

## **BROCK UNIVERSITY ECUMENICAL CHAPLAINCY**

The Brock Ecumenical Chaplaincy enjoyed another great year of student programming, learning, and justice activities on campus.

The stable program for this Chaplaincy is the Big Questions Club, which meets twice weekly during the year and has a student following of 221. It remains the most active group associated with the Ecumenical Chaplaincy. The Big Questions Club holds two basic goals. One is to build a community of trust where contemporary social, religious, and political questions can be raised, and the second is to give students the opportunity to relate what they learn in class to issues and concerns in their lives. It is also a great opportunity for students to learn about the Ecumenical Chaplaincy and the services it has to offer.

The Big Questions Club is complemented by two other programs that also extend the Chaplaincy into the lives of students. The Toonie Supper program continued unabated this year, and it gives an opportunity for congregations of the Niagara region (United Church, Anglican, Presbyterian, and Unitarian) to participate in the life of students at Brock. The second program is called “Tea Time Tuesday,” which is a student drop-in event that allows students to meet with the Chaplain on a weekly basis. All three of these programs – Big Questions, Toonie Suppers, and Tea Time Tuesday – remain both popular among students and integral to the outreach of the Chaplaincy into the lives of students.

The main project for the year 2016-2017 was to establish a “vibrant SCM” on Brock campus related to the Ecumenical Chaplaincy. The SCM (Student Christian Movement) is theologically and socially complementary to the values of the United Church of Canada. It was extremely popular on campuses across Canada in bygone years, and the project for the Ecumenical Chaplaincy was to create its presence at Brock and help revive this important form of campus ministry in Canada. The Ecumenical Chaplaincy received a WOW (Walk On Water) Grant from the Anglican Church of Canada to assist this project. During the year, the project aim proved difficult to achieve, but the foundations for success were laid. Presently, the Brock SCM remains small with twelve interested students signed up and three students committed to leadership. With this nucleus, two Wisdom Share (ecumenical dialogue) events were held, one study group was formed, and a Food Drive was conducted. There is every indication that this initial group holds the capacity for further growth in the coming years.

The Anglican Church WOW Grant also enabled the Chaplaincy to hire a student, Manarchari Paranthahan, as the Student Program Coordinator. Manchari mainly helped form the SCM, involving herself specifically in the promotion campaign and the development of leadership. Financial grants beyond subsistence level maintenance enable the employment of students, and this helps the Chaplaincy to grow quickly due to contacts on the ground and having multiple people involved in promotion.

The outreach achieved through program development increases the number of students who drop in to visit with the Chaplain and to express their various frustrations or celebrate achievements in relation to their studies. The most important quality a Chaplain can bring to the student body is a present and calm mentorship, particularly when the demands of studies can

feel overwhelming. Many students today hold part-time jobs in addition to full-time studies, and the Chaplain's presence as both a spiritual presence and counselling voice can make a significant difference.

The United Church and Hamilton Conference are to be thanked for continuing, as best they can in this time of scarce resources, to uphold the value of Campus Ministry and its need for financial support.

*David Galston, Chaplain*

## **ECUMENICAL CAMPUS MINISTRY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH**

The Ecumenical Campus Ministry (ECM) is the on-campus home of the Anglican, Presbyterian, and United churches. ECM offers discipleship programs consistent with the Mainline Protestant tradition, pastoral care, and connections to local churches, to the over 27,000 students, faculty, and staff at the University of Guelph.

This year marks the first full academic year for Andrew Hyde as ECM's full-time chaplain. So in many ways this still feels like a transition year – for our programming with a new chaplain at the helm, and for the entire ministry with a new model of full-time chaplaincy. At the time of writing this (April 2017), we approach the midway point of Andrew's three year contract.

**Healthy Congregations / Presbyteries:** The greatest barrier ECM faces to being a healthy ministry is around our finances. The ECM Board took a step of faith when they increased the chaplain position to full-time in late 2015. If new sources of funding cannot be found, the 3-year contract by which Andrew Hyde serves as chaplain is expected to exhaust ECM's financial reserves. Therefore, one of our goals is to transition from relying completely on denominational funding (which has decreased dramatically over recent years) to a model that includes individual and congregational funding as well. Over this year, we have seen modest increases in individual and congregational funding, but this trend will need to increase substantially for there to be any long-term difference. We are also looking into expanding our ecumenical mix, in the hopes of broadening our sources of support – the challenge will be whether we can do so while maintaining our identity as a liberal, Mainline Protestant ministry.

**Effective Leadership:** ECM's Board comprises clergy, faculty, and student representatives from our three partner traditions. The Board meets monthly. At this point in the year, we are seeking a few new Board members, but expect to fill those positions before our AGM this summer. Through a grant from the federal government, we were able to hire two summer students. And with a grant from the Anglican Diocese of Niagara, we were able to hire two interns to help lead our new worship services. Having a full-time chaplain is making a big difference in terms of ECM's visibility in the community and at the university, and is a model that has many benefits if it can be sustained.

**Faithful Public Witness:** ECM's programming this year has included a series of small groups (Parable Study, Christian Conversations, Decision-Making, MHKY Chapel), community-building events (weekly Community Dinners, Orientation Week events, BBQ's), and

participation in UofG's Multi-Faith Resource Team (Places of Worship tours, reconciliation presentation, Faith Fridays). Over the season of Lent, we have begun hosting Sunday afternoon worship services. These chapel services have gathered a group of about 20 each Sunday, and we are now deciding whether they might become a regular program offering come September.

**Strengthening Partnerships:** A major goal for ECM this year was to become more visible and strengthen our partnerships with local churches. Andrew has done this by making himself available for pulpit supply and has been able to speak at local churches approximately once per month. Andrew has also helped give leadership to local youth programming – the national Presbyterian youth gathering in 2016, Hamilton Conference Youth Forum 2016, London Conference Youth Forum 2017, Rendez-Vous 2017, Niagara Youth Conference 2017. ECM is also now linked in with Guelph United Ministries, where Andrew attends regular meetings and participates in programming on ECM's behalf.

Moving into the coming year, our goals include...

**Finding New Sources of Funding:** Whether it's through local congregations, individuals, taking on pieces of contract work (for websites, programming, etc.), or finding new grant opportunities, it is important that ECM find new revenue sources. Without it, ECM will have to give up on having a full-time chaplain, and may even need to cease its ministry altogether.

**Continuing to Build a Student Community:** We've been able to attract a good number of first-year students this year, and hope to continue to build a solid community of students through our programming. If we opt to continue with weekly Sunday afternoon worship services, we anticipate those services will be an important entry point for students.

**Expanding our Ecumenical Support:** Just as we hope to strengthen partnerships with Anglican, Presbyterian, and United Church congregations, we hope to add possibly two new traditions to our mix. We are pursuing some conversations with the Lutherans and the Disciples of Christ here in Guelph, and hope some new partnerships might develop.

*Andrew Hyde, Chaplain*

## **FIVE OAKS EDUCATION AND RETREAT CENTRE**

### **Statement of Mission and Purpose**

Five Oaks is a Retreat and Conference Centre in Paris Ontario. Our mandate is that within creation, we can all live into a vibrant, healing, and life-sustaining way of being.

“For the care of all life, we empower the human spirit to live into its inherent potential by inspiring connection to self, to Spirit, to each other and to nature.”

Five Oaks inspires connection to self, to Spirit, to each other and to nature while attending to the physical, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual well-being of ALL people.

### **Summary of goals and priorities for the past year and an indication of how those goals have served to address the four priorities of Hamilton Conference:**

In April 2016 the Board of Five Oaks announced its decision to cease operations effective November 2016. In June 2016, the members at the Annual General Meeting decided to “postpone definitely” two motions presented by the Board: one that had to do with selling the property and the other was about dissolving the corporation. In November 2016, Five Oaks laid off most of the staff, thanking them for many years of faithful service to Five Oaks. Currently Five Oaks continues on an operating model with three staff: An Executive Director, a Financial Administrator, and a Maintenance Coordinator, supported by a team of volunteers. A Member Working Group created by the AGM of 2016 will present a proposal to the Board in March 2017 on how Five Works can move forward on an alternative path.

We celebrate the fact that God opened the waters for us so we can cross to the other side. Five Oaks is stewarded by a Board and Member Working Group that has shown remarkable faithfulness and resilience during this process.

The Good News is that Five Oaks is open and alive. Our hope is that we will be shown the way forward. In 2016, the Board also decided to continue with offering Oaten Institute programs like NEOS for Youth Ministry (Feb 24-26, 2017) Licensed Lay Worship Leaders Learning Weekend (March 31-April 1, 2017) and Confirmation Weekend (March 31-April 1, 2017)

This is the way that Five Oaks hopes in some small way to contribute to the big work of promoting healthy congregations and presbyteries, effective leadership.

In the area of faithful public witness and strengthening partnerships, Five Oaks has started the work of finding strategic partners to diversify its funding base. Through these partnerships, Five Oaks hopes to establish new sources of ongoing revenue to fund operations and capital expenditures.

Discussion with partners like the Muslim Association of Canada, the Six Nations of the Grand River, the Fox Institution of Creation Spirituality, and Philip Newell’s School of Celtic Consciousness are happening.

With new partnerships, Five Oaks expects to engage people of all faiths coming from Canada's ethnically and religiously diverse populations. Our vision is to see Five Oaks as "*the place*" where people from the different religious and spiritual traditions are able to come together in peace.

We want to be one of the first interfaith/intercultural residential centres in Canada to model a way of being together and to provide leadership for religious and secular institutions on interfaith/intercultural understanding and joint action. The partners would be fully integrated into the mission and vision as well as the governance of the Centre.

This is our way of doing faithful public witness and building and strengthening partnerships.

### **Summary of work done to fulfill our mission and reach our goals over the last year**

Five Oaks successfully transitioned the organization into a leaner operational model last Nov 2016. After that the Executive Director was tasked with the Board to provide support to the Member Working Group in the preparation of its report to the Board in March 2017. This too has been completed. Much will now depend on other Board decisions that may arise during the interim period and the actions that may arise during the Annual General Meeting in June 2017.

### **Statement of our goals for the coming year and how those goals will serve to address the four priorities of Hamilton Conference.**

Much of the goal-setting in the coming year will depend on how the Board and the General Membership will respond to the recommendations of the Member Working Group. The challenge continues to be how to operate Five Oaks with greatly reduced funding from grants and donations, brought about in large part by the announcement that Five Oaks was ceasing operations in November 2016. It may take a while before Five Oaks is able to regain its momentum. 2017 will be a transition year where new models of governance, operations, financing, and staffing will be tested. While all this is going on, the Board, the ED, and the Member Working Group will have to work together with singularity of purpose to make Five Oaks "future-ready."

We thank Hamilton Conference for all the support it extended to Five Oaks this year.

Five Oaks Education and Retreat Centre

CHAIRS: Christine Grose (Chair) and Robert Stapleford (Co-Chair)

EMAIL: fiveoakschair@gmail.com

BOARD MEMBERS: (to be completed by all but Presbyteries)

Christine Grose, Robert Stapleford, Ted Smith, Ron Jewell, Pam Byers, Rhonda Johns, Yvonne Stewart, Cindo Peterson, Jayne Little

NAME OF PERSON SUBMITTING REPORT: Rev Rafael Vallejo

ROLE: Executive Director

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## UNITED CHURCH WOMEN EXECUTIVE

Jesus Loves the Little Children  
he said “let the little children come to me” Mark 10:13

I chose my theme after my grandson drew a picture in my note pad while waiting for me at a presbyterial meeting. Since we were still promoting child poverty, I felt it all fit. I love the children as Jesus did, where would life be without the love of children.

As the UCW groups continue to support the National/Conference project of “Child Poverty,” my theme reminds us to do the work of Jesus as he would have done.

Thank you to Halton and Eden United Church for hosting the 2016 Annual Gathering. Our guest speakers were from Church House, Jordan Sullivan, who spoke on Poverty, and the Rev. Maggie MacLeod, who spoke on missing and murdered Indigenous women. We thanked Joyce Osborne for her leadership and presented her with a gift. A thank-you and gift was presented to Pat Gilmore as she moves on to a new chapter of her life. We will miss her book reviews and those beautiful hats of hers.

In September Norene Anderson, Hamilton Conference UCW Vice President and President of NUCW, Phyllis Buchner, and I went to Queen of Apostles retreat facility in Mississauga for the annual meeting of the National United Church Women. President Phyllis continued with her theme of “Roots and Wings.” It is a great time to hear from the other Conferences across our nation, hearing what is going on in their areas, comparing notes, and helping each other with different concerns. Change continues to be the topic of discussions. With the remits from GC42, I encourage you to be apart of what is happening with the future of our church. Our new National President is Nancy Sutherland from Bay of Quinte UCW.

The fall retreat was October 14 and 15, 2016, at Five Oaks with my theme of “Jesus Loves the Little Children,” facilitated by Jennifer Bawden Miller and Mary Jo Patterson. A great retreat was had by all who attended. Our inner child was brought out. The next fall retreat is to be announced, watch for information from your Presbyterial Presidents.

I would like to thank all who sent prayers and stood in for me during the time I was taking care of my niece, who passed away before Christmas with cancer. Thank-you especially to Norene, who filled in for me when Shay was too sick and I could not leave her, and was there for moral support at her service.

Blessings,  
*Nancy Risto*

## WESLEY URBAN MINISTRIES

With your help, Wesley Urban Ministries offers support, every step of the way, to children, youth, adults and seniors living in poverty. This includes homeless youth and adults, refugees new to Canada, isolated seniors and vulnerable children and families. For our report, please find some highlights, updates and personal impact stories from the past year below.



### Our Highlights:

- Contributed to a significant 35% drop in chronic homelessness in Hamilton
- Served 138,189 hot meals to children, families, adults and seniors
- Welcomed and settled more than 1,300 refugees, predominately from Syria
- New Transitional Beds Program opened for seniors with responsive behaviours
- New collaborative project to tackle social isolation among seniors

### New Updates:

- We changed the hours of Wesley Day Centre due to the changes of the Mission Support Grant amount allocated to Hamilton Conference in 2016, however this has not reduced our critical meal program
- We have expanded our supports for families, youth, men and women and seniors in the Halton Region. More information at [wesley.ca/halton](http://wesley.ca/halton)
- Our Youth Outreach Workers program is now offered in Hamilton and Brantford
- Thanks to funding from the Mission & Development Council, Hamilton Presbytery, a new Chaplain position offers pastoral care and support to marginalized youth, adults and seniors at Wesley programs and First Place apartment building for seniors

### Three Stories:

The below personal impact stories were written by Scott Page, Wesley's Chaplain, on the theme of hope & hopelessness.

#### A Youth

James and I were walking down the street away from his current home at Wesley's Youth

Housing program. When I asked him how his week had been, James turned to me and said “So my mom sent me an e-mail.” James’ mom had kicked him out of her house a couple years back in part because of his habits at the time and partly because she blamed him for the breakdown of other relationships in the family, outside of his control. “Well what does that mean to you?” I asked. “I decided not to respond. It made me feel sad because we aren’t going to get along, but also happy because every time I talk with her I start being the parent or we fight,” James said. “I am not going to do that anymore so I am just letting it go for now.” “Wow, how did you figure that out?” I asked. “It’s just something I’ve been learning since I got here. I am stable with a job and even though it hurts to ignore, I can’t risk it.”

### **A Refugee**

Khaled worked most of his life as a skilled tradesman in Syria. He fled after his business was seized and some of his family was killed. We sat down to talk in an apartment he shares in Hamilton. He showed me pictures of his old shop and the detailed work he had done -- pieces that took hundreds of hours of excruciating detail-oriented labor. He had an accident while working in a third country, on his way to Canada, permanently injuring his back. Khaled is in his late fifties and has been working all his life. He spoke over and over again of how he was going to support his family, his daughter back in Syria and his sons in other countries -- one of whom lost a hand while captured. “How are you making it through this?” I asked him. “I always have before and my kids, I put the same in them,” Khaled said. “I can’t think that I might not work again, or bring them here, but I know the strength I still have and I can’t give in. [My kids] have that too.”

### **A Senior**

Tricia was carrying her coat and purse, pacing up and down the hallway at the Transitional Beds program at Wesley when we first met. She had just left the hospital and would be staying at Transitional Beds until a spot in a long term care facility opened up. As she paced, she would peak her head into every room, including the kitchen where some other residents and I were singing together. As she walked by a third time, I asked if she would like to join us. “Oh, I don’t want to intrude into someone else’s house. I am waiting for my daughter,” she said “She should be here any minute.” Her daughter had already been by that morning and would not be returning for at least another day. “Well I won’t be offended if you have to get up and leave, you might as well join us for now” I said. Tricia stepped into the room, laid her coat on the back of her chair and put her purse on the table in front of her. She sang “Swing Low,” she sang “Jesus Loves Me,” she sang “Tis so Sweet” and when the songs ended, she picked up her coat, put her purse on her elbow and kept walking.

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Thank you for your support! You are welcome to welcome to share any of these stories in your congregations. For any questions, please visit [wesley.ca](http://wesley.ca) or contact Andrea Buttars, Manager Resource Development, at [andrea.buttars@wesley.ca](mailto:andrea.buttars@wesley.ca) or 905 528 5629 x 248.