

## **BROCK UNIVERSITY ECUMENICAL CHAPLAINCY**

Brock Ecumenical Chaplaincy Services is part of Brock University Student Services (now called Student Life and Community Experience) and is accountable to the Director, Brad Clarke, of that service. The Ecumenical Chaplaincy is also accountable to the supporting denominations of the United, Presbyterian, and Anglican Churches.

The Ecumenical Chaplaincy is defined as “positive space,” which underlines its openness to all students regardless of gender identity, ethnic heritage, or religious beliefs. Students seek counseling, life skills, volunteer opportunities, discussion groups, learning opportunities, and friendships from the Chaplaincy.

One of the main challenges for Ecumenical Chaplains across Canada on university campuses is to provide spiritual growth and direction that is distinct from Christian or other religious clubs on campus. The Chaplaincy is not a student club, and it is important to remember that its ministry is directed as a service to the whole of campus life (faculty, staff, and students). At Brock, the Ecumenical Chaplaincy is often perceived as a resource for administrative committees and as a trusted service when issues related to religion and society emerge.

The Ecumenical Chaplaincy has a variety of popular programs that have defined its outreach for several years. The most popular student program remains the “Big Questions” group, which has over 200 members on Facebook and two regular meetings each week on campus. Other programs perhaps not as popular but equally important include the annual Wisdom Share event (by SCM Brock), the annual Co-Exist event (interfaith), the Toonie Suppers, Tea Time Tuesday, and Chaplaincy Open House. All programs provide opportunities for students to connect with the Ecumenical Chaplaincy.

For 2017/2018 the Brock Ecumenical Chaplaincy received an Embracing the Spirit grant (United Church) and a Potentials Fund grant (Niagara Presbytery) that enabled the hiring of two students to help grow and lead a new SCM group at Brock. Much energy has been placed in this project, but it might be noted that most students today understand “Christianity” negatively. However difficult and challenging it may be for the church to accept, outside of the church Christianity signifies unflattering labels like anti-science and sexism. The work of United Church supported Christian chaplains on University campuses is more important than ever if the face of the Christian religion in Canada is to recover and reclaim a positive and promising continent.

It is in the spirit of providing a positive and constructive presence for Christianity on campus that the Brock Ecumenical Chaplaincy chose to focus on and support the establishment of a Brock chapter of the SCM. The work is not easy because of the cultural resistance to Christianity predominant among younger people who limit Christian identity to restricted beliefs. Nevertheless, thanks to the work of the Ecumenical student leaders, Manchari Paranthahan and Emilie Phillips, Brock SCM has gotten off the ground. There is at Brock a small, initial group of SCMerS who have become an OPIRG (Ontario Public Interest Research Group) Action Group and who have promoted themselves on campus through tabling,

sponsoring workshops with the Human Rights and Equity Service, organizing the Wisdom Share event on campus, and forming a small but growing SCM Bible Study group.

The parable of the mustard seed is often mistakenly interpreted as something small that becomes big over time. In reality, the parable is probably a parody of the cedar tree image found in Ezekiel 17:23. The point of the parable, as many scholars today read it, is to undermine images of God as mighty and miraculous and to affirm God among those things humble, unclean, and not particularly impressive. I liken the SCM at Brock to this parable. Though Brock SCM sets its aspirations on the heights, its reality is on the ground among students who are part of a new Christian story perhaps less flamboyant than in the past but no less faithful to the promises Christianity holds.

On behalf of the Brock Ecumenical Chaplaincy, the many students, staff, and committee members that compose its community, I thank the United Church, the Hamilton Conference, and Niagara Presbytery for continued support and encouragement for this ministry at Brock University.

*David Galston, Brock University Ecumenical Chaplain  
March 30, 2018*

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

The Ecumenical Campus Ministry is the home of the Anglican, Presbyterian, and United Church at the University of Guelph. We offer pastoral care, worship services, and learning/discipleship programs consistent with the Mainline Protestant tradition to the UoG campus community. We also serve as a bridge between campus and our denominational partners in the Guelph area.

Healthy Congregations and Presbyteries - A continuing challenge for our ministry's health is around finding sustainable financial support and leadership on the Board. We had a few Board members transition off our Board this year, and were blessed to find replacements. We anticipate a couple more transitions on the Board this coming summer, so this continues being a challenge. We've been able to trim our budget deficit this year through a combination of fundraising, grants for special projects, and increased giving from denominations, congregations, and individuals. That said, there is still work to do, as we currently forecast a deficit of approx. \$25,000 over the coming years. Our reserves allow us to do this for another few years at most.

Effective Leadership - Finding leadership at the Board level is a continuing challenge, and there are a few openings coming up. We've been fortunate to be able to have a pair of student interns for our weekly worship services, thanks to seed money from the Anglican Diocese of Niagara. If we are to continue with those interns in the fall, we need to find new funding. Our challenge with sustainable funding is due in large part to the Board's insistence that a Full Time chaplain is important to have any significant presence on campus. As we move forward, our financial

realities may prompt the Board to reconsider the staffing model, but as of right now, the Full Time model is a priority.

Faithful Public Witness - This year we launched a weekly worshipping community called Campus Church. Having a regular worship gathering has helped the ministry be more visible and accessible on campus.

Strengthening Partnerships - Our partnerships tend to move in two directions: deeper into campus, and into the wider church (especially youth networks). This year ECM has developed deeper connections with the LGBTQ community on campus, athletics, and the wellness department. We have also committed considerable time to being involved with the Anglican Diocese's Niagara Youth Conference and with London Conference's Youth Forum event. We have also been a regular contributor to Guelph United Ministries.

Major program directions this year have included launching Campus Church as a regular weekly worship community; weekly Community Dinners and Christian Conversations small group; hosting the Men's Hockey Chapel Program; weekly meetings and program initiatives with the Multi-Faith Resource Team; Fall and Winter retreats; monthly guest speaker discussions.

Goals for the coming year include: drawing more people to Campus Church from the off-campus Guelph community; offering dinner opportunities after Campus Church (we meet at 4pm Sundays); partnering with LGBTQ community to offer Queer Christian small group; working with Guelph United Ministry to enhance their social media presence.

*Andrew Hyde, Guelph University Ecumenical Chaplain*

## **MCMASTER UNIVERSITY ECUMENICAL CHAPLAINCY**

**Statement of mission/purpose** – The Ecumenical Chaplaincy at McMaster University is a ministry of McMaster Campus Ministries Council (MCMC), a 45-year-old presence on campus ensuring ecumenical collegiality and good will.

The mandate of MCMC has been to “bear witness” to the meaning of Christian gospel on the pluralistic campus of McMaster University. This means honoring not only the ecumenical pluralism of the university, but the ecumenical plurality of Christian faith itself. Whether by inviting a healthy respect between various Christian groups, challenging these groups to focus on common values that “bear witness” to gospel love (rather than distinct doctrines that “bear witness” to a church divided), or providing a Christian alternative whose ecumenicity is compassionately based and justice oriented, our ministry seeks to balance inclusivity with mutual respect, and not enable those who do not.

The appointment of an Ecumenical Chaplain is not only to live out this mandate among the plethora of Christian “clubs” on campus, but has evolved into including those religious identities that are other than Christian, as well as those spiritual groups who do not identify in terms of “faith,” or

traditional religious language (e.g. indigenous spirituality, Buddhism, or “spiritual but not religious” identities).

**Summary of goals and priorities** – In order to live out this mission/purpose, the goals of the past year have been to acknowledge the evolving landscape of spiritual/religious identities; and with that, to name that what was once presumed to be “Christian” only, now invites us into new “ecumenical” territory, inclusive of but not limited to religion itself.

In order to utilize the best that “chaplaincy” as “spiritual care” represents from a Christian ethos, one named goal was to provide a weekly, consistent “presence” in the market place of the Student Centre (where the Chaplaincy Centre already exists).

This is different from providing short-term occasional programs, or even “one-off” projects, which still take place and have for years. This is the intentional act of moving out from our own “territory” (as a Chaplaincy Centre) and providing a regular space and place that speaks to all other aspects of chaplaincy. We have called this weekly program “Soup and Selah.” S&S is a time of reflection/meditation (for any and all) followed by the simple provision of soup and bread.

**Indications of goal(s) fulfilled** – The first gathering of “Soup and Selah” was four people, the Chaplain’s Assistant, two students, and myself. But we remained constant and over the last year, the gatherings have not only garnered a consistent sense of community who regularly attend and contribute, but attendance is consistently in the thirties, with spiritual reflections coming from students, faculty, and staff of various backgrounds, ethnicities, and spiritual inspiration. It has struck a chord, representative of the eclectic landscape of the university itself, yet deeply resonating with the fact that we are all spiritual beings. The only condition of a shared reflection (5 minutes in length) is that it be something inspirational to the presenter, while being cognizant that the group gathered is made up of varied spiritual/religious backgrounds. This changes the ethos away from purporting a traditional religious message, often perceived as coercive, and permits the authenticity of the student, staff, or faculty person presenting to come alive and genuinely be heard. All this is followed by the sharing together of bread and soup, garnering small table conversations and newly formed friendships. Through a brief “pause” (Selah) in the middle of the day, in the middle of the week of the day, in the middle of the highest volume trafficked building on campus, we are building a community of compassion which, like Jesus, is not belabored by ecclesial expectations of what this is supposed to look like.

A spirit is emerging and engaging all who are touched by the heart behind this ministry. Simple bread and soup. Simple food for thought. Simple invitations to sit, pause, and visit with other students, staff, and faculty. Stay 5 minutes, 10 minutes, 50 minutes. The participants decide, as the intentional brief beginning permits the space for those gathered to come and go.

How has this enabled/supported other ministries? From it have sprung spontaneous plans to attend public lectures of a social or spiritual interest together; small group discussions in the Chaplaincy Centre on the “Big Questions” of life; agreeing to share in Ecumenical Services at Advent and Lent; attending or volunteering for the annual International Students dinner the chaplaincy helps provide; participating in our MCMC Spiritual retreat; speaking at denominational meetings who support the chaplaincy; or discovering that with this simple, weekly gathering there is a community of chaplaincy who cares.

Yet from all that has emerged (or that is crystallized) by being a consistent, visible presence on our campus, most heartening has been the deepening of partnerships, already enjoyed from years of relationship-building through MCMC and my predecessor, the Rev. Dr. Carol Wood. Such partners include the McMaster Students Union, Student Affairs, Human Resources, the Equity and Inclusion Offices, as well as the office of the President.

Regular communication and collaboration take place, inviting the Ecumenical Chaplaincy to immerse into the life of the university, influencing multi-faith/spirit dialogue, encouraging inclusive values, and even helping shape protocols to ensure the safety of those most vulnerable and the forward vision of expanding Spiritual Care (aka Chaplaincy) beyond its current Christian monopoly.

This is the ministry of our chaplaincy, and it is carried out thanks to the vision and support of churches like the United Church of Canada, with which I am proud to be associated.

**Goals for year to come** – In addition to wanting to build on our recently set goals, only starting to find our “legs,” we have the goal to continue with the momentum of inter-faith/spirit fostering, for which our ecumenical portfolio is a natural catalyst.

In the spirit of enabling a sense of “Chaplaincy” that is inclusive, yet not limited to Christian, we are in the midst of composing an ad hoc steering committee to establish a “Spiritual/Religious Care Team” protocol. This is slow, arduous, and joyful work. We also see it as ministry deserving of our time and attention. This will be a lot of work in the year ahead, but we are determined, intentional, and patient to see the work of mutual respect and love find its place in what will be an exciting new face of ministry at McMaster University.

**Healthy Congregations and Presbyteries** – Though chaplaincy is unique compared to ecclesial models of ministry, it is not without the need to foster healthy dynamics and practices. In fact, the origin of chaplaincy, in any setting, is about seeking to nurture holistic, non-judgemental (yet discerning) and inclusive communities, which will continue to be the goal and the staple by which we measure our health.

**Effective Leadership** – Besides working collegially with other partnerships throughout the university, the ecumenical chaplaincy is privileged to work with other Christian chaplains and campus ministers. These partnerships only strengthen our bond, but more importantly, inspire our leadership in our respective ministries. Trumping all these, however, are the ways by which we are privileged as chaplains to mentor and enable leadership in the students with whom we work closest.

**Faithful Public Witness** – As mentioned, the original MCMC named “bearing public witness” as its principle mandate. The meaning has grown, but at the very least, it meant and means, living the heart of Christian faith with compassion and integrity. Proselytization is not an option, and is rejected as an aspiration for witness. Being present and pastoral are our mantras.

**Strengthening Partnerships** – Beside the partnerships we value and nurture on campus, the partnerships of our denomination supporters, in the Anglican, Presbyterian, and United Churches of Canada, are not just valued but necessary for our existential integrity of ecumenicity. Without you, we do not live, and move and have our being.

*Andy Crowell, McMaster University Ecumenical Chaplain*

## FIVE OAKS EDUCATION AND RETREAT CENTRE



# Five Oaks

Five Oaks is alive and well and on a journey of re-creation, re-vitalization and affirmation of its mission to be a sacred place where people of faith gather in community. We look forward to welcoming you back. Some highlights of the past year include:

**Engagement of Community:** Following unanimous adoption of the new Business Plan in June 2017, the Five Oaks Board of Directors has 11 board members, including two from Six Nations and two from the Muslim community; there are eight working teams served by more than 34 volunteers who regularly participate in key activities; flexible contract services for housekeeping and hospitality services; and a small staff has been hired including an Operating Manager.

**Mission as a Sacred Place:** There has been regrowth in use of Five Oaks facilities by faith and cultural groups, particularly Six Nations and including: a joint United Church / Muslim children and youth program; Luther Legacies; a Jewish Youth Retreat, a Hindu Festival, The Skylight Festival, and the School of Celtic Consciousness. Five Oaks continues to support the congregational ministry of the United Church with youth ministry training, confirmation groups, lay worship leadership, and spiritual and theological events for laity and clergy. The Centre's interfaith/intercultural focus fulfills the purposes of the *Mending the World Report*—to work in partnership with all who seek the health and well-being of the whole creation, to discern and celebrate God's Spirit in people of other religions and ideologies.

**Financial Health:** A plan has been developed for long term financial sustainability with the development of a cost-sharing model known as social enterprise. Rental income increases financial stability and there is less reliance on funding through grants. Five Oaks has negotiated creative collaboration with businesses who share our values and vision. Examples include food services by The Acorn and yoga and meditation by Ageless Arts and all ages outdoor recreational programming by GROWE. Revenue (generated by the social enterprise business venture and generous donor support plus other sources of income) exceeded costs and Five Oaks finished 2017 in the black.

**Looking to the Future:** Plans for 2018 include: capital upgrades, marketing and branding with a new logo (as above), web site enhancements and future spiritual and social enterprise partnerships and collaboration.

## GENERAL COUNCIL EXECUTIVE

The past year, for the United Church of Canada, has been dominated by Comprehensive Renewal. Remits 1–5, 7, and 8 all passed with substantial majorities. Remit 6, One Order of Ministry, did not pass as not enough votes were received to give an absolute majority. The passage of all of the Remits save Remit 6 has meant the ongoing development of plans for implementation of the changes for the United Church. The Remit Implementation Task Group has been co-chaired by our own Executive Secretary, Peter Hartmans. We look forward to the new opportunities that lie ahead as we live into change. This work is provisional at this point as the majority votes for the remits needs to be authorized by General Council 43.

One of the most direct changes coming forward will be around the change in boundaries that the Three Council Model of the church entails. A Boundaries Commission was struck by a recall of General Council 42 in September, 2017. This commission included representation from Hamilton Conference. A preliminary report was given in January and the final report was released at the end of February. The Boundaries Commission's work will be final as long as the remit authorizing the three court model is affirmed by General Council 43. The Commission developed a model for 16 Regions across the national church. The final report may be found here: <http://www.united-church.ca/news/final-report-regional-council-boundaries>

Hamilton Conference will be divided and become part of two of the new regions. Region 8 will have within it Waterloo Presbytery and Bruce Presbytery in addition to Huron Presbytery and Northern Waters Presbytery. Region 9 will have within it Halton, Hamilton, Erie and Niagara Presbyteries. A separate, but parallel, track to Comprehensive Renewal has been realigning staffing levels to match income levels in the United Church. To that end 6 provisional Executive Ministers have been announced for the 16 regions in the Church. Regions 8 and 9, in addition to Region 7, will have Cheryl-Ann Stadelbauer-Sampras as our Executive Minister. She has, most recently, been Executive Secretary of London Conference. Peter Hartmans, the current Executive Secretary of Hamilton Conference, will be the provisional Executive Minister of Regions 6 and 10. More details on the provisional appointments of Executive Ministers may be found here: <http://www.united-church.ca/news/provisional-executive-ministers-appointed>

This is not to say there have not been other important matters that have come before General Council Executive in the past year. The fall meeting of GCE dealt with twenty-seven proposals while the spring meeting had thirty-one before it. These varied from concrete proposals on employment standards to more general theological questions like Theologies of Adoption.

One question which is beyond the scope of the General Council Executive to decide is the place of Indigenous Ministry in the United Church of Canada. Too often white privilege has determined the roles of Indigenous peoples rather than allowing self-determination to operate. To this end the Indigenous Church is developing its own vision of the Church that it will share with General Council and the General Council Executive. This will happen on their timeline rather than the dominant church's. We commend a number of reports for information:

Aboriginal Ministries Council Accountability Report

Caretakers of our Indigenous Circle Report

United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Take Group Report

Committee on Indigenous Justice and Residential Schools Accountability Report

All of these reports may be found within the Reports for the GCE November, 2017 meeting.

[https://commons.united-church.ca/Documents/Governance/General%20Council%20Executive/GC42%20Executive%20\(2015-2018\)/Meeting%20Documents/2017-11-18%20GCE%20Meeting/GCE%20Workbook%20November%2018-20,%202017%20v.%201.pdf](https://commons.united-church.ca/Documents/Governance/General%20Council%20Executive/GC42%20Executive%20(2015-2018)/Meeting%20Documents/2017-11-18%20GCE%20Meeting/GCE%20Workbook%20November%2018-20,%202017%20v.%201.pdf)

It continues to be a privilege to represent Hamilton Conference on the General Council Executive. Moving forward, changes are coming to that body as well. The size of the GCE will be reduced from 50 to 18. Fourteen of these positions will be from the Regions of the Church and this will mean that not every region will have direct representation. We are moving into a time when we must “trust the body”—to use a former Hamilton Conference President’s theme. If there are any questions we would be happy to provide more information.

*Sybil Wilson, Niagara Presbytery*

*Tim Reaburn, Bruce Presbytery*



## **UNITED CHURCH WOMEN EXECUTIVE**

Jesus Loves the Little Children

he said “let the little children come to me” Mark 10:13

I chose to continue with my theme for another year. Loving the children as Jesus did, where would life be without the love of children?

As this is the last year of the five-year project of Bread not Stones, UCW groups continue to support the National project of “Child Poverty.”

Thank you to Waterloo for hosting the 2017 Annual Gathering.

In September Norene Anderson and I went to Queen of Apostles retreat facility in Mississauga for the annual meeting of the National United Church. 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. I encourage you to be apart of what happening with the future of our church.

The fall retreat was October 13 and 14, 2017 at Five Oaks with my theme of “Jesus Loves the Little Children.” Changes are happening at Five Oaks as well. We lost a great person in the passing of Jackie Childerhouse, who was a great friend of the UCW. Her wonderful smile was always present when selling us books and things from the Grand River Book Store, at Five Oaks. She will be greatly missed by all.

It has been a interesting year with the changes being discussed and trying to make plans for the future of the UCW. I attended a special meeting of one of our Presbyterials, to discuss the need to disband. I put forth the possibility that they continue without a President and take turns in chairing meetings for one more year, and to hang in there until we know what the future holds with the changes. There are other Presbyterials that are struggling to fill executives, we are running on less each year. This will be a big area slated on the agenda at Nationals I am sure.

*Blessings*

*Nancy Risto Hamilton Conference UCW President*

## WESLEY URBAN MINISTRIES

Thank you for your generous support and ongoing involvement with Wesley Urban Ministries. With your help, we are offering support, every step of the way, to people in Hamilton, Halton Region and Brantford. Our programs and services help homeless youth and adults, refugees new to Canada, isolated seniors and vulnerable children and families.

The below outcomes and stories from the past year highlight the impact of our work. For our full Annual Report including Financial Information (ex. 9% Administration & Fundraising Expenses) visit <https://wesley.ca/publications/annual-reports/>

- **578 At Risk Youth Connected with Mobile Staff**
- **2,436 Unique Children and Adults Received Food & Gifts at Christmas**
- **109,000 Hot Meals Served to Children, Youth, Adults & Seniors**
- **595 Refugees Welcomed and Settled to Canada**
- **65 Individuals Successfully Gained Full Time Employment**
- **1,350 Participants in Development & Positive Parenting Workshops**
- **95 Chronically Homeless Men Housed**
- **595 Children Attended Activities & Camps**
- **61 Languages Spoken by Staff to Best Meet Client Needs**

### Yazen's Story



During the historic influx of refugees in December 2015 to December 2016, we welcomed and settled 379 refugee families with a total of 925 children and youth, 90% from Syria. With such a great number of children and youth, we used almost one quarter of donations to our Syrian Refugee Fund for kids' activities. This has included recreation activities, lessons, workshops and entertainment. A highlight for many children, including Yazen, was a visit from the Harlem Globetrotters player Scooter. **"I liked seeing Scooter's basketball tricks! It was my first time seeing a basketball player in real life. I have only seen on television. I love basketball!"**

These arts and recreation opportunities are critical for children who have fled war, violence and such personal instability. We would like to thank our donors, volunteers, staff and community partners for their significant contributions to the historic resettlement efforts in Hamilton. With families now living in the community, children attending school and parents attending English as a Second Language classes, our continued focus is to help with employment assistance and re-training for adult and youth newcomers.

### Yakou and Fatima's Story



Two years ago, Yakou and her husband separated. She moved into the Beasley neighbourhood with her 10 year old daughter Fatime. Fatime started a new school and Yakou began working. Despite all these significant life changes, Yakou says, **“It was really a great transition for us with Wesley’s after school and summer programs. As an only child, my daughter was really shy, but since coming to Wesley, she is more independent and happy with lots of friends. The staff helps with math and teach good manners too.”** Yakou is a personal support worker and loves her job working in a nursing home. **“I feel happy taking care of others,”** she says. We’re glad our programs have helped Yakou maintain her employment and be a great role model for her daughter who dreams of being a teacher or a lawyer.

### **Rodney’s Story**



For the first time in his life, Rodney moved into his own one-bedroom apartment. For almost ten years, he lived in a series of shelters and unsuccessfully rented a room with other people. **“I didn’t want to do it no more,”** Rodney shares. **“I thought the people I was living with were my friends,”** remembers Rodney. **“But they were abusive, made threats and took my stuff - even my favourite lazy boy chair.”** When a Wesley housing worker met Rodney, it took time to build a relationship of trust. Trained as a heavy equipment operator, Rodney has worked a variety of jobs including in the auto industry, but has lost his job many times through cutbacks. But Rodney proudly shares, **“I work for what I got.”** We are proud of Rodney and will continue to support him and his landlord to ensure successful tenancy and avoid the cycle of shelter use and homelessness.

For any questions, visit [www.wesley.ca](http://www.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. From all of us at Wesley, a sincere thank you for your continued support!