



**A Report on the
OMC 35th ANNIVERSARY BANQUET
November 22, 2007**

By Ron Hunt

One of the measures of success of any multifaith gathering is in how well the cultural and faith differences are respected in terms of the meals that are served. For members of OMC, respect for dietary requirements is automatic – we do not even think twice about the need to accommodate one another in this way. This organization exists because of our collective conviction that all social and business gatherings in Ontario should meet this measure of respect and inclusion.

Measured in these terms alone, we are happy to report that the Banquet was a great success. It was also an occasion for networking and together reflecting on what OMC has achieved since the restructuring. Ray Czakowski, who organized the evening's program, did a superb job of emceeding the event.

The new LOGO of the OMCSRC was unveiled, ONE PURPOSE - MANY FAITHS. Also, the 35 Anniversary cake prepared by Dianne Algera, Member-at-Large on the Council, was shared.

Carl Tuyl

The address by Carl Tuyl was great. He has written a book called *He Knows My Name*. It arises from the story he told about his visit with a chaplain in an institution, when Carl asked, "What is your name?" to a patient, she said, "I don't know what my name is, but ask her, (pointing to the Chaplain), she knows." To be known, to be known by my name, is to know me. To be the one who knows the name of the other, is the one who knows who I am and what I need to be a whole person, my needs, my fears and my hopes. The paradigm that the story suggests, is that to know a person's name and to be known by name, is how the work of a spiritual and religious care provider works. It is knowing and being known in ways that provides care, respect and

understanding.

Carl spoke of the 3 or 4 members of the first group of OPIFCC to the present gathering of 35 Faith Groups represented by OMC Council. It was an interesting reflection on just 35 years of development.

He referred to the "army of volunteers" that makes the Regional Multifaith Committees function. Interesting image, the army of volunteers, would make a great painting or poster of super-imposed faces, representing various faiths, all reflecting the work-places that these volunteers enter.

He quoted from the Annual Report 1992/93. It would be good to have that quote available for reflection back to our stakeholders and government support persons. This was the picture then, in the words of the Premier.

He spoke of an image that remained in his mind, of a chaplain in a ward for alzheimers patients in worship, when the chaplain took a fresh red rose to each patient and asked them to smell it as a way of bringing back memories of gardens, summertime, and past relationships related to the scent.

He related how in April 1, 1999, he said goodbye to the work in the form of retirement and had the sense that his efforts had been for him, "the most satisfying time spent anywhere." What a great epitaph for any one bringing a particular work to a close.

He closed by quoting from the Gospel of John, to say, "...that if all of it (his career with OMC) were to be written down, there would not be enough room in the world to tell it all." Great ending. Lot's to think about.

Richard Landau

Richard Landau's remarks were challenging and thoughtful. He invited his listeners to reflect on seven possible trends that he sees emerging in the field of global faith and religious issues for humankind to consider.

Dear Friends of OMC,

It is with some regret and sadness that I am announcing my resignation as President of OMC. The truth is that I have yet to experience retirement and to this end I am looking forward to spending the time on delving deeper into matters spiritual.

I am most grateful for the support of the board, executive, staff, chaplains, volunteers and government in helping me with their knowledge and expertise in working through the restructuring period. In addition, I am taking this opportunity to offer my heartfelt thanks to The Venerable Lama Tenzin Kalsang, my spiritual teacher and guide. Without her guidance, care, love and patience it would not have been possible for me to have carried out the duties of the office. All errors I may have made I attribute to my own lack of self discipline and I thank all for their patience and support.

On a personal level, these past two years have certainly been a journey of discovery, growth and of meeting and getting to know many devoted people who sincerely care about the Spiritual Care and Religious Rights of individuals in the province. There is no question that there is much to do and keep vigilant about and so I wish the next president, executive and council much wisdom in fulfilling the OMC mandate.

Once again thank you for giving me the opportunity to serve you.

Peace,

Stan Middlestadt, President

- 1 The challenge of MAKING REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION for the spiritual and religious beliefs and practices of others as the world shrinks, and we are an increasingly global village. This is reflected in the food we eat, the clothes we wear, the way we speak and interact with one another.
- 2 WHAT IS A LEGITIMATE FAITH COMMUNITY? Does the minority speak for the majority? How do we identify a faith community and listen to it's needs and requests?
- 3 WHAT IS A FRINGE faith group? How do we limit the demands of the small fringe groups who want global voice and recognition?
- 4 WHAT CONSTITUTES HONEST DIALOGUE? After the facination with the interesting differences (exotica) we all have in our faith experience which differs from others, how do we get to the more basic, interesting and challenging dialogue about what accommodation of each other's faith postures means.
- 5 WHAT IS FAITH IN THE PUBLIC SQUARE to look like in the future? With 25% of any population demanding the limitation of faith practice publicly, what about the rights of the other 75% of people. How should faith in the public arena be expressed honestly and fairly among us? Does our present practice represent the image of the tail wagging the dog?
- 6 Across the globe, there is a NORTH - SOUTH RIFT represented by spiritual and religious expression and belief. Logic vs emotion, expression vs quiet reflection, and cultural differences clashing with religious ideas. How are these differences to be accommodated?
- 7 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND FREEDOM WITH OPENNESS AND MUTUAL RESPECT FOR DIFFERENCES. With China and India as emerging social and population giants in the world, how with the major Faiths of the world be encouraged to work together and to

understand each other.

Personally, I have always felt that the model represented by the Ontario Multifaith Council on Spiritual and Religious Care could provide a forum and paradigm for other countries and indeed, the United Nations, to reflect on multifaith dialogue and co-existence. However, such an undertaking would require finances and a vision far beyond the present.

Ron Hunt is the Anglican Alternate representative to the Ontario Multifaith Council.

OMC AT A GLANCE

The Ontario Multifaith Council:

- consults and advises the government of Ontario on faith group matters relating to the provision of spiritual and religious care in government run or funded institutions
- ensures the availability of persons (Board members/appointees and volunteers) with adequate understanding, ability, qualifications and appropriate status within their faith group
- collaborates with the Government in providing multifaith awareness training and education to persons who work or volunteer in government institutions and transfer payment agencies

Please email us with your suggestions and content submissions. If you would like to write something for the newsletter, please let us know.

Send all newsletter comments and inquiries to:

newsletter@omc.ca

For other inquiries contact:

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ESSAY CONTEST - 2008: CALLING ALL CHAPLAINS IN ONTARIO

The Ontario Multifaith Council on Spiritual and Religious care is inviting all chaplains, full, part-time or volunteer working in Ontario to participate in the OMC Essay Contest – 2008.

TOPIC: The Ontario Multifaith Council chose as its theme for 2007: “Caring for the Human Spirit”. How is this expressed in your belief system and practice?

PRIZES: 1ST - \$1,000, 2ND - \$500, 3RD - \$250

REQUIREMENTS:

- Essays will be 3 typed pages, double-spaced, single side, printed on 81/2 x 11 bond white paper.
- Name of the writer and contact information will be on a separate front page.
- No identification information will be contained in the essay i.e. name or location; although the nature of the work may be stated i.e. Hospital, prison, or long term care.
- The essay must be anonymous for judging purposes
- Essays become the property of the OMC and may be posted on the web page or newspaper.
- Essays will be judged on clarity, composition and reference to topic. Judges decision will be final.
- By submitting the essay, the writer declares it to be their original work.

Essays will be received at the Ontario Multifaith Council, 789 Don Mills Road, Ste. 208, Toronto, ON M3C 1T5 between November 22, 2007 and March 31, 2008.

All winners and ties will be invited to the OMC Annual Dinner to receive their prize. Honourable mentions will receive a gift.

We thank all those submitting essays, however, only those who are winners or honourable mentions can be acknowledged.

See the OMC website (www.omc.ca) for more details.

Text of the President's Address
Given at the OMC Board Meeting
January 17, 2008

By Stan Middlestadt, President

Does the OMC have a purpose in the Province? The obvious answer is "yes." "Why?" Because there can be solidarity and a voice when all faith groups speak with "One Purpose" on specific issues.

So, what is the status of the current relationship between the Government of Ontario and the member faith groups in the OMC? It is defined in the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) which defines a broad mandate. The MOA, without a doubt, is filled with wisdom and much foresight. All it requires is constant effort to implement what was originally intended at its inception. The MOA is certainly a document worth reviewing by everybody, it can be found on the OMC web site.

The question of continued government funding to OMC is reviewed regularly, and so, is always open to change. This creates the opportunity for the OMC to mount an energetic lobbying effort to the government to make sure our needs are considered. This is where political will comes in. If one looks at the signatories to the MOA one will see that a number of government Ministers were intimately involved in its creation. It is of great importance that we continue to work with government Ministers and ensure they are aware of the OMC and at the same time seek their support.

Potential sources for funding fall into three broad categories - government, private and OMC initiatives. With new funding, we would be able to hire staff for new programmes. For example the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care, who have not really been actively involved with the OMC for some time, is implementing an "Aging

at Home" strategy in which they are spending over \$700M in the next three years. While this presents a potential opportunity for Spiritual Care Providers/Chaplains to become involved, there is much work and lobbying to do to make this a reality. Essentially, the government continues to increase its outsourcing of spiritual and religious care and related programmes in an effort to get out of any direct involvement with administering in these areas. As always, the lobbying effort to ensure adequate spiritual care in Long Term Care Facilities, continues.

Over the past year or so we have renewed an excellent working relationship with the Ministry of Community and Social Services. On the other hand, much work is required with The Ministry of Corrections and Safety, one of the last places Chaplains are in the direct employ of the government, to re-establish a process of assessments and the ability to effect the planning of dates for the necessary changes which may be uncovered by these assessments.

Another key activity will be the rejuvenation of the Joint Committee, which I know the government is reviewing. Joint Committee activities have come to a halt for a number of reasons. My desire, during the time that the Committee was active, was to go back to the original makeup and have Assistant Deputy Ministers on the committee who could facilitate communication of spiritual and religious care issues to the Ministers.

Finally, in terms of the government, I'd like to go back to "political will." It has become patently obvious to me that for us to be successful we need to mount an effective education campaign with the MP's - specifically targeted to the Ministers and to the Premier. After all, they are the ones who make the decisions concerning issues that

involve us.

To get funding from private or philanthropic agencies requires another committee be struck to investigate and approach these institutions. Finally, we need to investigate how we might raise funds through our own activities such as holding special events. There is no end of possibilities here, but, as an organization of volunteers we need to target those opportunities that provide the greatest benefits for the amount of effort - otherwise we risk becoming dispersed in our efforts.

I am not one to remember everything that I have participated in with the OMC. In the past, especially, during my time in the corporate world, it was a necessary part of justifying one's existence. I've left that environment and feel quite comfortable for others to carry out those corporate functions. In a way, a corporate perspective for OMC is still required and, in this regard, there are others who are much more competent than me who will come forward to lead.

My message would not be complete if I did not offer my thanks to all who have supported me and helped me during this time. If there is one thing I've kept in mind is that I need others to accomplish anything. Consulting with, and getting others' opinions and ideas has certainly enriched any results. It's wonderful that others are willing to come forward and offer assistance. If I may put it in Buddhist terms, it is interdependence made visible. And while on this vein it is time for me to thank my spiritual guide Gen-la who has made all of my activity possible and any errors are definitely from my own ignorance.