

**Ontario Multifaith Council's
Spiritual & Religious Care Awareness Week**



October 19-25, 2015

Theme: Mental Health: Cultural and Religious Dynamics

207 - 3570 Victoria Park Avenue,
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Letter of Introduction

Spiritual and Religious Care Awareness Week: October 19 - 25, 2015 *“Mental Health: Cultural and Religious Dynamics”*



The Ontario population boasts multifaith diversity which challenges the needs of providing spiritual and religious care in provincial institutions. The Ontario Multifaith Council (OMC) promotes and engages in multifaith education to increase awareness in the provision of spiritual care and protection of religious rights.

OMC invites you to participate in our annual celebration on Spiritual & Religious Care Awareness Week (SRCAW), October 19 - 25, 2015. This year’s theme is *“Mental Health: Cultural and Religious Dynamics.”* SRCAW pays tribute to religious and spiritual care providers working in public, private, not-for-profit, academic and faith sectors and to the celebration of staff, families, and volunteers from the faith communities.

Each year, the government and non-for-profit institutions proclaim the importance of this celebration and that faith groups and their volunteers have a meaningful impact on the lives of the people of Ontario.

We are encouraging you to take time to celebrate with us as we continue to give recognition to the growth and appreciation of chaplains and others who give their time, effort and compassion offering spiritual and religious care.

If you have any questions, please contact us by email: omcsrc@omc.ca or call us directly at 416 422 1490. For more updates on this celebration, you may visit our website at www.omc.ca

Yours truly,


Pandit Roopnauth Sharma
President, OMC

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What is Spiritual & Religious Care Awareness Week?

Background

Spiritual and Religious Care Awareness Week celebrates the work of providers of Spiritual and Religious Care, and focuses our attention on the challenging work of these individuals and teams. The Ontario Multifaith Council provides free materials to help you to recognize the valuable work of your spiritual care providers during Spiritual and Religious Care Awareness Week.

Spiritual and religious care is provided in provincial institutions by spiritual and religious care providers, sometimes by social workers and Native Institutional Liaison Officers in hospitals, correctional centers, long-term care facilities, mental health centers, university campuses are among the many places where spiritual care is delivered by professionals and volunteers.

Why do we celebrate Spiritual Care Workers?

Spiritual and Religious Care Providers are among the least well-recognized caregivers in our communities. This is a week in which we reflect on the importance of those who provide Care of the Soul to people in distress.

What do they do?

- When you are scared, lonely, confused, angry or disillusioned, Spiritual and Religious Care Providers will listen, clarify and share your pain.
- A Spiritual and Religious Care Provider, or Chaplain, is a guide who offers spiritual direction in times of crisis, questions and wonderment.
- Your Spiritual and Religious Care Provider or Chaplain offers counselling and support, and when asked, will contact representatives from your own faith group to assist in your care and comfort.
- Your Spiritual and Religious Care Provider serves those of any faith, and those of no particular faith.

What is OMC?

The Ontario Multifaith Council on Spiritual and Religious Care (OMC) is a group of 30 faith groups who assist different levels of government and other institutions in discharging their duty to provide these services in all facilities and environments. The OMC provides authoritative guidelines, information and support to facilities, community programs, Chaplains, policymakers, and the general public.

How Can People Participate?

You can participate by contacting the Spiritual Care department, or the chaplain, of your local hospital, long-term care facility, prison, school, or community program, and offering your service. The Care of Souls is difficult but rewarding work, and can only be achieved through one human being stretching out a hand, and an ear, to another.

Celebration of Ideas

The Ontario Multifaith Council provides resources to help you to recognize the valuable work of chaplains and other spiritual and religious care providers during Spiritual and Religious Care Awareness Week. Let us know if your community organization, institution, faith community or yourself is interested in participating.

In a facility, institution or place of worship

- Prominently use the Spiritual & Religious Care Awareness Week poster
- Display pictures, literature, brochures and videos
- Sponsor a *Multifaith Spirituality Workshop*
- Celebrate a *Multifaith Meditation* with staff, residents and the community
- Offer a special blessing or service
- Host a tea or brunch for community faith groups
- Ask administrators to send a press release to local media announcing SRCA Week
- Dedicate or re-dedicate worship space
- Create an information display
- Send letters to faith groups inviting them to participate in Spiritual & Religious Care

For staff and volunteers

- Invite administrators and staff to a brief ceremony announcing the beginning of Spiritual & Religious Care Awareness Week
- Host an Open House - reception in the Spiritual Care Department
- A phone call to your institution, municipal or government offices and to request them for proclaiming of this week. Please forward the Proclamation – Sample (see page 12)
- Present letters of appreciation to staff and volunteers
- Present *Ontario Multifaith Council Appreciation Certificates* to volunteers

For yourself

- Discover prayer and worship in a new faith community
- Identify and research a faith group in your community
- Visit the OMC Library and research one faith tradition other than your own

Checklist

The materials in the package are intended to help you plan and celebrate Spiritual & Religious Care Awareness Week (SRCAW).

OMC Publications

OMC's President Letter

This document highlights SRCAW's goals and invites all stakeholders to join in the celebration and make it a grand success.

Celebration Ideas

This is an action plan and it helps you accomplish the goals and mission of the week.

Proclamation

Community partners, government bodies and any institution is welcome to use this proclamation in declaring Spiritual & Religious Care Awareness Week.

Volunteer Certificate

These certificates are designed to support your volunteer programs. A sample copy of the Certificate is provided in the package. Originals are available on request at a minimal cost for shipping.

Bibliography

This highlights some items in OMC's collection. If you are a member of the OMC, you may borrow these materials free of charge - but be certain to book them in advance in order to avoid disappointment.

Sample Press Release

Product Order Form *(found on the OMC website)*

Multifaith Screening Brochure *(found on the OMC website)*

Faith Symbols & Their Meanings

Feedback Form We value your opinions and suggestions.

Faith symbols and their meanings

Bahá'í: The Nine Pointed Star



A simple nine-pointed star is generally used by Bahá'ís as a symbol of their Faith. The number nine has significance in the Revelation. Nine years after the announcement of the Báb in Shiraz, Bahá'u'lláh received the intimation of His mission in the dungeon in Teheran. Nine, as the highest single-digit number, symbolizes completeness. Since the Bahá'í Faith claims to be the fulfillment of the expectations of all prior religions, this symbol, as used for example in nine-sided Bahá'í temples, reflects that sense of fulfillment and completeness."

Buddhism: The Dharma Wheel



The Dharma Wheel is the symbol of Buddhist life, the endless circle of birth and rebirth, and also represents the Buddhist teaching or Dharma. The Buddha's first sermon is called "Turning the Wheel of the Dharma." The wheel often has eight spokes, which stand for the noble Eightfold Path of Buddhism.

Christianity: The Cross



The Cross (sometimes known as 'the crucifix') is the main symbol of Christianity. It serves as a reminder of the sacrifice that Jesus made on the cross. It emphasizes not only his obedient suffering, undertaken for the salvation of humanity, but the power of his risen life.

Hinduism: The OM



The OM represents the letters A U M in Hindi, which is the sound of the sun. A – to create, U – to preserve, M – to destroy. The three letters represent the trinity of God in Hindu Dharma (Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva). They also represent the states of waking, dream and deep sleep and the three planes of existence: heaven, earth and the netherworld.

Islam: The Crescent Moon and Star



The crescent moon and star Although Islam has no symbol doctrinally associated with it, the symbol of the crescent moon and star (hلال in Arabic) is now widely used to symbolize Islam. This symbol has no religious significance in Islam and Muslims do not hold the crescent and star to be in any way holy or sacred. The crescent represents progress and the five pointed star, light and knowledge. The moon is also the appointed sign of times, seasons, fast and feast, and governs the Islamic calendar. The five points of the star can be taken to represent the five pillars of Islam, the essential elements of the Muslim faith.

Jainism



The comprehensive Jain symbol consists of a digit of the Moon, three dots, the Swastika or Om, the palm of a hand with the wheel (Chakra) inset, and outline figure which encompasses all symbols. Also each individual symbol is separately used in Jainism. The Palm of the hand signifies this assurance; 'do not be afraid' indicating that human beings, which are suffering due to karmic bondage, do not need to be disheartened. The Wheel of Dharma (Chakra) with 24 spokes represents the religion preached by the 24 Tirthankaras consists of nonviolence (Ahimsa) and other virtues. The three Dots represent the Jain path of liberation (Jain trinity): right faith, right knowledge, and right conduct, together lead to liberation. The digit of the Moon represents the region beyond the three worlds wherein reside the liberated souls. The Swastika signifies the cycles of births and deaths due to karma, in any of the four forms; heaven, human, tiryanch (animals, birds, and plants), and hell of the non-liberated souls. It reminds that one should follow the true religion and be liberated to get out of this suffering. The Om represents the salutation of five revered personalities of Jain religion.

Judaism: Star of David



Through the Jewish people's long and often difficult history, we have come to the realization that our only hope is to place our trust in God. The six points of the Star of David symbolize God's rule over the universe in all six directions: north, south, east, west, up and down. Originally, the Hebrew name Magen David -- literally "Shield of David" -- poetically referred to God. It acknowledges that our military hero, King David, did not win by his own might, but by the support of the Almighty. This is also alluded to in the third blessing after the Haftarah reading on Shabbat: "Blessed are you God, Shield of David."

Sikhism: The Khanda and the Chakkar



The Khanda is the insignia of the Sikh faith. The central doubled-edged sword, used by Guru Gobind Singh to prepare Amrit, is referred to as Khanda. It signifies divine strength, truth, freedom, justice, and the Sikh belief in One God. The inner circle, Chakkar, represents the Oneness of God who is without beginning or end, Oneness of humanity. This Chakkar was used by Sikhs as a war weapon against injustice and oppression. Guru Gobind Singh himself and all his Sikh warriors wore the Chakkar on their turbans as part of the battle dress. The Chakkar is surrounded by two swords call Kirpans which symbolise the twin concept of Miri (temporal sovereignty) and Piri (spiritual sovereignty) introduced by Guru Hargobind, to represent the equal emphasis that a Sikh must place on spiritual aspirations as well as on obligation to society.

Unitarian Universalism: The Flaming Chalice



Flaming Chalice is the official symbol of the UU Service Committee and the Unitarian Universalist Association. The flaming chalice combines two archetypes—a drinking vessel and a flame—and as a religious symbol has different meanings to different beholders. Officially or unofficially, it functions as a logo for hundreds of congregations. Perhaps most importantly, it has become a focal point for worship. No one meaning or interpretation is official. The flaming chalice, like our faith, stands open to receive new truths that pass the tests of reason, justice, and compassion.

Wicca: The Pentacle or Pentagram



The pentacle or pentagram is a five-point star surrounded by a circle. It is the symbol of the Wiccan faith, and represents the five elements: Air, Earth, Fire, Water and Spirit. The pentagram has long been associated with mystery and magic. It is the simplest form of star shape that can be drawn unicursally - with a single line - hence it is sometimes called the Endless Knot. It has long been believed to be a potent protection against evil and demons, hence a symbol of safety, and was sometimes worn as an amulet for happy homecoming. The old folk-song: "Green Grow the Rushes, O!" refers to the use of the pentagram above doors and windows in the line: "Five is the symbol at your door." The potency and associations of the pentagram have evolved throughout history. Today it is an ubiquitous symbol of neo-pagans with much depth of magical and symbolic meaning.

Zoroastrianism: The Faravahar, or Farohar



The Faravahar, or Farohar, is to remind one of the purpose of life on this earth, which is to live in such a way that the soul progresses spiritually and attains union with Ahura-Mazda (the Wise Lord); this state is called Frasho-kereti in Avesta. In the center of the figure is a circle which represents the soul of the individual. For the soul to evolve and progress, it has two wings. In each wing there are five layers of feathers. These remind one of the five jzhirums with which the soul is linked. To achieve the ultimate goal of reaching Ahura-Mazda, the soul has to pass through all the jzhirums. The five layers can also represent the five Divine Songs (Gathas) of Zarathustra, the five divisions of the day (Gehs), and the five senses of the human body. The head of the figure reminds us that Ahura-Mazda has given every soul a free will to choose either to obey divine universal natural laws or to disobey them.

Sample Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE (October 1, 2015)

Spiritual and Religious Care Awareness Week

<Community name> – October 1, 2015

<Name of facility or community> has designated October 19 - 25, 2015 as Spiritual and Religious Care Awareness Week. The theme for 2015, “Mental Health: Cultural and Religious Dynamics,” is to re-enforce our commitment to support and value the services offered by spiritual and religious providers.

Spiritual and Religious Care Awareness Week offers an opportunity to recognize the value of spiritual and religious care and to honour those who provide the care. Spiritual and religious care is about listening, clarifying and offering spiritual direction to those in need. When one is scared, lonely, confused, angry or disillusioned, spiritual and religious care providers offer counsel and support.

Across Ontario thousands of dedicated spiritual and religious care providers of all faiths work in specialized settings such as hospitals, long term care facilities, correctional facilities, mental health centres, and facilities for people with developmental disabilities.

During Spiritual and Religious Care Awareness Week facilities recognize the contributions of staff, families and faith community volunteers in providing the best care possible for residents and patients.

Spiritual and Religious Care Awareness Week is sponsored by the Ontario Multifaith Council. Ontario Multifaith Council is one of North America’s largest organizations dedicated to advocacy of spiritual care and the protection of religious rights. The activities of the Ontario Multifaith Council promote an environment of acceptance and respect amongst the diverse communities of Ontario. Each year the Ontario Multifaith Council provides Spiritual and Religious Care Awareness Week packages to individuals and facilities across the province to help celebrate this very special work.

For more information contact:

<Press contact for your facility>, <Your facility name><Phone number and email>

Note: For additional information on Spiritual and Religious Care Awareness Week around the province please visit www.omc.ca

Request for Proclamation

OMC encourages people to send the letter below to their local municipal, regional, provincial and federal government protocol office and to other non-profits to request they proclaim Spiritual & Religious Care Awareness Week during October 19 - 25, 2015.



<Date>

Dear Community Partner <Provincial *Municipal Government / Non-Government* >



Re: Proclamation for Spiritual & Religious Care Awareness Week October 19 - 25, 2015



The Ontario Multifaith Council (OMC) is a registered, non-profit, charitable organization representing a wide-range of faith groups in the province of Ontario. The OMC is comprised of representatives from 30 faith groups with 185 Regional Multifaith Committee members throughout Ontario who give support to our vision and mandate.



OMC is dedicated to the promotion and facilitation of equal access to adequate and appropriate spiritual care and religious accommodation for persons in government operated/funded institutions and organizations, in context with the Ontario Human Rights Code. OMC initiates and organizes an annual celebration of Spiritual and Religious Care Awareness Week (SRCAW) which provides an opportunity to recognize the value and dedication of Spiritual and Religious Service Providers of all faiths who work in specialized settings such as, hospitals, long-term care facilities, mental health centres and correctional facilities.



We are asking that consideration be given for SRCAW to be proclaimed throughout Canada during the week of October 19 - 25, 2015. This year's theme is "Mental Health: Cultural and Religious Dynamics". Spiritual and Religious Care is supported through the Human Rights Code not only in the province of Ontario but throughout the mosaic of Canada. Regardless of age, race, social or political standing, whether interfaith or multifaith, the celebration of SRCAW gives support to those who provide and receive Spiritual and Religious care.



It is our hope that your response to our request will be positive. We would be most pleased to provide any additional information that is required to enable you to process our request.



Sincerely



Pandit Roopnauth Sharma, OMC President

Proclamation - Sample

PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS across Canada there is concern about the necessary and important place of spirituality in the provision of care in hospitals, long term care facilities, correctional settings, mental health centres and facilities for people with intellectual disabilities, AND

WHEREAS the need for and work of dedicated, qualified and competent spiritual and religious caregivers in society and particularly in our provincial institutions of care needs to be officially recognized and applauded, AND

WHEREAS the multicultural mosaic of Canada demands diversity in the provision of spiritual and religious care and the protection of religious rights, this unique provincial phenomenon, having been recognized and provided for by the Ontario Multifaith Council, AND

WHEREAS throughout the province there will be a celebration of SPIRITUAL AND RELIGIOUS CARE AWARENESS WEEK during October 19 - 25, 2015.

THEREFORE be it resolved that the (name of municipality, e.g. City of Cornwall) join with other like-minded political jurisdictions in the Province of Ontario (or the name of the province, region) and declare the week of October 19 - 25, 2015 as Spiritual and Religious Care Awareness Week and to support all local observances pertaining thereto.

Ontario Multifaith Council
Mental Health: Cultural and Religious Dynamics

Bibliography

While the following online materials are available from the OMC Library, however, OMC is not responsible for the content nor does it necessarily endorse the points of view presented.

These are copyrighted materials, listed for educational purpose. Request a link to the full text from The Multifaith Library ☐ (416) 422-1490; ☐ omcsrc@omc.ca

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<p>The Ontario Multifaith Council on Spiritual and Religious Care develops and makes available Multifaith resource materials for religious and spiritual caregivers, educators, and others.</p> <p>Ask: omcsrc@omc.ca</p>	
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