



THE ECUMENICAL CHAPLAINCY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

CALLING OUR FRIENDS

Fall 2024 Volume 19

From the Chaplains

ECUT Fall Gala, November 6, 2024



Chaplain Rev. Tim Kennedy

As we enter Advent, a time marked by hope and anticipation, we reflect on the transformative power of faith, community, and compassion. Advent is not only a season of waiting for the light of Christ but also an opportunity for each of us to share that light with the world around us. ECUT is dedicated to walking alongside students, staff, and faculty, offering spiritual care, a compassionate ear, and a place of refuge in the midst of academic and personal challenges. Through pastoral care, interfaith dialogue, worship, prayer, spiritual practice, student leadership development, and community meals, we create a welcoming space where all individuals can feel supported, nourished, and valued. Your partnership is essential in bringing God's hope and healing to our campus and we are deeply grateful for your continued support.



Rev. Ralph Carl Wushke



Sonal Castelino and Tim Kennedy

In a crowded room filled with friends and supporters, ECUT was thrilled to celebrate Rev. Ralph Carl Wushke's legacy in campus ministry and launch a fundraising campaign to keep our campus ministry going. Over 100 people gathered at St. Andrew's Church to celebrate with ECUT at the fall gala!

Honourary co-chairs of the ECUT fundraising campaign, Rev. Mardi Tindal and Rev. Daniel Cho, opened the evening by welcoming everyone and sharing their reflections on why campus chaplaincy, and particularly queer positive chaplaincy, is needed and vital on campuses.

The heart of the evening was honouring Ralph Carl's legacy in supporting queer students and building queer friendly spiritual spaces was highlighted in the tributes. Adonica Huggins, Student Life Coordinator, Academic and Peer Programs at U of T, talked about Ralph Carl's founding of Qu(e)rying Religion, *"as a way to ...make sense of 'home' in the context of queer sexuality, gendered realities, race, kinship, faith, land, belonging - and nonbelonging. QR offered me and many others regular opportunities for engaging in text reading, spoken word, film, music, visual art, and most importantly conversations with diverse queer folks...so many students, staff and faculty have benefited from his continuing commitment to diverse 2SLGBTQIA+ communities"*.

ECUT Fall Gala....

Former student Elliot Gunn described Ralph Carl as connector, spiritual guide, and a launchpad. Elliot's story: *"I first met Ralph Carl years ago as an undergrad at U of T, wrestling with being gay and Christian. I knew there was no path in which I would abandon God, but the things I had been doing to repress my identity were starting to fail me. I felt increasingly tormented and thought I might need to take a break from school just to figure things out. Then I found a Bible study Ralph Carl led... This was the first place in my life where I felt safe to ask questions as a Christian. On a campus as large as U of T, where many students feel subsumed by the scale of classes and the pressure cooker of competition, Ralph Carl carved out space for a group of students to feel less alone. Two years later, when I came out as gay, I no longer worried as much about what other Christians thought about me. I knew where I stood in Christ."*

ECUT also launched "Together We Grow, a \$200,000 fundraising campaign to continue this legacy of building a vibrant, diverse and inclusive Christian community on campus. The money raised during this campaign will support programming, equitable staff salaries and the development of our new Student Ministry Team.



Inkloosiv Voices Gospel Choir

The evening closed with the beautiful harmonies of the Inkloosiv Voices, an R and B gospel choir that celebrates inclusion and diversity. By the end, the choir had everyone in the room loudly singing along, "It will get better, God is in control" If you'd like to hear more, check them out:

<https://www.instagram.com/p/DCPPd2lv3bh/>

After the gala, Ralph Carl shared this reflection: *"Deep thanks to everyone who made the sold-out ECUT gala and the legacy award on Nov. 6 possible. Daniel Cho's story about a gay college classmate "Eric", pulled at my heartstrings. Fifty years ago, I was a first-year seminarian, aching to come out. Like "Eric" I was afraid, but the need for acceptance trumped my fear. During my internship in fall 1976 a trusted campus chaplain, the late Don Johnson from UBC, gave me an opening at a pastors' retreat. With tears of catharsis I spoke the words, "I am a homosexual" for the first time. Pastor Don's acceptance was immediate and unconditional. My fear of rejection was allayed; the path of life and ministry seemed easier. Campus ministry for me has always been about "giving back". My coming out to a university chaplain was repeated by many queer and trans students who risked coming out to me in my years as ECUT chaplain. It's impossible to quantify the difference those conversations made in their lives. This spring one of those students – now a professional who has followed his dream – treated me to breakfast to thank me again. Your support makes this kind of life changing ministry by the ECUT chaplains possible. Thank-you!"*

ECUT thanks all who helped to plan the gala, all who attended, all who donated, and all who continue to support ECUT with prayer and financial generosity. It was a night to remember, and we are grateful!



Enjoying the Fall Gala

Grateful to Our Friends

Many thanks to the following donors and sponsors who contributed to ECUT **from January 1- December 1, 2024**. ECUT is a CRA registered charity (884133315RR001). We do our best to acknowledge all donations received, let us know if your name is missing. (* Monthly donations through PAR or Canada Helps)

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In May 2024, ECUT received a grant from "The C. Jean Moore Endowment Fund of the United Church of Canada Foundation." This Seeds of Hope grant provides paid internships to two students in the areas of ecology and spirituality and social justice and inclusion. ECUT is partnering with St. Mike's Campus Ministry to support these two students.

Empowering Student Leaders: A New Era in Campus Ministry!



*Back: (L-R): Tim Kennedy, David Knox, Catherine Bergs, James Aitchison, Nic da Silva
Front: (L-R): Cindy Wu, Christina Kim, Linda Endicott, Jeanette Unger*



Chloe Kim, ECUT student leader, at gala

In June 2022, the Ecumenical Chaplaincy at the University of Toronto (ECUT) adopted a three-year strategic plan aimed at building a vibrant and inclusive Christian community where all students feel embraced and have the opportunity to grow in their love of God and neighbour. A key component of this plan was the formation of a **Student Ministry Team**, with a focus on developing student leadership and empowering these leaders to shape and guide our ministry on campus.

We are thrilled to announce that this vision has become a reality. This year, we celebrated the launch of our dynamic, new **Student Ministry Team**, which comprises **eight passionate student ministers**. These student leaders gather weekly to plan, organize, and lead ministry programs directly with students on campus. These student leaders are at the forefront of the ministry's initiatives, from worship and prayer to spiritual practices, Bible study, and community gatherings.

The Student Ministry Team's contributions extend beyond these essential ministries of personal discipleship to include ministries of concern for our community and world. Student leaders are deeply involved in facilitating discussions around eco-spirituality, social justice, inclusion, and queer interfaith conversations, enriching the spiritual life of the campus with diverse perspectives and experiences. Their leadership is not only about developing spiritual practices but also includes creating an environment where students can engage with one another, grow in discipleship, and make a meaningful impact in their communities.

As we continue to build momentum, we are excited to announce plans to draft an official organizational constitution and seek recognition as a student organization at the University of Toronto in the coming year. This is a critical step in ensuring that the Student Ministry Team and ECUT's overall strategic mission will continue to flourish and impact future generations of students.

The Student Ministry Team represents the heart of ECUT's growth and evolution, and we are deeply grateful for the dedication and vision these students bring to our campus ministry. Their leadership is a testament to the power of student-driven ministry, and we are excited to witness the ways in which they will continue to shape and enrich our community life together.