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EXERCISE/EXERCICE NEW HORIZONS

"Caring for All – The Challenges for Chaplaincy in a Multi-faith Military"

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Abstract

Military chaplains are called to serve all members of the Canadian Forces, as well as their families, and to provide each one with spiritual, religious, moral, and ethical support. With the increasing diversity of the Forces and the accompanying new opportunities and challenges that chaplains are facing each day, it is more essential than ever that they be able to minister effectively and enthusiastically in a pluralistic environment.   By examining some of the gaps in the education, selection, and training of chaplains, and describing various challenges that may confront them in today's military, this paper will demonstrate the necessity for the Chaplain Branch to adopt or develop its own means to ensure that all chaplains have the necessary understanding, training and desire to work in multi-faith ministry.

As chaplains we accept the responsibility to minister in the n

human beings."[3] The reality of day to day work for most military chaplains is that they must strive to find that balance between a deep and fulfilling commitment to their own faith while demonstrating sincere respect for people whose lives are based on distinctly different beliefs.   Although providing truly effective ministry in a multi-faith environment is possibly one of the more challenging responsibilities confronting chaplains, and one to which the Chaplain Branch is paying increasing attention, it is this writer's opinion that insufficient care is being taken to ensure that chaplains are fully trained and uniformly motivated to attend to this task. This paper will argue, therefore, that the Chaplain Branch must adopt or develop means to ensure that all chaplains can acquire and demonstrate the necessary basic knowledge and professional willingness to provide ministry within a religiously pluralistic military community.

As each subject tends to have its own language, this paper will begin with a brief exploration of some of the terminology that will be used in the discussion. Then, although all the roles and responsibilities of military chaplains will not be discussed in detail, a brief personal account will be offered to illustrate a couple of the challenges and opportunities that chaplains are currently facing in their exercise of ministry.   Following that, the focus will become more futuristic, looking at changing religious demographics and the opportunities for ministry that await chaplains who can work competently in an increasingly multi-faith environment. Issues around recruitment and retention, the changing military culture, and operational deployments will be explored in order to demonstrate the increasing necessity for the Canadian Forces to have appropriately

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[3] Marc Gopin, *Between Eden and Armageddon: The Future of World Religions, Violence, and Peacemaking* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 202.

qualified chaplains. Having identified ways in which chaplains could be engaged in ministry, the paper will look at the desire and ability of the Chaplain Branch to respond to these multi-faith issues. This segment will include an overview of current Branch multi-faith activity and identify gaps in education, selection, and training which confront the Branch in its efforts to fulfill its mission. Finally, although the primary focus of this paper is to identify the problem, not to formulate the solution, the final paragraphs will look at lessons the Branch might learn from an agency that has been engaged in multi-faith ministry for many years.

In beginning a discussion of chaplaincy in a multi-faith or religiously pluralistic military community, it is important to clarify some of the terms to be used. Christian organizations normally use the term "ecumenical" only when referring to dialogue or activities that involve two or more Christian denominations. Groups and organizations, such as the Ontario Multifaith Council[4] and the Interfaith Committee on Canadian Military Chaplaincy, will use the terms "interfaith" and "multi-faith" to indicate their mandate or desire to include non-Christian faiths; thus, an interfaith dialogue or a multi-faith gathering would generally indicate that the dialogue or gathering involved Christians and members of one or more other faith groups. Unlike these terms which simply indicate the existence of other faith communities, "the issue of religious pluralism has surfaced as an intellectual and practical response to the religious diversity of our

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[4] Although neither the spelling of word "multifaith" as is contained in the title of this organization nor that of "multi-faith" as is used elsewhere throughout the paper are contained in The Canadian Oxford Dictionary (Oxford University Press Canada, 2001), in most of the literature writers use the hyphen. In this paper "multi-faith" will be used except in direct quotation or in the title of this organization.

world."[5] Pluralism, like exclusivity and inclusivity, speaks to a view one holds of other

faith groups. These three terms can be thought of as three points along a spectrum:

> The first is exclusivism, the attitude that one religious cultural system is valid and all others are invalid, even if they might be right minded and sincere. Midway is inclusivism, the view that one religious system is certainly valid while certain other, but not all, systems share partially and imperfectly in that valid system. Thirdly, there is religious pluralism. It holds that all existing religious cultures are valid. They differ simply because they employ variant symbolisations of ultimate order, providing alternative foci, and so relate the individual to ultimate order by a different route.[6]

In light of these definitions, one can see that the religious diversity within Canada's

current military community can appropriately be referred to as either multi-faith or

pluralistic. "In accordance with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the

Canadian Human Rights Act, the policy of the Canadian Forces is to accommodate the

fundamental religious requirements of its members."[7] In offering this accommodation to

all members, irrespective of their religious affiliation, the military is, in effect,

recognizing that by composition the Canadian Forces is multi-faith, and by policy and

custom it is to be religiously pluralistic.

The chaplains who are currently providing pastoral care and spiritual leadership

within Canada's military community are frequently confronted by situations that require

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[5] Mahmut Aydin, "Religious Pluralism: A Challenge for Muslims-A Theological Evaluation," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* (2001) [journal on-line]; available from http://www.questia.com/; Internet; accessed 24 April 2004.

[6] Robert Crotty and Shirley Wurst, "Religious Education in a Religiously Pluralist Society," (Australian Association for Research in Education, 1998 Annual Conference) [on-line]; available from http://www.aare.edu.au/98pap/cro98119.htm; Internet; accessed 29 April 2004.

[7] Department of National Defence, *Religions in Canada* (Ottawa: Directorate of Military Gender Integration and Employment Equity, March 2003) i.

sensitivity and knowledge in multi-faith issues. A typical situation, based on personal

experience, occurred while this writer was serving as a chaplain in Bosnia-Herzegovina

on 11 September 2001. Following the news of the tragedies in New York and

Washington, the first person to seek out spiritual support from the chaplain was an

individual whom the chaplain knew to be a devote Wiccan, that is to say a member of one

of the pagan religions. How could a Christian chaplain help another from a vastly

different faith community struggle with the emotional and spiritual challenges of that

moment? Furthermore, three days later, at the request of the Commanding Officer, this

chaplain led a memorial service so that all within the camp, military and civilian, might

have an opportunity to reflect and pray. Attending that service were about three hundred

people of many religious backgrounds, including a large number of the locally engaged

employees. Most, if not all, of these civilian employees were Muslim. This personal

example is not unlike the many challenges all military chaplains face each day

throughout Canada and around the world, and one can easily predict that those challenges

will occur even more frequently in the future.

The Statistics Canada information contained below in Table 1 reveals that the

number of Canadians who identify with non-Christian faith groups has been steadily

increasing since 1981.[8] Based on these figures and their own research, the Ontario

Consultants for Religious Tolerance estimate that, "by the time of the next census, non-

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[8] Statistics Canada, *Population by Religion*, Catalogue # 93-319-XPB [on-line]; available from http://www.statcan.ca/english/Pgdb/demo30a.htm; Internet; accessed 24 April 2004. Note: The 2001 and 1991 figures used in compilation of the table were available on this site on the date accessed; the 1981 were originally downloaded from this site but are no longer available on line.

Christians will probably exceed the number of Protestants in the country."[9] Further

evidence of the growth of non-Christian faith groups in Canada is offered by Dr.

Reginald Bibby who has been monitoring religious trends in Canada for thirty years.[10] In

2002, he reported that "since 1980 there has been a growing tendency for teenagers to

identify with a range of religious groups."[11] His figures, offered in Table 2, show that

identification with Roman Catholic and Protestant communities has declined among

teenagers to a greater extent than the Canadian average, while other faith groups have

shown almost a five-fold increase. This demographic change among the youth is of

particular significance for the military which focuses great attention on recruitment from

that population. The logical conclusion from this cursory look at the figures is that

Canada's military is bound to become increasingly more culturally and religiously

diverse.

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[9] Ontario Consultants for Religious Tolerance, *Census and Polling Information about Religion in Canada* [on-line]; available from http://www.religioustolerance.org/can_rel.htm; Internet; accessed 24 April 2004.

[10] Reginald W. Bibby, *Restless Gods: The Renaissance of Religion in Canada* (Toronto: Stoddart Publishing Co. Limited, 2002), 3.

[11] *Ibid*., 86.

Canadian Population by Religion, 1981-2001 Source: Statistics Canada			
	1981	**1991**	**2001**
Catholic	47.3%	45.7%	43.6%
Protestant	41.2%	36.2%	29.2%
Christian not included elsewhere	4.9%	7.9%	2.6%
Islam	0.4%	0.9%	2.0%
Buddhist	0.2%	0.6%	1.0%
Hindu	0.3%	0.6%	1.0%
Sikh	0.3%	0.5%	0.9%
Eastern Orthodox	1.5%	1.4%	1.6%
Jewish	1.2%	1.2%	1.1%
Para-religious groups	0.1%	0.1%	
Eastern religions			0.1%
Other religions	0.1%	0.1%	0.2%
No religious affiliation	7.4%	12.5%	16.5%

Table 1

Religious Identification of Teens, 1984-2000 Source: Bibby, Project Teen Canada survey series			
	1984	**1992**	**2000**
Catholic	51%	41%	39%
Protestant	35%	28%	22%
United	10%	4%	3%
Anglican	8%	5%	3%
Baptist	3%	2%	2%
Lutheran	2%	1%	1%
Pentecostal	2%	1%	1%
Presbyterian	2%	1%	1%
Other/Unspecified	8%	13%	11%
Other Faiths	3%	10%	14%
Muslim	<1%	1%	3%
Jewish	1%	1%	2%
Buddhist	<1%	1%	2%
Other/Unspecified	2%	7%	7%
No Religion	12%	21%	25%

Table 2

Many chaplains have recognized that the Chaplain Branch must be prepared to respond to the changes in Canada's religious demographics. In June 2002, the Chaplain General reminded the chaplains: "The ethnic and religious make up of the CF is changing

and will continue to do so in the years ahead. As a Branch we have a responsibility and

an opportunity to play a leading role in this change."[12] A year later the same Chaplain

General, after announcing that the Branch had recruited its first Muslim chaplain

informed the Branch: "We have chosen to lead in this endeavour rather than be led by

political expediency or policy. We believe it is the right thing to do."[13] The Chaplain

General's words make it clear that, in addition to responding to a changing environment,

individual chaplains are being challenged to provide valuable leadership in helping the

broader military community address the changing Canadian religious demographic.

One area in which chaplains should be providing leadership is in that of

recruitment and retention of service members from non-Christian faith groups. In a

research note prepared for the Directorate of Land Strategic Concepts, Brigadier-General

(Retired) Ernest B. Beno and Colonel (Retired) John D. Joly investigated the

demographic changes noted above.[14] Their research underlined that the traditional

recruiting base for military members from among "the two founding cultures"[15] is

lessening due to both the aging of that population and the proportional increase of "the

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[12] Commodore T.A. Maindonald, "Chaplain General's 2002 Annual Address to Chaplain Branch" (Cornwall, Ontario, 12 June 2002), 7. (Note: Used with permission. A copy of this speech and accompanying slides are available through the Office of the Chaplain General)

[13] Commodore T.A. Maindonald, "Chaplain General's 2003 Annual Address to Chaplain Branch" (Cornwall, Ontario, 11 June 2003), np. (Note: Used with permission. A copy of this speech and accompanying slides are available through the Office of the Chaplain General)

[14] Department of National Defence, Director of Land Strategic Concepts DLSC Research Note 0001, "Sustainment Capabilities for the Army of the Future" by Brigadier-General (Retired) Ernest B. Beno and Colonel (Retired) John D. Joly (Kingston, Ontario, March 2000), 23.

[15] *Ibid.*, 23.

multicultural elements of society."[16] One implication of these findings was addressed in

the 2002-2003 Chief of Defence Staff's Annual Report: "To support its recruiting and

retention efforts, the CF must also do more to reach out to a broader base of Canadians

and encourage greater diversity within the Forces."[17] The question is how best to

accomplish this task. Although the Beno/Joly report indicated that their are no "simple

'cookie-cutter' solutions",[18] it is logical to assume that a greater understanding of the

expectations and traditions of Canada's multicultural groups would enhance both the

ability to recruit from these groups and address significant issues that would aid in their

retention. Chaplains who are accepting and knowledgeable of other faith groups could

certainly assist and provide leadership in these areas.

Although the Canadian Forces does not provide a detailed breakdown of the

religious affiliation of serving military members, the unofficial estimate provided in the

far right column of Table 3 would suggest that not only is the number of Canadians from

non-Christian faith groups serving in the military quite small, but also, proportionally,

other faith groups are less well represented in the military than are Christians. As the

efforts directed by the Chief of Defence Staff to enhance diversity within the Canadian

Forces begin to produce results, the number of personnel from non-Christian faith groups

can be expected to increase substantially. Chaplains will have to be prepared to respond.

An increase in the number of non-Christian members will certainly involve more frequent

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[16] *Ibid*., 23.

[17] Department of National Defence, *A Time for Transformation: Annual Report of the Chief of the Defence Staff 2002-2003* (Ottawa: Director General Public Affairs, 2003), 25.

[18] DLSC Research Note 0001, 23.

pastoral situations involving service members or members of their families whose faith backgrounds are distinctly different than that of the chaplain. But that is not the only challenge. "Faith, however personal, invariably has a pronounced social and cultural dimension. To be raised Baptist or United or Catholic or Mormon is to acquire a religious identity which is accompanied by ideas and ways of expressing faith that one sees as normative."[19] As the religious composition of the military community continues to change, it is logical to assume that so too will the military's social and cultural dimension. Not only must chaplains be prepared to respond to these changes, they, in addition to others who are aware of and sensitive to cultural and religious issues, can also provide leadership in addressing current military customs and traditions that are barriers to the effective incorporation of non-Christians into military units.

	Statistics Canada (*Summary of Table 1*)			Unofficial estimate of currently serving CF members by religion[20]
	1981	**1991**	**2001**	**Feb-03**
Catholic	47.3%	45.7%	43.6%	52.98%
Other Christian	46.1%	44.1%	31.8%	33.23%
Other Faiths	4.1%	5.40%	7.90%	2.65%
No religious affiliation	7.4%	12.5%	16.5%	11.14%

Table 3

As the military community becomes more diverse, one can expect that not everyone is going to greet the accompanying cultural changes with enthusiasm. Chaplains who are trained and comfortable working in a pluralistic community can be

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[19] Bibby, *Restlesss Gods …,* 34.

[20] Note: Since the mid-1990's the Canadian Forces no longer regularly compiles a detailed breakdown of the religious affiliation of Canadian Forces members. The figures in the far right column are, at best, a rough approximation compiled by the Director of Chaplain Policy in February 2003; they are based on the religious information service members provided when requesting identification disks. It is this writer's understanding that the Office of the Chaplain General is working to obtain more accurate and official statistics through the offices of the Assistant Deputy Minister (Human Resources – Military).

valuable assets in responding to the tensions that will occur. This need for leadership and

guidance in accepting change was evident recently within the Chaplain Branch itself. In

a Branch that now includes a non-Christian chaplain and which is mandated to provide

ministry to all irrespective of their faith group affiliation, it seemed to this writer and

others that it was both appropriate and necessary to change the Branch March from

"Onward Christian Soldiers" to a more pluralistically appropriate piece of music. This

small change was met with significant opposition from a number of service members,

including some chaplains. Critics objected on a range of issues but primarily they saw

the change as over-zealous political correctness and an unwarranted denial of Branch

heritage to accommodate a very small portion of the military community.[21] Undoubtedly,

the military community will need to deal with many more of these types of situations as

its diversity becomes more pronounced. Informed, supportive chaplains should be

among the obvious choices to assist in mediating the conflicts that will certainly arise.

The last three paragraphs addressed ways in which chaplains who are

competent in multi-faith issues can assist and lead in changes internal to the military

community. There is also a more externally focused area where a chaplain's awareness

of other faiths could significantly assist a military unit fulfill its mission in many of the

world's conflict situations. In a paper first presented at a Harvard University symposium

on religion's role in conflict resolution, John Dawson addressed the issue of

reconciliation: "There are no rules except the obvious one: study the other party and

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[21] Note: As this writer was intimately involved with the project to change the Chaplain Branch March, this account is based solely on a personal recollection of events.

respond appropriately."[22]   Although this may be a grand over-simplification of a complex

issue, it does underline the importance of understanding the people and the issues

involved before attempting to find or impose a solution. As the following quote attests,

religion, although often a negative factor in conflict, offers an immense array of resources

that could be used for peace building:

> Through our long human history, religion has been a major contributor to war,
> bloodshed, hatred, and intolerance. Yet religion has also developed laws and ideas
> that have provided civilization with cultural commitments to critical peace related
> values, including empathy, an openness to and even love for strangers, the
> suppression of unbridled ego and acquisitiveness, human rights, unilateral
> gestures of forgiveness and humility, interpersonal repentance and the acceptance
> of responsibility for past errors as a means of reconciliation, and the drive for
> social justice.[23]

At a Command Consultative Advisory Group meeting in 2002, Lieutenant-

General M.K. Jeffery was recorded as saying, "The nature of the security framework is in

transformation. Conflicts may be more among criminals and religious groups than nation

states – as in the Middle Ages. We may be entering a century of surprises."[24]   Later in the

same meeting, he reported that "[w]e are now seeing the three-block war: combat; peace

and stability; and humanitarianism."[25]   Whether religious differences are at the root of a

conflict or merely hijacked by political and military leaders to motivate people to a

desired end, those who are called to deal with the conflict must be prepared to recognize

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[22] John Dawson, "Hatred's End," in *Forgiveness and Reconciliation: Religion, Public Policy, and Conflict Resolution*, ed. Raymond G. Helmick, and Rodney L. Petersen (Philadelphia: Templeton Foundation Press, 2001), 244.

[23] Gopin, *Between Eden …*, 13.

[24] Department of National Defence, Command Consultative and Advisory Group, *Record of Discussion*, 5 May 2002, (Item 10), 3.

[25] *Ibid*., (Item 16), 4.

and respond to the religious issues involved. Indeed, as the following quote suggests, religion may even become part of the solution:

> Rarely do diplomats or conflict resolution experts currently engage religious groups on their own terms and dynamically interact with their categories of thinking in order to produce a greater commitment to coexistence and peacemaking. But the effort may produce important benefits that have eluded international diplomacy until now.[26]

Chaplains who value the significance of faith and recognize the importance of religious traditions in the lives of people can be ideally placed as resources to military units that are engaged in humanitarian or peace and stability operations, especially where religion has become one of the elements of the conflict. If Lieutenant-General Jeffery is correct in his assessment that we are entering a century of surprises, one of those surprises may be the significant role that qualified chaplains can play in assisting religious communities bring positive resolution to some of the world's conflicts.

The issues addressed above are not news to the Chaplain Branch. In fact, the Chaplain General spoke to many of these issues in 2002 when he addressed the Chaplain Branch at its annual gathering in Cornwall, Ontario, saying:

> One particular area that we have to be more deliberate in addressing is that of interfaith ministry…. What this will mean for the face of the Branch is uncertain, but we are dedicated to ensure that all members of the CF can expect to find spiritual leadership and pastoral support provided to them by a professional and inclusive Chaplain Branch.[27]

Over recent years several activities have demonstrated this intent. Care was taken to involve spiritual leaders from several non-Christian faith groups during the ceremony in

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[26] Gopin, *Between Eden …,* 28.

[27] Maindonald, Chaplain General's 2002…, 7.

May 2000 for the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier[28] and again in 2001 for the dedication of

the National Military Cemetery.[29] During 2002, the Chaplain General established an

Interfaith Advisory Committee, with representatives from the Christian, Muslim, and

Jewish communities, to assist the Branch in becoming more aware of and sensitive to

issues relating to the pluralism of the military community.[30] Also in 2002, the Branch

became the process which led to the enrolment of Imam Suleyman Demiray as the first

Muslim chaplain to ever serve in the Canadian Forces.[31] Furthermore the Branch adopted

a new vision statement in 2003, incorporating a pluralistic tone in the following words:

> As men and women of God, endorsed and supported by their religious authorities,
> the Canadian Forces Chaplain Branch is dedicated to the provision of spiritual,
> religious, moral, and ethical support to the Canadian Forces and their families at
> all times and under all circumstances, irrespective of religious belief or practice.[32]

Although the incidents mentioned exemplify the intent of the senior leadership of

the Chaplain Branch to positively address the military's religious pluralism, they do not

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[28] Note: Although many can remember the new coverage of this event showing the Chaplain General walking alone in front of the casket, for the 24 hours leading up to the service the Chaplain Branch had coordinated a vigil around the casket in which members of many faith communities were asked to participate. Further information is available at http://www.vac-acc.gc.ca/general/sub.cfm?source=Memorials/tomb/thetomb.

[29] Note: Even though the Chaplain General acted as the sole representative of Canada's religious communities during the formal military opening ceremony, representatives of eight faith groups came together at the cemetery a week early with members of the Chaplain Branch to consecrate or dedicate the grounds, each according to his/her own tradition. Further information is available at http://www.waramps.ca/military/memorials/nmc.html.

[30] Note: During the annual Chaplain General address to all chaplains in June 2003, he spoke of the creation and work of this Advisory Committee and encouraged all Area and Formation chaplains to create local Advisory Committees to assist them in their areas of responsibility.

[31] Note: Although this item is based on personal recollection, further information can be found in a Canadian Forces News Release, *First Muslim Chaplain for the Canadian Forces*, NR-03.137, [database on-line]; available from http://www.forces.gc.ca/site/newsroom/view_news_e.asp?id=1280; Internet; accessed 29 April 2004.

[32] Department of National Defence, A-CG-001-000/JD-000 *Canadian Forces Chaplain Branch Manual* (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2003), reproduced [CD-ROM], Chapter 2, para 1.

guarantee that the individual chaplains throughout the Forces have the appropriate

knowledge or personal desire to engage in the multi-faith ministry that may be required

of them. Major Baxter Park, in a short article published in 2003, expressed his belief that

there are serving chaplains who are exclusivists, believing that salvation is "achieved

only through the personal acceptance of Jesus as our Lord and Saviour,"[33] others who are

inclusivists holding that "it is possible for a devout follower of another faith to have been

saved by Jesus,"[34] and some who are pluralists in that they accept that "all religions are

different paths to God."[35] For some, especially those who would be considered

exclusivists, it can be extremely difficult to provide the ministry required within a

pluralistic military community.   Numerous conversations and situations experienced by

this writer during recent years would support Major Park's assessment and demonstrate

that religious pluralism can prove to be a tremendous challenge for many currently

serving chaplains. This should not be surprising; as expressed in the following quotation,

religious faith is not always conducive to religious co-operation or tolerance:

> Religions provide individuals and groups with a sense of identity, a place in the
> universe, oriented to some notion of a special reality, truth, or authority
> considered ultimate in some sense. In so doing, they foster a sense of group
> feeling that motivates not only behavior important to personal and social
> integration (cooperation, sharing, mutual respect, altruism) but also behavior that
> draws lines between an "us" (the in-group), who have the truth, know the good,
> and live rightly; and "them" (the out-group), who do not share these
> characteristics, or at least not fully.[36]

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[33] Maj (the Rev Canon) Baxter Park, "Religious Pluralism and the Chaplaincy in Canada," in
Department of National Defence, A-CG-007-000/AF-001 *The Ecumenical Model of Ministry in the
Canadian Forces Chaplain Branch* (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2003), 117.

[34] *Ibid*., 117.

[35] *Ibid*., 117.

[36] Sumner B. Twiss and Bruce Grelle, eds., *Explorations in Global Ethics: Comparative Religious
Ethics and Interreligious Dialogue*, (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998), 156.

One of the realities which can lead to difficulty in offering ministry in a pluralistic environment is that those called to ministry as chaplains are not necessarily educated with a view to working outside their faith group, or even their own Christian denomination. For example, in examining the course requirements for students at the Atlantic School of Theology in Halifax for the current year, one notes that there are no required courses during the normal three-year Masters of Divinity program that clearly address multi-faith issues.[37] Although the mission statement of the school includes "encouraging openness to other faith traditions"[38] as one of its nine elements, it would appear that candidates for ministry could complete the required program without formal training in this subject. At Concordia Lutheran Seminary in Edmonton, candidates for ministry in the Masters of Divinity program only have one optional course, "Christian Encounter with World Religions," which is available for students who might be interested in multi-faith work.[39] Although these are but two of the many seminaries and divinity schools through which currently serving chaplains have been trained, their lack of required courses in the area of multi-faith ministry would seem to be typical. In a 2003 article about multi-faith education in seminaries in Great Britain, Sophie Gilliat-Ray expressed concern about the lack attention given the topic. She found that "[t]he subject of religious diversity now competes for a place on an already over crowded syllabus."[40] Although some candidates

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[37] Atlantic School of Theology, *2003-2004 Official Calendar of Atlantic School of Theology* [pdf version on-line]; available from http://astheology.ns.ca/studCalendar.htm; Internet; accessed 24 April 2004, 13-14.

[38] *Ibid*., 2.

[39] Concordia Lutheran Seminary, "Masters of Divinity Program" [on-line]; available from http://www.concordiasem.ab.ca/; Internet; accessed 24 April 2004.

for ministry may choose to advance their education in this area, it cannot be assumed by the Chaplain Branch that all applicants for enrolment as chaplains would have done so.

Some might argue that the interview and selection process for chaplain candidates is one method by which the Branch could establish if prospective chaplains had a willingness and capacity to work in the pluralistic military community. Indeed, chaplain candidates are examined in this area during the Selection Board interview; however, the effectiveness of this process is currently limited. The minimum standard required during the questioning on working with other faiths is that the candidate has "very little experience" combined with saying that "he/she is enthusiastic at the prospect of conducting religious services for other faiths".[41] Furthermore, under the present protocol, exploration of a chaplain's desire and ability to work in a pluralistic environment is only one of eleven areas that would be examined during a one and a half hour interview. Although this format might eliminate a candidate who was firmly opposed to multi-faith ministry, it is highly unlikely to guarantee that all prospective chaplains would enrol with sufficient education, training and experience to deal appropriately with the range of multi-faith issues that will likely confront them in their military service.

For the last three years, the Chaplain Basic Officer Training at CFB Borden, a thirteen week program combining basic military training with chaplain specific instruction, has tried to provide some multi-faith training. During last year's course, one

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[40] Sophie Gilliat-Ray, "Religion: Ministerial Formation in a Multi-Faith Society," *Teaching Theology & Religion* 6, no.1 (February 2003) [journal on-line]; available from http://www.questia.com/; Internet; accessed 24 April 2004.

[41] Department of National Defence, *Chaplain Branch Interview Protocol* (Ottawa: Office of the Chaplain General, January 2003), Question 3.

day was set aside to examine religious pluralism. Dr. Charles Fensham from Knox College in Toronto was invited to guide the recruit chaplains in reflecting on their own understanding of pluralism and its implications for their ministry in the military community. As well, in a presentation entitled, "Encountering People of Faiths Radically Different from My Own," he presented a review of ways in which Christian denominations have traditionally dealt with people of other faith groups, and suggested to them that "whatever faith tradition we come from and whatever position we take on the status of other religions, we are invited in the Canadian Forces to interact on a level of mutual acceptance and respect."[42] Following his presentation chaplains were required to submit and be graded on a 1500 word essay dealing with the various Christian perspectives "on the relationship among different faiths".[43]

Although there may be other brief opportunities at regional or national gatherings where chaplains can formally discuss or receive presentations on pluralism, this writer is not aware of any time, other than the Basic Chaplain Training, during which chaplains are formally assessed on their understandings of and approaches to pluralism. Although it is commendable that chaplains currently entering the Branch receive this training, there remain a large number, all those who joined before 2001, who have never had this opportunity or assessment. As well, it was most interesting in discussing this day long activity with one of last year's participants to hear that the presentation occurred during

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[42] Charles Fensham, "Encountering People of Faiths Radically Different from My Own," (presentation to Chaplain Basic Officer Training Course, CFB Borden, October 2003), used with permission.

[43] *Ibid*., Assignment Sheet.

the first part of the course which is primarily devoted to basic military training, when, according to that one participant, she was too tired and otherwise focused to give the attention to the topic that she felt it deserved.[44]

This paper has identified some of the ways through which the Branch has sought to convey its intent to be sensitive to the religious pluralism of the Forces; however, all those activities have all occurred within the past few years. Although the Chaplain Branch has been recognized by others for its leadership and initiative in ecumenical work,[45] it does not have a significant history in the area of multi-faith ministry. For example, in a history of Protestant chaplaincy published in 1996, the reader will not find any reference of ministry to non-Christian faiths.[46] One organization that has been engaged in multi-faith work since 1972 is the Ontario Multifaith Council on Spiritual and Religious Care, which was originally established to ensure "a high quality of spiritual and religious care would be consistently available to those in Government-funded and -operated institutions in the province".[47] In this writer's opinion, one of the significant messages that the Ontario Multifaith Council has for the Chaplain Branch as it responds to the increasing pluralism of the Forces is that th98.88832 488.16 Tm2 22 TsTm(d whoin mul5997 88.1

must have a comprehensive knowledge of, and respect for, the beliefs and practices of a wide variety of Faith Groups."[48]

To ensure that all of those providing spiritual and religious care in Ontario's provincial institutions are qualified to do so, the Ontario Multifaith Council has a memorandum of understanding with the province that authorizes the Council to screen every candidate and to evaluate all the spiritual and religious care programs in each institution.[49] During the screening process, every applicant is interviewed by a committee and, if successful, is offered a certification which is valid only for five years. As part of the interview, the applicant must demonstrate an understanding of their own faith community, a sensitivity to issues of cultural diversity, a competency in interfaith dialogue, and an ability to assist people of other faiths grow spiritually in their own tradition.[50] Through this detailed screening, a periodic review of programs, and the provision of a resource library and training opportunities for its members, the Ontario Multifaith Council has sought to ensure that its chaplains can competently provide the ministry required within Ontario's provincial institutions. The Chaplain Branch must be equally as diligent if it is to ensure that military men and women and their families receive the ministry they deserve.

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[48] Ontario Multifaith Council, *Multifaith Certification Information* [on-line]; available from http://www.omc.ca/certification.html; Internet; accessed 24 April 2004. Note: Used with permission of Executive Director, Michael Skaljin, January 2004.

[49] Ontario Multifaith Council, *A Brief History* …n.p.

[50] Ontario Multifaith Council, *Multifaith Certification* …n.p.

Canada's military community is pluralistic and will likely become more so. The senior leadership of the Canadian Forces Chaplain Branch has expressed a desire in both word and action to become more responsive to this pluralism. The main difficulty which this paper has identified in meeting this laudable goal is that the chaplains who are providing ministry throughout the military community may not necessarily have the knowledge or the theological inclination to participate fully in that vision. The Branch cannot assume that all chaplains enter the military with a background that adequately prepares them for multi-faith ministry, nor should the Branch assume that a day or two of multi-faith training is all that is required to ensure that they can meet the ever increasing demands that will be placed upon them.

The military community is changing, and chaplains who are competent in working with multi-faith issues are uniquely situated to provide vital leadership as the military responds to these changes. Whether discussing recruitment policies, addressing cultural change, dealing with internal conflicts, or serving on peace and stability operations, the knowledgeable and motivated chaplain can offer insight and inspiration that might otherwise be unavailable. The Chaplain Branch now recognizes the importance of this ministry, but it still needs to learn from others that not all who are called to Christian ministry have the necessary gifts and abilities to work in a pluralistic environment.

Military chaplains are called to serve all members of the Canadian Forces, as well as their families, and to provide each one with spiritual, religious, moral, and ethical support. With the increasing diversity of the Forces, it is more essential than ever that

military chaplains be able to minister productively and enthusiastically in a pluralistic environment. It is vital, therefore, that the Chaplain Branch adopt or develop its own means to ensure that all chaplains have the necessary desire, training, and understanding in the area of multi-faith ministry that will allow them to respond effectively to these new challenges and opportunities.

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