Interfaith Council of Halton

25TH ANNIVERSARY BREAKFAST

Twenty-five years at one table

Imam Abdul-Qayyum Mufti
The Rev. Dr. Mòrar Murray-Hayes, D.D.
Founding Co-Chairs, 2001

Wednesday, October 14, 2026 · Thomas Merton Centre, Oakville



WHO IS SPEAKING

CO-CHAIRS



CO-CHAIR

Deborah Laforet

Diaconal Minister

St. Paul's United Oakville



CO-CHAIR

Imam Abdul-Qayyum Mufti

Islamic Faith

Al-Falah Islamic Centre, Oakville

WHO IS SPEAKING

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT



MEMBER AT LARGE

Gillian Federico

System Chaplaincy and Faith Formation Lead

Halton Catholic District School Board

HONOURED REPRESENTATIVES

MP Anita Anand’s representative

MP Sima Acan

MPP Stephen Crawford

Mayor Rob Burton

Stephen Tanner (Chief of HRPS)

Sue Biggs (Inspector)

Aaron Groat (Chaplain)

Councillor Dave Gittings (Ward 3)

ICH EC Members

SECRETARY AND TREASURER



SECRETARY

Vida Rosen

Bahá'í Faith Representative



TREASURER

The Reverend Malcolm French scp

St. Simon's Anglican Church, Oakville

ICH EC Members

MEMBERS AT LARGE



MEMBER AT LARGE

Gillian Federico

System Chaplaincy and Faith Formation Lead

Halton Catholic District School Board



MEMBER AT LARGE

The Venerable Jeff Ward

Archdeacon of Trafalgar

Rector, St Cuthbert's Anglican Church



MEMBER AT LARGE

Pravin Lata Sharma

Hindu Faith

ICH EC Members

MEMBERS AT LARGE



MEMBER AT LARGE

The Rev. Dr. Mòrar Murray-Hayes, D.D.

Adjunct Faculty, Tyndale Theological Seminary



MEMBER AT LARGE

Rabbi Stephen Wise

Shaarei-Beth El Congregation

WHO HAS CHAIRED

PAST CHAIRS



CO-CHAIR

Imam Abdul-Qayyum Mufti

Islamic Faith

Al-Falah Islamic Centre, Oakville



MEMBER AT LARGE

The Rev. Dr. Mòrar Murray-Hayes, D.D.

Adjunct Faculty, Tyndale Theological Seminary



FORMER CO-CHAIR

Rabbi Paul Sidlofsky

Shaarei-Beth El Congregation



MEMBER AT LARGE

Rabbi Stephen Wise

Shaarei-Beth El Congregation



MEMBER AT LARGE

Gillian Federico

System Chaplaincy and Faith Formation Lead

Halton Catholic District School Board

PAST MEMBERS

Ann Mulvale (former Mayor of Oakville)

Laila Eiriksson (Bahá'í)

Fr Ted Sleman (Catholic)

Rev Dan Phannenhour (Anglican)

Kermin Byramjee (Sikh)

Ruth Victor (Town Planner)

Nozer Kotwal (Zoroastrian)

Darcey Lazerte (Anglican)



OUR MEMBERS

Nine faith traditions, one table

Bahá'í

Buddhism

Christianity

First Nations Spirituality

Hinduism

Islam

Judaism

Sikhism

Zoroastrianism

Christianity at our table includes Protestant and Catholic members. Everyone comes as themselves, and no one is asked to be anything else.

IN EVERY TRADITION

The Golden Rule

Bahá'í Faith (Vida Rosen)

Lay not on any soul a load that you would not wish to be laid upon you, and desire not for anyone the things you would not desire for yourself.

Hinduism (Pravin Sharma)

This is the sum of duty: do not do to others what would cause pain if done to you.

Sikhism (Pravin Sharma)

I am a stranger to no one; and no one is a stranger to me. Indeed, I am a friend to all.

Islam (A. Q. Mufti)

Not one of you truly believes until you wish for others what you wish for yourself.

Christianity (Jeff Ward)

In everything, do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets.

Zoroastrianism (Xerxes Madan)

Do not do unto others whatever is injurious to yourself.

Buddhism (Stephen Wise)

Treat others not in ways that you yourself would find hurtful.

Judaism (Stephen Wise)

What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbour. This is the whole Torah; all the rest is commentary. Go and learn it.

First Nations Spirituality (Stephen Wise)

We are as much alive as we keep the earth alive.



BEFORE WE EAT

Blessing of Food

IN HEBREW

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, הַמּוֹצִיא
לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ

TRANSLITERATED

Baruch atah, Adonai Eloheinu, melech haolam, hamotzi lechem min haaretz.

IN ENGLISH

“Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, who brings forth bread from the earth.”

WHO IS SPEAKING

Two of our founders, still at the table



Imam Abdul-Qayyum Mufti

Islamic Faith, Al-Falah Islamic Centre, Oakville

Founding Co-Chair, 2001

Co-Chair today



The Rev. Dr. Mòrar Murray-Hayes, D.D.

United Church Minister for over 50 years

Founding Co-Chair, 2001

Member at Large today

2001

It began with two gatherings

At the Al-Falah Islamic Centre, hundreds of community members from across Halton — with the HRPS Chief and officers, the Fire Chief, the OPP, the RCMP, then Mayor Ann Mulvale, Councillors, MPs, MPPs and other dignitaries.

Together We Stand

Faith leaders across Halton, and Rev. Mòrar Murray-Hayes, accepted the invitation.

Together We Celebrate

Soon after, at Eid — the same people, and another full house.

THE IDEA

Why wait for a special occasion to meet?

Why not a forum where we meet regularly — not just to meet and greet, but to learn from each other?

1

Learn

from each other, around one table

2

Educate

our own congregations and communities

3

Share

what we learn with the general public

THE FOUNDING

Three Co-Chairs, and an open door

Imam Abdul-Qayyum Mufti

Brought the idea

The Rev. Dr. Mòrar Murray-Hayes

The first person I invited, who said yes with open arms

Rabbi Paul Sidlofsky

Was next to be approached with the idea, and graciously accepted

A. Q. Mufti - My first call: then Mayor Ann Mulvale. I shared the idea with her first and asked whom I should approach; she graciously gave me a few names. Once we had formed, she opened the doors of Town Hall, took the minutes of our first meeting herself, and gave us a permanent place there to meet.



Morar Murray Hayes

A PERSONAL WORD · AQ ON MÒRAR

The first faith leader I came to know

- Always ready to listen, to understand and to support, with a wonderful smile.
- From the start, she brought members of her congregation to our programs and welcomed us to hers.
- Instrumental in sponsoring Syrian refugees and in welcoming the family at her Church.
- The first person I invited to form the ICH.

“I cherish a quarter of a century of her friendship.”



MÒRAR'S STORY

One of the pioneers, long before this table

- A United Church Minister for over 50 years, and a pioneer in the establishment of women in ordained ministry.
- At McGill, among students from a wide spectrum of faith traditions, she studied Judaism and Islam as well as Christianity.
- A doctorate at Princeton Theological Seminary; later an honorary doctorate from McGill.
- Teacher of ministers at four theological colleges.

MÒRAR'S STORY

Over fifty years of ministry

Teaching

A teacher of ministers at four theological colleges. Today, Adjunct Faculty at Tyndale Theological Seminary.

Coaching

A coach of congregations in transition, for both the United and Lutheran churches. A mentor to many.

Preaching

Preaching described as energetic and quirky, and masterful storytelling.

"She assists others to think spiritually about the world and life."

From Mòrar's published introduction, Interfaith Council of Halton

DECEMBER 2009 · MÒRAR'S STORY

Writing the rules of the table

THE FIVE WHO WROTE IT

Mervyn Russell

Laila Eirksson

Stephen Wise

Donna Martin

Mòrar Murray-Hayes

1

Decisions by consensus

How the Council makes its decisions.

2

Never lose a faith group

"With care never to lose any faith group over a matter of conscience."

Approved as a final draft for the September 2010 AGM. · From the Council's Our History page



Imam Abdul-Qayyum Mufti

A PERSONAL WORD · MÒRAR ON AQ

A pillar of this community

- Served Halton and Peel for over thirty years as an IT specialist, a certified Project Manager, and a social and community activist.
- A member of Oakville's Al-Falah Islamic Centre, he bridges communities by interpreting the Muslim faith for police services, school boards and governments.
- Founded the Interfaith Council of Halton in 2001, and serves as Co-Chair today.
- Mobilized the community to raise $5 million for Mississauga healthcare, through walks and virtual skydiving.



With Mòrar, at Abraham's Children celebration

A PERSONAL WORD · MÒRAR ON AQ

A chauffeur, a teacher, a friend

- Gracious when we stumbled in following the rituals.
- Persistent at staying at the table.
- And along the way, he studied to become Imam Mufti!
- I first met Mufti as a chauffeur, bringing a speaker to our church. Now I know him as a teacher, a mentor and a friend.

"Please welcome Imam Abdul-Qayyum Mufti."

A MESSAGE FROM OUR THIRD FOUNDING CO-CHAIR

Rabbi Paul Sidlofsky

Founding Co-Chair, 2001 · now serving a congregation in the United States



Click to play · 2 min 59 s

ALONGSIDE THE COUNCIL

Womengathering







- Lottie Grant and Ann Mulvale sparked the creation of Womengathering — biennial events where women learn about their neighbours' faiths and hear remarkable guests' stories.
- They raise money too — a scholarship for an Indigenous woman at Laurentian University among them.
- Speakers include Laila Eriksson, chair of the Halton Multicultural Council and a founding member of the Council — independent of us, but a crossover well worth celebrating.



OUR FIRST ACT — AND STILL OUR LARGEST

The Interfaith Youth Festival

The first Ten students from each high school in the region — and Michael “Pinball” Clemons as keynote speaker.

Then Instead of selecting students, we went into the schools with faith leaders: 400 to 500 students in a day.

With HRPS A police Inspector, Jackie Gordon, assigned to the Council, helped secure our first, perhaps only, grant — the display boards for the booths.

Today Still going into public and Catholic schools across the region.

HOW A FESTIVAL DAY WORKS

One passport, every faith









1

The Interfaith Passport

A small booklet — the same questions for every faith.

2

At the booths

Students circle round in groups and ask each faith its questions.

3

By day's end

Every student holds an interfaith comparative study.

4

Town hall

Open questions to a panel of faith leaders, in the auditorium.

85%+

improvement in students' understanding of other faiths

Scientific surveys, before and after the programme

MÒRAR'S STORY

Conversations about things that matter

Imaginative ways to live creatively through changing times.



ICH members and Festival Youth Leaders.

RECOGNITION

Two Gold Medals of Excellence

1 First, to the Council

For the Interfaith Youth Festival — the initiative behind that 85% rise in understanding.

2 Then, 29 March 2011

To the HRPS Multi-Faith Support Team, on which the Council sits — after police studies found crime went down where we held the festival.



The medal, the certificate and the citation, 29 March 2011.

Human Rights and Race Relations Centre, Toronto

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS

Some of the moments that show what we are for

2001
Together We Stand, and Together We Celebrate

2001
First meeting, at Town Hall

Soon after
First Interfaith Youth Festival

2006
Regional/municipal OPA negotiations for faith-group rights begin.

2009
Meeting at Al-Falah; a constitution is written

2011
The Interfaith Breakfast

2015
Abraham's Children welcome a Syrian family

2017
"Circles of Peace" after Quebec City

2018
Halton's first Interfaith Peace Camp

2020–21
Meeting through the pandemic, online

2025
In Halton Catholic school classrooms

2026
Fasting, and what it teaches



IN PUBLIC, WHEN IT HURTS

Standing together

2014 Vigil in Oakville for the children killed at the Peshawar school

2016 Oakville pays tribute to the victims in Orlando

2017 After Quebec City: a circle outside the Al-Falah Islamic Centre while Muslims prayed inside

2018 After Pittsburgh: Prayer inside Shaarei-Beth El Congregation

2022 Prayers for peace in Ukraine

2023 Prayers for Peace outside Oakville Town Hall

Nobody had to be persuaded to come.

15 DECEMBER 2015 · OAKVILLE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Speaking for our faiths



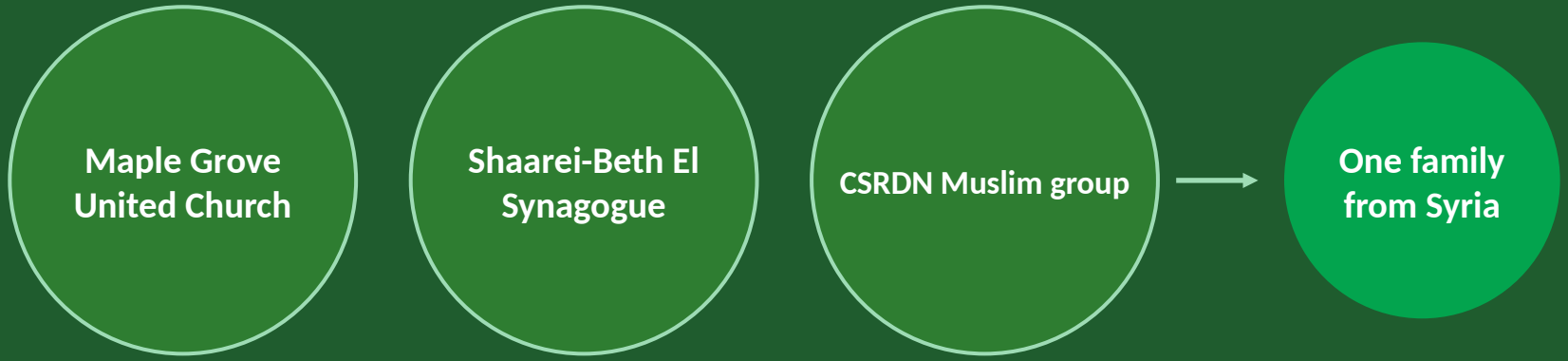




Council leaders on stage, each speaking for their own tradition. Photograph: Fotografia Boutique.

DECEMBER 2015 · REFUGEE SPONSORSHIP

Abraham's Children



Three traditions, one family, one undertaking.

Jews, Christians and Muslims all trace their faith to Abraham — and all three scriptures command hospitality to the stranger.



The family, with the leaders who brought them here

ABRAHAM'S CHILDREN · THE TEAM

"How can we help?"

- Dr. Aliya Khan, of the ICNA mosque, and Heather Donaldson, of Maple Grove United Church, asked the question that started it.
- Sandra Onufryk and Katy Joaquim led the Oakville interfaith team.
- A joint effort, featured by the Toronto Star and WSNBC.



Council members outside the new Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital.

BEYOND OUR OWN WALLS

For the whole community

$150,000

raised by members of the Council for Oakville's new hospital.

A hospital serves every faith, and none.

STARTING EARLY

Interfaith Peace Camp



Halton schools, November 2025



Interfaith Youth Festival

Children and Youth leaders skip the books to learn about other faiths directly from people—and they can't wait to return!

"Understanding is easiest to build before there is anything to undo."

STARTING EARLY

Interfaith Peace Camp



TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF LEARNING

What we have learned

1. The essence of our core values is the same.

2. Understanding does not require agreement. It requires presence.

3. Being a guest somewhere unfamiliar does more than just talk about it.

4. Start with the young. It is easiest before there is anything to undo.

5. Cooperation is not self-sustaining. It is built, one generation at a time.



IMPACT

From tolerating difference, to accepting it, to embracing it

400–500

students met in a single festival day

85%+

rise in understanding of other faiths

Lower crime

where the festival was held, per HRPS studies

2

Gold Medals for Excellence





Vida Rosen · Imam Abdul-Qayyum Mufti · Rev. Deborah Laforet · Rabbi Stephen Wise · Pravin Lata Sharma · The Rev. Malcolm French SCP

STILL GOING

The work continues

The Council still meets, still listens, and still turns up when a community in Halton is grieving or afraid.

Membership is open to authorised representatives of any faith, religious or spiritual group in the Region of Halton.



LOOKING BACK

"We feel humbled for what we have achieved — first our own self-improvement in understanding our fellow faith communities, and spreading the message of peace through learning, educating and understanding our fellow neighbours, and appreciating the diversity."

THE ROAD AHEAD

"The road ahead is long. We will carry on this mission, and pass on the torch to whoever joins us in this journey of love, understanding, mutual respect, and spreading peace among our communities."

Interfaith
Council of Halton

Table Stories

1. *What should be the primary goal of interfaith dialogue, and why is it important? (If applicable, please share your memories of working with the Interfaith Council.)*

2. *How can we inspire curious, open learning about different faiths to reveal shared values and foster unity?*

Interfaith
Council of Halton

Closing Prayers

Interfaith
Council of Halton

Everyone is welcome at the table

Thank you for twenty-five years.

interfaithcouncilhalton.com

We meet at various places of worship in Halton Region