

During the month of May each year the PAONL highlights giving to missionary work, both at home and overseas. Offerama is not a new venture. It has been a part of the missions program of the fellowship for more than two decades. Offerama was initiated in 1990 by Pastor Scott Hunter, Director of Missions Promotion, under the leadership of Pastor Roy D. King, General Superintendent. Sensing a need for an increased missional thrust, the PAONL undertook this new venture with gusto. Given that 24 years have elapsed since the inception of the Offerama, and our provincial goal is set higher than ever before, perhaps this is a good time to look back on what's been accomplished through this ministry and how the faithfulness and generosity of our people and churches has impacted the kingdom of God, both at home and abroad.



The first Offerama goal was set at an ambitious \$200,000 in 1990. The total amount raised that year was \$203,445. This was announced at the World Missions Rally on the last day of the 42nd General Conference when Pastor Scott Hunter reported, "Offerama '90 was an astounding success!" Pastor Hunter explained to the Conference that Offerama was not to be considered merely a fundraising challenge; rather should be viewed as the single largest yearly thrust to finance the fellowship's commitments to home and foreign missions. The end result of the effort was to reach unsaved people "through a variety of methods."

In 1991, Offerama was fueled by a serious practical need, half a world away. The most significant project supported during that year via Offerama was the initiation of a famine relief project for refugees from Mozambique. Essentially, trying to escape the unrest in their region



Photo from 2010 Offerama poster.

during the civil war, masses of refugees fled to Zimbabwe. At the time, the best source of protein for Zimbabweans were tiny fish (*kapenta*) found in Lakes Malawi and Kariba. Due to famine and increased demand, the lakes had been overfished and the fish stocks drastically depleted. Pastor Hunter, in cooperation with the missions department of the PAOC, created a plan to generate meaningful employment for Newfoundlanders in the fishery while also providing desperately needed sustenance for the refugees in the form of dried capelin. The first shipment was sent in April of '91.



It was a fantastic achievement when the 1991 provincial goal of \$200,000 was surpassed and an incredible \$305,809 raised! Yet, this is not the most significant memory of that year's offer-

ing. Offerama '91 is particularly noteworthy because of the participation of the provincial government as well as the Canadian Foodgrains Bank.<sup>1</sup> The PAONL had agreed to give \$100,000 from the Offerama to the capelin project, which the government of Newfoundland and Labrador matched. Now \$200,000, through ERDO<sup>2</sup> of the PAOC, was matched *four to one* by the Canadian Foodgrains Bank! Thus, one million dollars was donated to starving refugees in Zimbabwe based on \$100,000 worth of capelin from the shores of Newfoundland! God truly *can* multiply the loaves and the fishes and has done so even in our time.

The following year, it was thought that the Offerama might be seriously affected, as the cod moratorium became the cause of economic decline and the initial trigger for out-migration. However, over \$260,000 came in that year and Offerama totals didn't dip under \$200,000 until 1995.

Throughout the 90s, the focus of Offerama was primarily on home and foreign missions as well as famine relief. Specific projects weren't promoted as much as they would be in later years. Offerama giving hit its lowest point in 1997

at \$131,965.23 (\$143,050.51 including Sunday School giving). This was likely due to the overall decline in attendance combined with out-migration reaching its peak. In more recent years, as Offerama has become more project-based, giving has increased significantly.

In the past 15 years, Offerama has maintained a strong emphasis in the fellowship, averaging \$295,163.24 per year in revenue. Throughout this time, Offerama has maintained its emphasis on supporting ERDO, but has also funded other significant and noteworthy projects in that timeframe. For example, in 1999, Offerama donated funds to the Hopedale Breakfast Club and met a significant



need in that area. In 2000, monies were channeled into leasing 800 acres of farmland in the prairies for cultivation of

food aid, Labrador breakfast programs, ERDO, home missions and overseas missions.



In 2004-6, projects in Africa, Asia, and Newfoundland and Labrador were supported, along with ERDO and world missions. In 2007, \$15,000 was given to support the Bible School in Mozambique. Furthermore, \$50,000 was given to church planting and pastoral leadership development in Mozambique. What is significant about this shift is that rather than providing a short-term solution to an immediate need, focus was turning towards supporting local ministries and training local personnel. The short-term investment may seem less glamorous, however, the long-term return is invaluable!<sup>3</sup>



As many will recall, providing vehicles to our overseas missionaries has been a part of Offerama through the years. For example, from 2007 – 2014 alone, nearly \$350,000 will have been given towards vehicles for our missionary workers in overseas settings.



In 2010, Offerama giving surpassed \$350,000 for the first time and hasn't dipped below that number since then. In the past 5 years the annual average giving to Offerama is noteworthy: \$368,203.10. While Offerama giving has not yet surpassed \$400,000, the goal for 2014 is \$425,000. Since the inception of Offerama in 1990, the complete revenue, including Sunday School Offerama contributions, is \$6,691,252.39! Let us continue the good work that began over two decades ago! If the PAONL reaches its goal this year, it will be the first time that Offerama giving surpasses \$400,000. Furthermore, it will bring our total Offerama giving in 24 years to over 7 million dollars. For a small province, this is an astounding figure!

One must highlight the fact that Offerama giving continues to climb in spite

of aging membership and decline in church attendance provincially. It is important to acknowledge the faithful giving of our 50-plus membership who have driven this ministry with their selfless generosity and passion for the cause of world missions. I believe the time has come for my own generation to step up and carry the torch of active giving, faithful stewardship, and passion for the cause of Christ—both in our own province and around the world. We can no longer rely on those who have gone before us and feel as though we can give and serve vicariously through them. The responsibility is ours to continue in the rich legacy of our fathers and mothers in the faith.

As Christians, we are called to meet practical needs when it is within our means to do so. Yet in our compassion and desire to meet physical and economic needs, we must keep at the forefront of our motivation the fact that we are first called to spread the Gospel. This is inherent to who we are as followers of Jesus. We must never forsake the mandate of Christ to go and make disciples. Let us continue to give sacrificially and responsibly as an attempt to both meet physical needs and, more importantly, to introduce people to salvation through Jesus Christ. We must continue to prayerfully support Offerama as great strides are being made in both humanitarian aid and delivery of the Gospel. The former is important; the latter is imperative. May God continue to bless and multiply our efforts!

1. The PAOC became a member of the Canadian Foodgrains Bank in 1983 and the two organizations have been working cooperatively in the food distribution process since that time. For more on how this works, see [http://foodgrainsbank.ca/emergency\\_relief\\_and\\_development\\_overseas.aspx](http://foodgrainsbank.ca/emergency_relief_and_development_overseas.aspx).
2. ERDO (Emergency Relief and Development Overseas) is the humanitarian agency of the PAOC. It is involved in over 35 countries worldwide and seeks to support transformation of the community, family, and individual by providing compassionate response to the needs of hurting people. ERDO offers hope through Crisis Response, Food Relief, Community Development, and ChildCARE Plus sponsorship. For more information see <http://www.paoc.org/missions/emergency-relief>.
3. Also, during this time frame, various local capital investments were made in home missions. For example, home missions properties in Placentia and Paradise have been funded through Offerama.