

## RIDEAU PARK CHAPEL NAMED IN HONOUR OF OTT AND FLORA McKENNITT

By Heather Ingrams

On October 31, 2010, Rideau Park United Church, Ottawa, dedicated the McKennitt Chapel in honour of Reverend Ott McKennitt and his wife Flora, with his children, grandchildren, great granddaughter and the congregation taking part in the service.

The naming of the McKennitt Chapel honours Ott's leadership and ministry to Rideau Park for over 24 years , from 1959 to 1983, a period of rapid expansion in size, programs and service to the community for the relatively new congregation, which had been founded in 1951. As Mabel Bannerman noted at the dedication, "In the years Ott and Flora were here, a firm foundation was established and this congregation has thrived because of it," now comprising over 700 households or 1,700 people.



Ordained in 1941, Ott began his ministry in the Sudbury area and then served in the Army Chaplaincy overseas during World War II, earning the Canadian Decoration for Military Service. During his ministry at Rideau Park United Church, the Sunday School and community outreach programs started, grew and thrived. Now 96, Ott continues to be an active member at Rideau Park serving as the Minister Emeritus and has published numerous books since his official retirement in 1983, including his autobiography in 1994 titled, *A Wondrous Life*. In all, he has published ten books, with *Morning Has Broken: Meditations for a Generation Struggling With Despair and Meaninglessness* in 2006, being among the most recent.

Ott and Flora have been married for 67 years. In her remarks at the dedication service, Mabel Bannerman stated that, "Ott has always acknowledged the important role that Flora has played at Rideau Park and at all the other churches in which he served." Flora has been an enthusiastic member of Rideau Park's United Church Women (UCW) and when many women in the congregation were asked, "Why did you join the UCW?" the reply in most of the cases was because Flora had invited them.

It was fitting that on Anniversary Sunday for Rideau Park, the chapel was named the McKennitt Chapel since it is joined to the Sanctuary, where for so many years the congregation was inspired by Ott's sermons on Sunday mornings. His deep, rich voice added much to the heartfelt message in his sermons. These days, the McKennitt Chapel is filled on Sunday mornings with families and their young children who play, usually quietly, while their parents participate in the Sunday service – a legacy that pleases Ott and Flora.