



Good morning I'm Derek Wishart, the new chair of Executive Council.

Our congregation has been on a journey called The Fairlawn Call to determine what God is calling us to be in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

What does God require of us? Micah tells us "to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God". Today there will be talk about doing and of doing justice. There will talk of love and loving kindness. There will be talk of God and walking humbly with God.

## **Your Fairlawn Call Team**

**Greig Clark**

**Christopher White**

**Michelle Sparrow**

**Carol Reader**

**Jim Pollock**

**Morrey Ewing**

**Derek Wishart**



These are our preliminary findings, based on your input, on our ***purpose, core beliefs*** and ***desired future***.

I've just returned from March Break in Florida with my family. While I was there, I went to church. I went to church 43 times with 8 congregations, all thanks to my iPod. I listened to The Meeting House. They call themselves "the church for people who aren't into church". They don't bother to have a church building – they meet in movie theatres. In the past few years they have started 18 congregations in Southern Ontario and are planning to open 5 more under the banner grow, invite, care. I was inspired by Hillhurst United lead by John Pentland who was here last fall. He described how his church reversed years of decline to become a growing, vital part of the Calgary community known for their welcome whoever you are, wherever you're at, join us on the journey. And then I happened upon a podcast that gave me chills. The minister gave a series of moving sermons about the need for that church to find a new direction. Then just as the congregation was about to come to a decision the podcast series stops. It just stops. It appears that the congregation is about to close.

Then I read that the United Church is closing a congregation every week. That is scary. I don't know about you but I choose life. I choose life so that you and your descendants may live, loving God, obeying God, and holding fast to God; for that means life to you and length of days. I want Fairlawn to be a ***vibrant, growing, welcoming church community*** but this won't happen if we just wait for it to happen. We have to make it happen.



The work of The Fairlawn Call project team is divided into three phases:

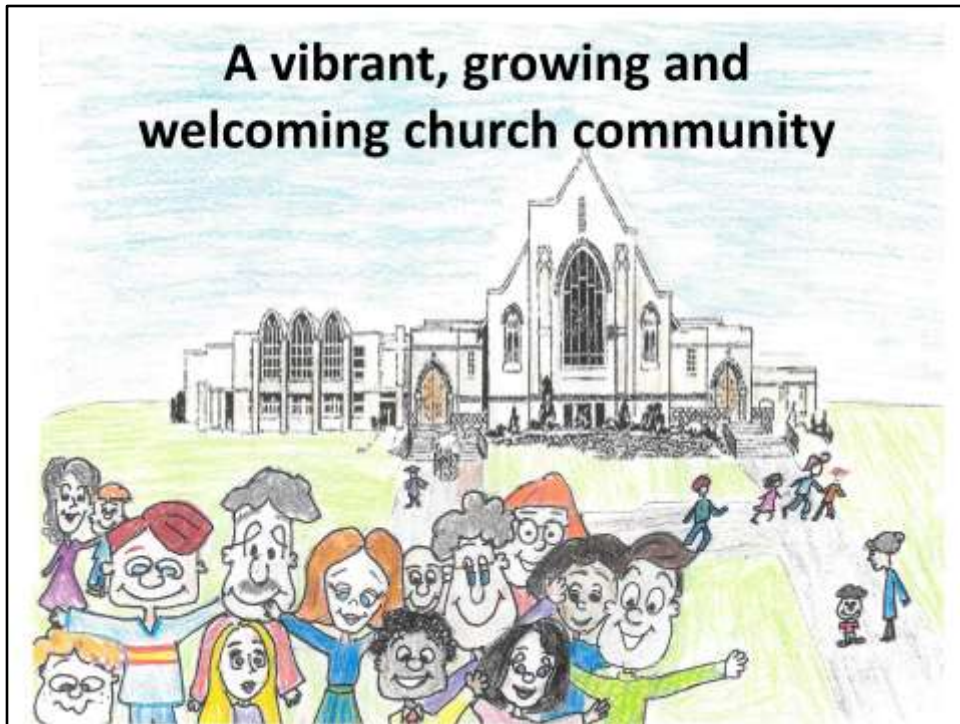
In the fall we were gathering input

- John Pentland came to teach us about Hillhurst → it was refreshing to hear a positive story about a United Church congregation that's vibrant and growing
- We researched what other congregations are doing → we learned that "if you build it they will come" doesn't work. We need a clear plan to be successful.
- We met with the ministry teams that do the work of the church → we were reminded of the wonderful things that we do to explore your spirituality, experience belonging and embrace action
- We made a point of speaking to people who are curious about Fairlawn but don't attend → If we are to grow we need to know what these people need.
- We asked for your input in November and boy did you give us input! We got more than 250 comment cards and more than 100 idea files.

Over the winter we worked to synthesize the input that you gave us to answer **what is our call?** The result of that work is the draft **purpose, core beliefs** and **desired future** that we will discuss today.

Next we will develop an implementation plan. And along the way we'll be consulting further in Dialogues for Direction.

September isn't the end it isn't even the beginning of the end but it is the end of the beginning when we will begin to work in earnest to build the new Fairlawn and choose life.



We believe God is calling us to be a ***vibrant, growing, welcoming church community***. This is our ***desired future***.

To be vibrant and growing we need two things: more people to be engaged and people to be more engaged. More people engaged requires us to think about all of the ways that the curious can connect with Fairlawn, including entry points for people who don't come to worship. For example last fall's series Faith In Your Everyday Life was designed to be accessible to those who are curious but not part of Fairlawn. We only did a little advertising but we still had many newcomers attend – and they liked it!

Welcoming takes many forms. John Pentland talked about Stephanie. She was nervous about coming to church because she was unfamiliar with the secret handshakes. We need to eliminate anything that the curious might perceive as a secret handshake. We're putting all the words on the screens. I know the Lord's Prayer and you might but people who are curious might not. So we put the words on the screen to level the playing field – to eliminate a secret handshake.

In February we took a big step by deciding to become an Affirming congregation which means that we want to be welcoming to everyone especially people who are marginalized.



Based on your feedback and what we learned, we think that God's purpose for us is three-fold:

The first is to give people a place to explore their spirituality and develop their faith: ***explore your spirituality***

The second purpose is to give people a place where people can ***experience belonging*** and be part of a loving community.

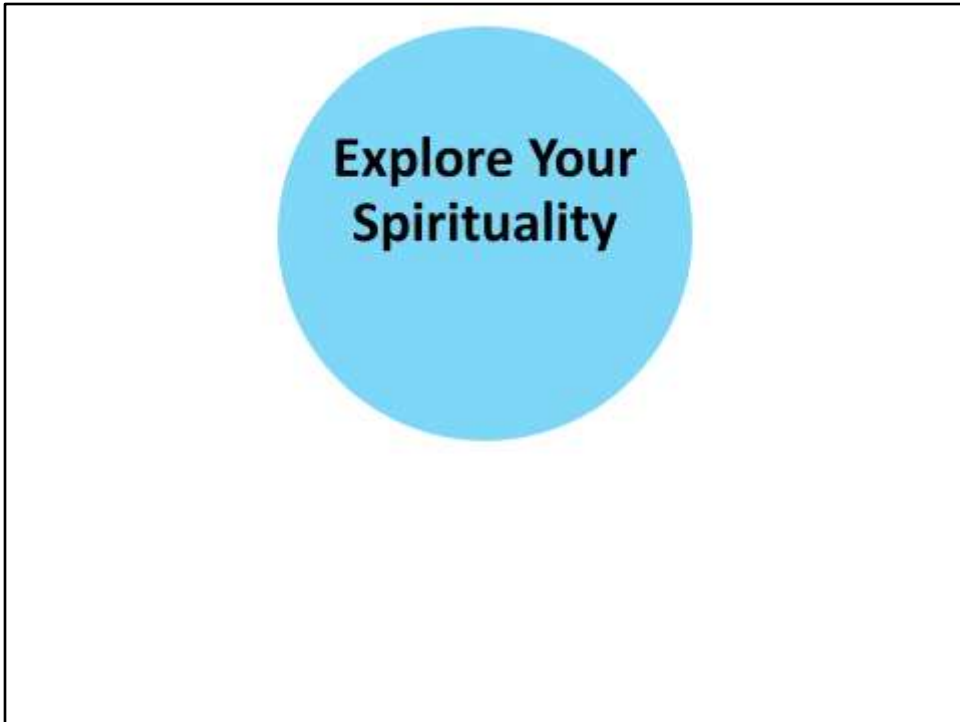
The third purpose is to help people ***embrace action*** as disciples of Jesus.

When we consulted you in November we had different names for these, but based on your input we think that these are more apt.

Explore, experience, embrace

Spirituality, belonging, action

Let's look at each of these purposes one at a time



What does our God require of us  
What does the prophet say?  
To walk humbly with our Maker  
Pray to God our hopes and fears  
Learning how to grow in spirit  
Exploring through the years

***Explore your spirituality***

This purpose includes all of the ways that we explore our spirituality and develop our faith including worship, music, adult education and Sunday School.



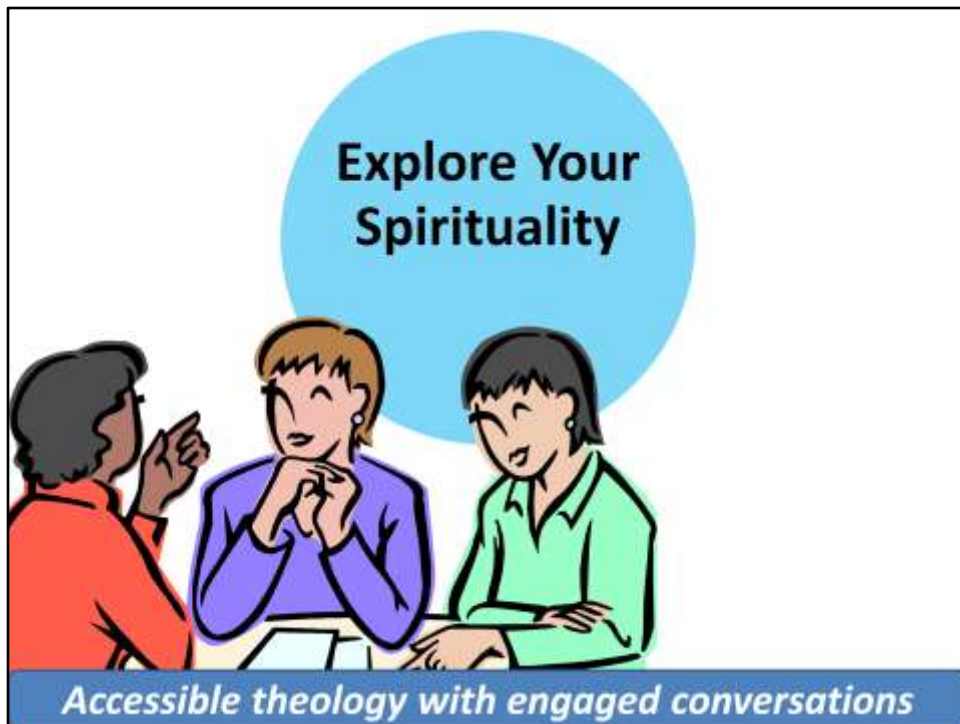
You told us what you like about worship and your dreams for worship:

- Sanctuary
- A haven
- Lovely music
- Music that restores my soul
- Thought provoking sermons that make connections to day-to-day life
- Sixty minutes of peace when I don't need to answer the phone or text of do anything but listen and learn
- Experience that God loves me, even if I'm not sure about God

You also told us about Christian education for all ages:

- Small group discussions where we can learn and explore together
- Acceptance of where I'm at in my faith journey
- Rethink Sunday School to be more effective in reaching all youth
- Accessible theology with engaged conversations





You want our music and worship to be reverent, relevant and participatory.

Going forward, we want people to explore their beliefs and personal relationship with God as part of a life-long journey of faith that includes doubt and discovery.

We've had a success with this winter's series about God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit called The Big Three which was an interactive exploration of faith.

By 2017 we think want to be known throughout Toronto as the place to go to **explore your spirituality** as the place where **we explore all of life's great questions and our place in the world.**

When the media want to know what Christianity means in 21<sup>st</sup> century Toronto, they'll call us.

In fact the media is already calling. You may have heard Christopher's interview on CBC about Ashes To Go on Ash Wednesday.



What does our God require of us  
What does the prophet say?  
To show kindness to each other  
In one close community  
Sharing love with sister, brother  
In Christian harmony

***Experience belonging***

This purpose is about all of the ways that we take care of each other and build community.



You told us that we do a lot well to create community.

- Fairlawn is a place where we take care of each other
- We prayerfully knit shawls and give them to those who need physical and spiritual warmth
- We make soup together and give it to those who need of physical and spiritual nourishment

You told us that what you hope we can become better at helping each other

***experience belonging:***

- A place where all people would be supported and nurtured – where someone who know if you were away
- We need to welcome newcomers so they don't feel lost

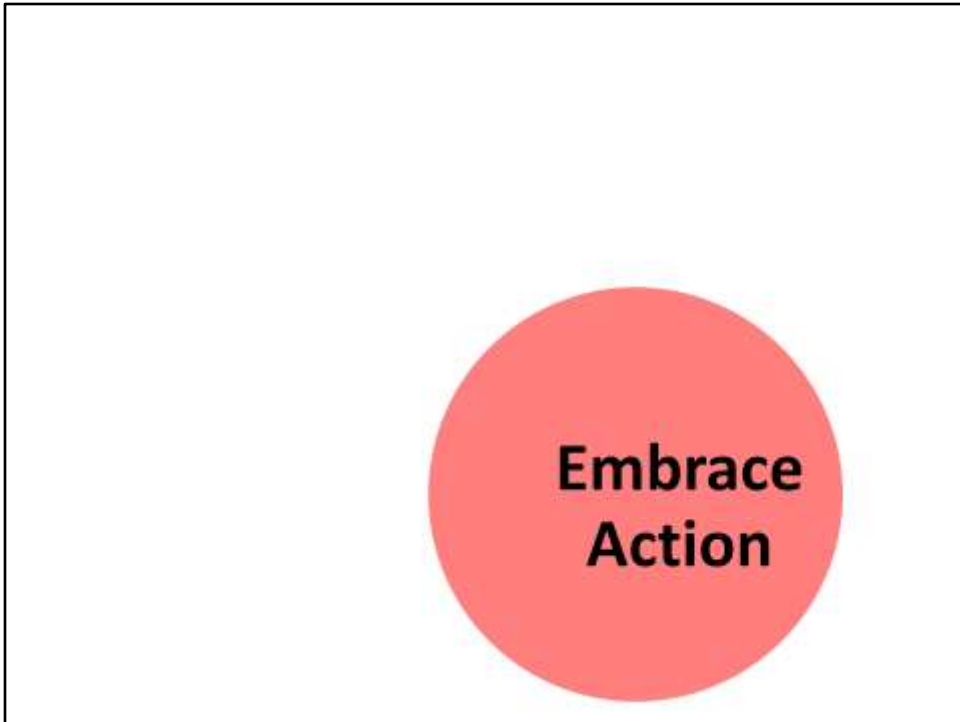


In our communion service we invite everyone to participate because everyone is welcome at God's table. We aim to extend that welcome – that everyone belongs – to every facet of our church life.

Going forward, we need to help the new comers to find their way in without smothering them. We need to remind ourselves that the purpose of growth isn't to increase givings and it isn't about putting more people on committees, it's about helping more people feel God's love and hear God's call.

Sheila Corkill is organising a workshop on Kindness, Caring and Pastoral Care on April 12. This is an opportunity to become better as a congregation at helping everyone ***experience belonging***.

By 2017 we want everyone who participates at Fairlawn to feel that we are ***a truly welcoming community, supporting each other. It's a place where I feel I belong.***



What does our God require of us

What does the prophet say?

To do justice – love in action

Serving all humanity

Seeking housing for the homeless

Confronting poverty

Our third purpose is ***Embrace Action***



You told us that you are very proud of the work we have done and are doing with

- 40 Oaks
- the Christian Resource Centre in Regent Park
- our Boarding House Ministry
- and our support of Camp Scugog

You told us that you like:

- Faith In Action is for me the highlight of why I attend Fairlawn

You told us that your aspiration for **embracing action** is:

- A focus on living according to Jesus's teaching, not just talking about them → leading by example
- 7 generations – leaving the beauty of the Earth for our great grandchildren's great grandchildren
- Fairlawn is a good place to give back
- When worship ends, service begins



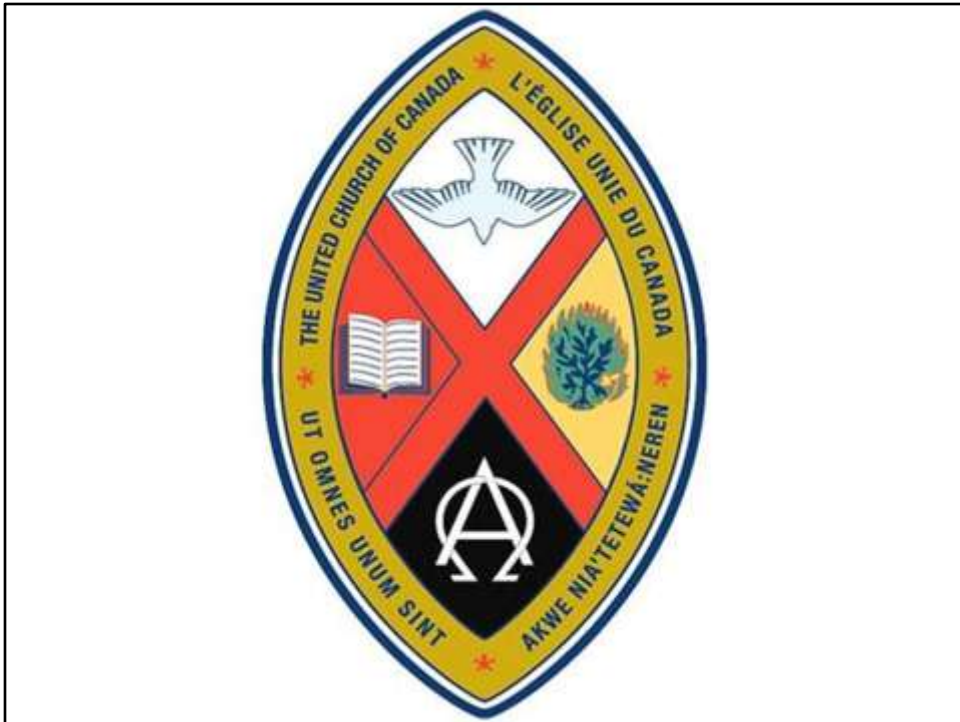
Jesus's call to us isn't to just develop our faith. Jesus calls us to put our faith into action.

When we ***embrace action*** we are following in the footsteps of our forbearers who formed Second Congregational Church in 1849 to oppose slavery.

When we ***embrace action*** we help persuade the government to raise the minimum wage.

Going forward, we aim to help every member of our community find their personal gifts and apply them.

By 2017 we want to be a beacon of God's call to action – ***we encourage each and every one of us to realize our talents and make the best of them to make a difference in the world***



The New Creed starts and ends with the reassurance that ***we are not alone*** because we are connected to God.

Look at the United Church crest. In the bottom left in Latin we say “ut omnes unum sint”, which means “that all may be one”. We are one with God, we are one by love.

In 2012 we added the phrase in Mohawk “akwe nia'tetewá:neren” which means all my relations. When our first nations brothers and sisters pray, they often end their prayers with all my relations. We are all part of the family of God and what connects us? Love.

***We are not alone. We are connected to God and each other by love.***





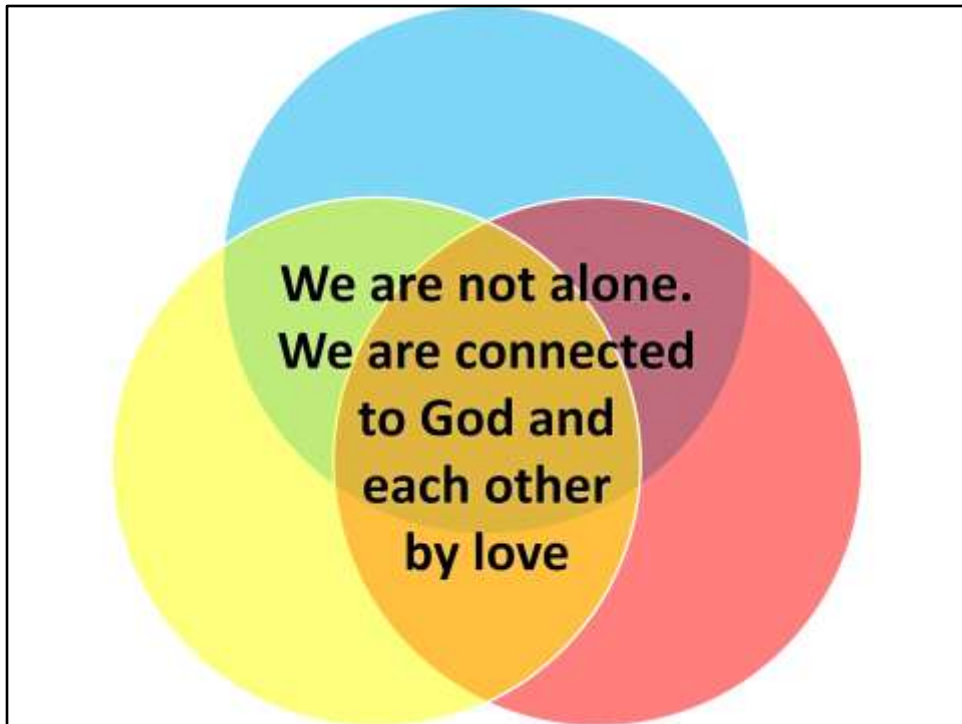
Our purposes are best when they are combined

When we explore our spirituality together, we get to know each other better and become a stronger community.

When we work together as a community to put our faith in action, we can do things we could never do alone.

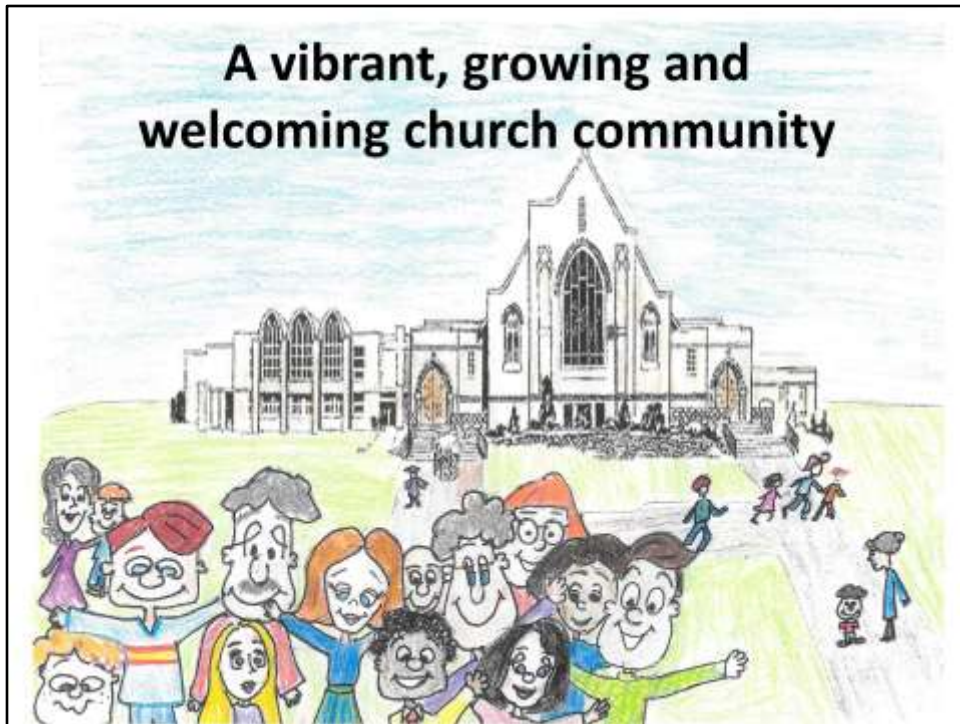
When we put our discipleship in action, we deepen our faith.

These purposes work together.



And right at the centre of it all: ***We are not alone. We are connected to God and each other by love.***

This is what we think is our core belief.



We want people to be proud of their association with Fairlawn. We hope to pass the Starbucks test. The Starbucks Test is: how would you describe your church to someone you meet at Starbucks?

Our first hope is that each of us will be willing to talk about Fairlawn in at Starbucks.

We want every member of the Fairlawn community to be able to say something that demonstrates that we are a vibrant, growing, welcoming church community.

If you participate in Adult Education you might say ***we explore all of life's great questions and consider our place in the world***

Someone who participates in our Affirming ministry might say ***everyone is welcome and we all support each other***

Someone who participates in our social justice ministry team might say ***each and every one of us to realize our talents to make a difference in the world***

## Group Discussion

**11:30-11:40** → Get assigned to a group

→ Refreshments available

→ Childcare available

**11:40-12:30** → Small group discussion

→ Wrap-up

We've prayed for the guidance of the Spirit. We've tried to synthesize what you told us and what we learned from others. Now we need your input. We would like to have small group discussions to learn what you think about these three things.

- First – our three purposes: ***explore your spirituality, experience belonging, embrace action***
- Second – our core belief that ***we are not alone. We are connected to God and each other by love***
- And third – our desired future to be a ***vibrant, growing, welcoming church community***

And we want to know what you would say about Fairlawn if you were asked about us in a Starbucks three years from now. We will use your input to develop our implementation plan. We'll use your input to guide the decisions that we make at Executive Committee.

We look forward to your input.

Thanks be to God.