

## A vibrant, growing and welcoming church community



### I. What is The Fairlawn Call?

The Fairlawn Call is the result of 10 months of widespread consultation with the congregation which produced the following description what we believe that God calls us to do and to become:

#### The Fairlawn Call

**Desired Future** *what we are trying to become*

Fairlawn is a vibrant, growing and welcoming church community

**Core Beliefs** *the centre of everything that we do*

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

**Purposes** *the things that God calls us to do*

Explore Spirituality: We provide a safe place for everyone to explore spirituality, wherever they are on their journey

Experience Belonging: We welcome everyone and help each other experience belonging

Embrace Action: We develop everyone's gifts and embrace action to make a difference in the world

### II. How will The Fairlawn Call be used?

The Fairlawn Call will replace Fairlawn's current mission statement and will be used as the basis for all planning, strategies and programs at the church. Everything we do should answer these questions:

- Does this fit Fairlawn's purposes?
- Will it effectively get us towards the desired future?
- Are we acting each and every day in alignment with our core beliefs?

Examples:

- 1) All bodies of the Church will start plans by asking: How does this support The Fairlawn Call?
- 2) Communications both internal and external will be consistent with The Fairlawn Call
- 3) Job descriptions will articulate how the role supports The Fairlawn Call
- 4) In our daily dealings with each other we will strive to treat each as members of a community connected by love, especially in time of difficulty or conflict

### III. What does the Fairlawn Call mean? What is the thinking behind the words chosen?

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

One of the blessings of the United Church is our New Creed, which like each of us has evolved over time. Not all of us have the same interpretation of the creed because we are all in the process of exploring what we believe, yet the creed provides a basis for that exploration and that discussion with each other. The opening of the creed is powerful: "We are not alone". We decided to state positively. "We are connected to God and to each other by love."

*Purpose → Explore Spirituality*

Explore ties into the comments on core beliefs above. We chose "spirituality" (vs. faith or religion) because our research showed that many people are put off church or are fearful of coming to church because they believe that they do not believe enough. We need to be clear that all of us are on a journey exploring life and its mysteries. We want those who are unsure to know that so that will join us.

Key areas include: all forms of worship including music and faith development for all ages.

*Purpose → Experience Belonging*

Experience belonging refers to connecting to others in the Fairlawn community. Community came up strongly in the Idea Files. For example Connie Buck said: "I love my Church and that will never change. I want others to have a community like I have". We chose "belonging", because of its intimacy and warmth. Belonging has least two sides: support (both general, and especially at the times of a life crisis) and social (a good place to get together).

*Purpose → Embrace Action*

Embrace Action is about connecting to those outside the Fairlawn community. We considered "faith in action", but found that this phrase does not resonate with the unchurched and the curious that we are trying to attract. Jesus calls us to put our love into action every day. We believe that most people want to live their love and put it into action.

We liked "embrace" because it is like a hug, which is a way for real people to connect through love. "Action", of course, is about getting out and getting things done, not just talking.

*Desired Future: Fairlawn is a vibrant, growing and welcoming church community*

To be vibrant and growing we need to:

- 1) have people be more engaged (current congregants)
- 2) have more people be engaged (the curious)

Although there is some overlap among the words, we kept "growing" because we felt it was the most measureable and aspirational and the most likely to help us hold each other accountable.

We took the coffee shop test<sup>1</sup>: If you were in a coffee shop three years from now what would you love to say if someone asked "What's Fairlawn like? Why do you go there?" We decided the best way to respond was to come up with a desired future statement for each purpose:

<sup>1</sup> Inspired by John Pentland's workshop in October 2013

1. **Explore Spirituality:** Our aspiration is that by 2017 we will be known the best place in the city to explore spirituality. People will say this because we live our purpose of helping everyone explore spirituality, wherever they are on their journey. We will do this through things like relevant, reverent, participatory worship (including quiet contemplative worship) and exciting and interesting, non-judgmental faith development lectures, classes and small group discussions.  
 Invitations to the curious: “Wherever you are on your spiritual journey you are welcome to join us”, “Fairlawn is a safe place to explore spirituality”, “Would you like to join our upcoming series called Theology 101?”, “Would you like to join a small group discussion at my house next week?”
2. **Experience Belonging:** Our aspiration is that people will say this because we will live our purpose of helping people experience belonging with a warm, welcoming culture so that by 2017 we can say: “every day in every way we are all helping people to feel like they belong”.  
 Invitations to the curious: “This is a great place to get support when life’s big crises hit”, “Why don’t you come and see what works so well for me?”, “Would you like to join me and work at the next book sale and see just what kind of folks we have there? A lot of them are just like you.” and “I’m sure that they will be there for you when you need them.”
3. **Embrace Action:** Our aspiration is by 2017 that we will be known the best place in the city to go when you decide you want to give back. People will say this because we will truly live our purpose of embrace action by being a terrific place to get involved in charitable and social justice work.  
 Invitations to the curious: “Are you looking to get involved to give back and making a difference? If so, then Fairlawn is the best place to work from. There are many ways to get involved in and a supportive base of people to work with.”

#### IV. What was the process used to arrive at The Fairlawn Call?

In the fall of 2011 Fairlawn launched the Branding Project. That team conducted research both within and outside Fairlawn. For any new branding to work, they realized that we needed a clear picture of Fairlawn’s calling which lead to the initiation of The Fairlawn Call Project which had 3 goals:

1. To determine where the church was and where it had come from
2. To determine what God is calling Fairlawn to be
3. To develop a plans to move us towards the desired future

The Fairlawn Call was developed in two phases: gathering input and discerning our call.

##### *1. Gathering Input (June to November 2013)*

The team studied all the Fairlawn research and documents including:

- History of Fairlawn
- JNAC (2001)
- Focus on Fairlawn (2007)
- JNAC and Congregational Survey (2009)
- Retreat (2010)
- Constitution Review (2011)
- Branding Research (2013)

The team conducted extensive one on one interviews with both current congregants and the curious, which includes recent arrivals, those with intermittent involvement and those who have never been to Fairlawn but might be interested.

The team studied success models of other churches both by visiting them and reading about them and studying the current church Literature. The models we studied most closely were:

- Hillhurst United In Calgary: They put on a workshop for us on Oct 19, 2013
- Norwell United Church of Christ: We read Scattering Seeds and visited them in Oct 2013
- Metropolitan Community Church Toronto: They visited us and we visited them.

A number of things became clear to us:

- Vibrant churches are clear about their purpose and desired future, and have a plan to get there
- We realized that Fairlawn would need an intentional process to do so
- Our statements of our purpose, desired future and core beliefs would need to:
  - use language that could be used every day in the life of the church
  - be short and memorable
  - be built into the governance and goal setting structure
  - be meaningful to both current congregants and the curious

The next part of gathering input was to get congregational input through a 2 step process:

1. Yellow cards: For 3 consecutive Sundays we asked the Congregation in the service and via the Website to hand in Yellow Cards which asked the following questions:
  - Oct 27 What is Church for you? to get input on purpose core beliefs
  - Nov 3 What do you think Church could be? to get input on the desired future
  - Nov 10 What Role could you play in the future of Fairlawn? to determine interest areas
2. Nov 17 Congregational Meeting: At this meeting there were small group facilitated discussions. The focus was on what each purpose area means and how to enhance it in the future to bring more value to both the current congregation and the curious. The facilitators and The Fairlawn Call team met afterwards to summarize the ideas.

## ***2. Discerning our call (November 2013 to April 2014)***

The Fairlawn Call team synthesized what we had learned:

- Dec 11 blue skied on all possible options
- Dec 19 Communications Task Force meeting: helped narrow options to draft #1
- Dec 19-Jan 6 draft #1 circulated and was revised twice drafts #2 and 3 over Christmas break
- Jan 9 developed draft #4
- Jan 9-Feb10 drafts #5, 6 and 7
- Jan 12 Dialogue for Direction held after church to share the key findings from Nov 17
- Feb 12 developed draft #8
- Mar 6 developed draft #9

Mar 23 Congregational Meeting: Derek Wishart made a presentation in the sanctuary immediately following worship.

This was followed by facilitated small group meetings. The key questions were:

- How do the draft purposes and core beliefs resonate with you? How would they resonate with your neighbours?
- How does the draft desired future resonate for you? How would they resonate with your neighbours? How would you want to answer the coffee shop test?

We made sure that there was a chance for those who were not there on March 23 to give input. Derek's presentation was posted on our website along with the key questions and an invitation to all to comment and answer the questions. We received a number of responses.

The findings from March 23 and subsequent feedback were summarized circulated to The Fairlawn Call team. On April 9<sup>th</sup> the team met and each word was assessed to produce the summary of Fairlawn's Call presented in section I. The Fairlawn Call team believes that we have landed on good language for The Fairlawn Call. However, it must not be locked in stone. If better language surfaces, The Fairlawn Call should be updated. The focus of our energy now should turn to building and executing the plan to get us there.