

A message about the Fairlawn Call

September 14, 2014

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

1 Corinthians 12:4-7

We are into the fall season and looking toward to September 28 when the Fairlawn Call Plan will be presented for your feedback and to October 5 when you will be asked to support the plan.

This is an appropriate time to pause and reflect on the journey we have been on to discern God's call for us and our response as God's people in this time and place.

Churches across North America are dealing with unprecedented challenges, the United Church of Canada has experienced numerous church closures, and Fairlawn is not immune to these trends. Last year, we launched The Fairlawn Call because – as Christopher said in a congregational letter – our church would benefit from carefully considering how it must build upon its strengths to be a vibrant and sustainable church in the years ahead.

The Fairlawn Call has been a journey of reflection and discovery. The model for this journey has been listening to, and considering openly and respectfully, the perspectives and insights of our congregation. Numerous activities have been undertaken to present and discuss ideas about the Fairlawn Call including:

- Oct. 27, Nov. 3, & Nov 10: the congregation answered “What is Church for you?”, “What do you think Church could be?”, and “What role could you play in the future of Fairlawn?” on yellow cards
- Nov. 17 congregational meeting and small group discussion to get input on our purposes and how to engage the curious
- Mar. 23 congregational meeting and small group discussion to get more focused input on who we are and what we should become

In addition, our website has provided a venue for sharing information and for making comments through an online survey, and the Fairlawn Call team met with many congregational teams to gather input, answer questions and clarify ideas.

On May 25, 2014, the congregation approved The Fairlawn Call which identifies our three purposes: **explore spirituality**, **experience belonging**, and **embrace action**; our core belief: **We are not alone. We are connected to God and each other by love** and our desired future to be **a vibrant, growing and welcoming church community**.

The Fairlawn Call



To make the Fairlawn Call 'come alive', the Fairlawn Call team has been developing a plan. Congregational teams have been prayerfully developing approaches and activities that would support us in living our three purposes and building our desired future. A series of Dialogues for Direction has been presented by these teams to share their proposals and get input from the congregation to build and refine the plan. The Dialogues for Direction held thus far have been:

- May 4 Worship: focusing on the Sunday service
- Jun. 8 Spirit Space: proposal for the new model of children's education
- Jun. 22 How we work together at Fairlawn: our new governance model
- Sep. 7 Ministry and Personnel

Information about the Dialogues for Direction was posted on our website which also allowed people to submit comments. More Dialogues for Direction will be held as we continue to develop the plan. Those already planned include:

- Sep. 14 Adult Education
- Oct. 19 Engagement
- Oct. 26 Communications and Identity
- Nov. 2 Stewardship and Finance

A few words on Communications and Identity: The Fairlawn Call team is developing a logo and tag line with the assistance of an advertising agency which has donated its time to the project. A logo is a visual image that can be used on letterhead and in advertising to create a consistent identity for Fairlawn which reflects the nature and spirit of our church. We are excited to show you what we have developed, and we look forward to your comments on it that will help shape the final version. We will also ask you to provide input so we can develop a short, powerful tag line (a phrase) that will tell the wider community what we are all about. We are not planning to change the church name.

With all this activity, some of you have told us you feel the process has been rushed. We hear you and are making changes. For example, to give everyone an opportunity to provide input into the Fairlawn Call Plan, we are spreading our discussion of it into three steps:

- Sep. 21 The current draft of the Fairlawn Call Plan will be distributed to the congregation
- Sep. 28 Congregational meeting immediately following a shortened worship to discuss the plan
- Oct. 5 The congregation will be asked to vote on whether it supports the direction proposed in the plan. In asking for your support, we are not just asking for your support for implementation and continued development of the plan, but also that each of you will support it by offering your unique gifts and talents to help us bring the Fairlawn Call to life.

The Fairlawn Call will be successful if all of us are engaged and supportive. As Christopher said in a recent sermon, we must put on our aprons to do God's work. We invite – we need – your input, your openness, your respectfulness, and your love as we continue along this road. Take advantage of opportunities to participate and let's celebrate what we are accomplishing.

We are blessed by what each and every one of us is contributing as we respond to God's call as individuals and as the church for the common good.

Yours in Christ,

Christopher White
Senior Minister

Derek Wishart
Chair of Executive Council

Greig Clark
Chair of The Fairlawn Call Team