

Fairlawn Avenue United Church Transition Update June 16, 2019



Key Transition Goals

- Foster trust, inclusiveness and joy.
- Learn, grow and strengthen our Fairlawn community.
- Articulate a Mission that reflects our work as a church in the community around us.
- Enhance our approach to leadership and governance that reinforces our Mission and helps us deal effectively with the challenges and opportunities open to us.
- Prepare to call a new Minister for Fairlawn.

The Plan

We need to focus initially on transition work before moving to planning for the future.

Transition work of strengthening, mending, renewing:

- Encourage a respectful culture.
- Heal wounds and unresolved issues.
- Explore new approaches to lay leadership and governance.
- Increase communication within Fairlawn.
- Enhance support for our staff.

Plan for the future and focus on what we need as a church community:

- Review our Mission to ensure it is meaningful to us and the community.
- Review our capabilities, capacities, resources and priorities.
- Develop and approve a Community of Faith Profile that reflects our Mission and priorities and informs our minister search.
- Prepare to call a new Minister for Fairlawn.

The Emerging Roadmap: what happens and when

Over the Summer

- Governing Council discussions on leadership.
- Research communication approaches.
- Initial development of a draft Covenant of Respect.
- Organize fall congregational workshops.

This Fall

- Congregational workshops:
 - Covenant of Respect: developing, refining, adopting and practicing.
 - Capabilities, Capacities and Resource Review: discussion about what we might realistically accomplish as a church.
- A covenant service to approve and adopt the Covenant of Respect into the Fairlawn constitution.
- Initial preparation for winter workshops and meetings.

Winter and Spring 2020

- Review the materials from the research project, the leadership and governance discussions and other documents to help determine what our future might look like.
- Congregational workshop to review/refine the Mission.
- Congregational meeting to approve the Mission and Governance model as needed.
- Develop a draft Community of Faith Profile for a new Minister.
- Congregational meeting to review and approve the Community of Faith Profile.
- Prepare to call a new Minister for Fairlawn.

Notes on the Nine Priority Transition Tasks

In preparation for the Transition Team and Governing Council's February 2019 planning meeting to finalize the draft priority transition tasks, Transition Minister Douglas duCharme and our Transition Consultant Abigail Johnson compiled materials from the February 2018 Presbytery report and Governing Council's goals for the Transition as background. Their work is included here to provide some context for the tasks.

Task One: Encourage a respectful culture (Listening Project, Code of Conduct)

Listening Project

Background

Congregational "culture" was highlighted in the Presbytery recommendations, and the Goals provided by Governing Council as part of the Transition Team's mandate. A "culture of conversation" is a focus of the Transition Team's *Listening Project* initiative. Skills and practice in listening will build stronger and healthier relationships within Fairlawn and beyond.

Action so far

- Established the Listening Project to help us become more connected with one another.
- Held two events – an after church workshop in November 2018 to practice active listening and, as a result of feedback from that session, one-on-one conversations during the 2019 Mother's Day service to listen and share more deeply with one another.

Upcoming

- Identify ways to translate the learning from the formal listening exercises to congregational teams and committees and ultimately, to individual connections.
- Possibly additional congregational sessions to learn more about listening, practice applying the skills and mindsets required, and get beneath the surface with each other.

Code of Conduct

Background

Culture expresses congregational values and attitudes translated into behaviour. Behaviour often communicates who we are more effectively than what we say. Thus, a *Code of Conduct* is an expression of standards, expectations, and commitments of behaviour in all relationships at Fairlawn Avenue. This Covenant of Respect (*working title*) will be a covenantal relationship with staff, ministry personnel, lay leadership and the congregation. Such a code will include steps to promote behaviour outlined in the Code and suggest ways to deal with occasions when the covenant is ignored, or violated.

We will identify and approve principles we should all live up to under a Covenant of Respect to ensure respectful encounters among congregants, staff and leadership.

Upcoming

- A fall congregational session to determine what we want to include in a Covenant of Respect.
- A covenant service to approve and adopt the Covenant of Respect into the Fairlawn constitution.

Task Two: Develop new forms of lay leadership and lay leaders

Background

Transitions are an occasion for succession when long-time leaders step aside so new leaders with fresh perspective can emerge. Succession requires an ongoing capacity to recruit, develop, and manage new leaders. Recruitment needs clarity of leadership roles, support and resources to equip new leaders, and a culture of permission to encourage new approaches to existing programmes, and new ways of exercising leadership. Churches today need leaders who can work in adaptive situations, where the challenges are not clearly defined and conducive to problem-solving. At the same time the opportunities that are arising are unlike what congregations may be familiar with, so there is need for experimentation, rooted in the Mission, to explore responses to the challenges we face. Lay leaders will be invited to learn together as they bring leadership.

Action so far

- Ongoing relationships with the North Toronto cluster of churches, a Fairlawn initiative, that result in sharing ideas, resources and opportunities.

Upcoming

- A series of discussions over the summer with the Transition Minister and members of Governing Council to learn about alternative ways to provide leadership in a changing church environment.

Task Three: Heal wounds and unresolved issues (from 2016-17)

Background

A period of uncertainty, conflict, and upheaval began in 2016 that left an impact on FAUC members. Some members require a continuing period of gradual healing, and re-building of trust. Others prefer to move forward with meaningful and hopeful programmes and projects at Fairlawn. Yet others find the entire situation confusing because they were largely unaware of the tensions that developed. Everyone wishes to restore a sense of purpose and community. Responding to such diverse responses is challenging. We cannot act as though nothing happened, yet there is little appetite for dwelling on the past. However, healing is evident in the Transition Team's *Listening Project* initiative. Specific needs for healing are expressed and being met, often in one-on-one conversations. In some cases, healing takes place with time or absence from regular attendance. We need to remain sensitive and alert to this healing work.

Action so far

- Ongoing one-on-one conversations with our Transition Minister and members of the congregation to address concerns about the events of 2016-17. This option is open to all who would like to talk in confidence.

Upcoming

- Individual conversations over the next few months with Transition Minister Douglas duCharme and those directly involved in the conflict to reflect on

how we might do things differently if we were to face similar crises in the future.

Task Four: Strengthen internal communication

Background

Communication at Fairlawn Avenue has improved in recent years—a huge achievement. At the same time, communication with the congregation is ineffective. Congregation members feel they are not receiving information or that information is not sufficient and leaves them with questions. In an era of social media, our communication needs to be inter-active, timely, and responsive. Communication is not only information, it can also change people's assumptions and perceptions of “church” and engage people who visit Fairlawn to explore further.

Action so far

- Initial meeting of the task group to identify issues and potential solutions and put together a short survey to determine what kinds of communication the congregation wants.

Upcoming

- Involve members of the congregation via the survey and conversations with task group members to determine what they need in the way of communication and how best to convey that information.
- Explore alternative forms of communication that can tell our story – Fairlawn's and stories of individual congregants.
- Increase and make more interactive, communication about the Transition process.
- Identify ways to promote sharing of information, ideas and views that is omni-directional and interactive where possible.

Task Five: Strengthen staff, team-building

Background

In recent months the Fairlawn staff has reached a greater understanding that the minister and staff work with the congregation to enable, equip, and encourage members to fulfil the FAUC mission. To strengthen this understanding, the congregation needs to be clear about staff roles. Expectations of staff members need to be understood by M&P, Governing Council, key lay leaders and congregation members. Staff members need to fulfill their work responsibilities with confidence, and not feel overwhelmed by unreasonable workloads.

Upcoming

- Communicate to the congregation the purpose and responsibilities of staff members as well as their designated priorities and various policies (e.g., *Greetings* protocol) governing their work.
- Continue the search for a Communications Manager [Key need].

Task Six: Agree on a Mission Statement

Background

The Fairlawn Call contains an implicit spirit of the congregation's mission. However, a distinct and explicit statement of Fairlawn Avenue's particular identity and context is not expressed. A mission statement not only expresses FAUC's gifts, experience, and ministry, it also prioritizes what work needs to be done now or in the future. Discerning FAUC's mission comes at a time when church is part of a rapidly changing society, a time that needs to be reflected in Fairlawn's understanding of its mission today.

Action so far

- Initial input received from the congregation at the recent AGM.

Upcoming

- Depending on the results of the research project regarding community needs and the decisions of Governing Council, organize a congregational workshop for winter 2020 to answer these or other questions to help enhance/refine our Mission: What is it to be church? What do we need church for?

Task Seven: Review and refine governance

Background

The current FAUC governance model has served the three programming areas, and the need for accountability (e.g. finance, property). With a review of *The Fairlawn Call* and agreement on a Mission Statement, an evaluation of the current governance model will be useful and timely.

Upcoming

- Governing Council to explore the possibilities of an approach to governance that reflects possible changes in the function and process of leadership and concentrates on developing policy and supporting the health of the church rather than, or in addition to, day-to-day management.
- These discussions will be held in tandem with the leadership learning workshops over the summer of 2019.

Task Eight: Strengthen Ministry & Personnel role and effectiveness

Background

A *Ministry and Personnel Committee (M&P)* is a conduit between concerns of ministry personnel and staff, and the Governing Council and congregation. Thus M&P was involved in the upheaval at Fairlawn Avenue in 2016-2017. As a result, M&P was criticized for its role in the situation, as well as a recognition that this

complex and multi-faceted set of factors was beyond fixing, by M&P or anyone else.

At the same time, with a growing staff and evolving governance, M&P's policies, practices, and procedures also need to grow and evolve. One area of growth is to clarify the role of Fairlawn's Executive Director versus M&P in human resources work, and supervision of staff.

Action so far

- The model for M&P has changed, as decreed by the United Church. As a result, Fairlawn's M&P Council is currently in the midst of the development of and training in M&P responsibilities. This work is ongoing.
- Joint meetings with staff and M&P Council members to discuss challenges, communication needs, etc. These meetings are also ongoing.

Task Nine: Strengthen capabilities, capacities, and resources where possible, and bring clarity to limits (Property, Stewardship, etc.)

Background:

At this point in its story there is a need to take Fairlawn Avenue's capacity and resources into consideration for whatever we decide to do into the future. Staff is working to capacity, lay leaders are weary, and finding new leadership and new approaches to the leadership we need, is challenging. Stewardship has remained level. Where will any new capacity and competency be found in order to respond to the opportunities that will emerge? How do we develop new programmes with existing staff, limited financial resources, and a building that is showing its age and in need to increasing repairs and maintenance?

A part of the Transition work involves identifying ways that Fairlawn can focus, and not be driven by a one-stop-shopping approach. How can Fairlawn come to terms with the reality that we cannot do everything on our own anymore?

Action so far

- Current work on updating policies and procedures.

Upcoming

- Review of time and resources required for ongoing work of the church, capital projects, staff capacity and volunteer work.
- A fall congregational workshop to examine our capacities and resources and set out priorities. The ultimate goal will be to achieve a clear understanding of what initiatives we can realistically take on, given our current resources, to help ensure sustainability and clarity of what we do as a church.