



# Transition to Transformation: Emerging Directions for Our Shared Path

## **Where are we now?**

The challenges being faced by churches in our increasingly complex society are daunting. At the same time, the opportunities that exist are vast and exciting. One thing that is very clear is that God is not done with us yet and God's Spirit is alive and at work bringing life to the world all around us.

At Fairlawn Avenue, the efforts to focus on opportunities for new directions in ministry and programming over the past five years – through The Fairlawn Call, becoming an Affirming congregation, investing in Spirit Space for Kids, and much more – brought hopeful change.

Yet, we know that the challenges that we – as a church and faith community – continue to face remain large. They require further evaluation, study, discernment, and effort to understand. We have an opportunity for further learning about where we have been and how we can move forward in new ways based on what we have learned together, so that we can ideally live our faith in a way that feeds our soul and responds to the world's needs.

## **Defining the problem and rebuilding for a hopeful future.**

Together, with the collaborative efforts of Toronto Southeast Presbytery, a number of areas have been identified as needing work to repair, restore, and strengthen Fairlawn Avenue's capacities for ministry that transforms lives and makes a difference in the world.

Working together, we have maintained our active congregational life and ministry while working to rebuild trust and heal strained relationships. We have seen new leaders be inspired to step forward from the congregation. We have also strengthened our stewardship of financial support and volunteer time and seen an encouraging growth in regular worship attendance. It's an exciting time to be involved at Fairlawn.

We are addressing our operating challenges in order to allow the tremendous opportunities for ministry to open in exciting ways, including developing stronger partnerships with the community around us. We continue to be humbled and acknowledge that God does not wait for us to figure everything out before seeding life in the world through people and groups in community! We are reminded that sometimes our job is to pay attention to the signs of life and hope in the world and to participate with what God is already doing in our neighbourhoods.

The research we are doing through our *Taking the Call Forward* initiative will help us determine the places where Fairlawn Avenue can contribute to existing

projects and programs and identify where we have something unique to offer as a faith community of Spirit. We will bring our experience with social justice, children and youth, seniors, adult learning, music and the arts, spirituality, and much more to working out new ways of deepening the sense of life for people around us. We believe that the research will be presented to us in early 2020.

Building upon the transition work that we are doing, we will be in a healthy position to identify our future directions and priorities as a faith community. We will give attention to the kind of leadership that Fairlawn Avenue needs as we move into the future, as well as continuing to work on a renewed vision for our life together.

### **When will we get there?**

This experience is a bit like driving down a curving road at night: our headlights show the road through the next turn, but we can't see the destination quite yet. We are, however, moving forward steadily, and faithfully, together. Everyone who is involved with this diverse and active Fairlawn Avenue community has a part in this journey and something to contribute along the way, and we know that we are not alone: God is very much with us on this path!

We also know that – to be successful – we need to integrate the vision of our new future into the operating reality of our current human and financial capacities, as well as our collective hope for the future of our church. This will require input from you in our faith community who love what we have **and** hope to build toward an even better future.

Over the next few months, as the research results are tabulated, sorted, and digested, they will be shared with the congregation through meetings, discussions, and deliberations to ensure that they take us in the direction that we, collectively, believe is the right one for this church. We will want to validate our values and strive to synthesize how we want to live our faith values in the world.

In the meantime, the life and ministry of Fairlawn Avenue will continue to actively engage us all in opportunities to be involved as we Explore Spirituality, Experience Belonging, and Embrace Action together, connecting with the things that matter in people's lives.

**18 September 2019**  
**Rev. Douglas duCharme and the members of**  
**Governing Council and the Transition Team**



**FAIRLAWN**  
Connect with what matters in life.