



The Breast Friends, and one of their caregivers, enjoy their bi-annual lunch.

Breast Friends is All About Women Helping Women

By Shirley Joyce

Breast Friends, the Fairlawn Breast Cancer Support Group that has been operating since 2012, has just switched to bi-monthly meetings as most of our members are flourishing.

“We’ve become a group that keeps in touch with each other,” says Kathleen Magladry. “If someone breaks her ankle or is dealing with lung cancer and treatment, we all know and she still has someone to turn to.”

Our group began when Marion Boyce and I started discussing our experiences dealing with breast cancer and treatment after church one day. We invited Carolyn Hay of Fairlawn to join us, then decided to form a support group when several other women in the congregation were diagnosed.

Our group has had from 12 to 16 members as friends and community members have joined us. When members were dealing with diagnoses and treatment, we’d start with Boyce’s opening prayer, then talk, share articles, and discuss concerns, treatments, and

their after-effects. We’d also invite guests to speak on body image or fitness and exercise, and we even took a field trip to Sunnybrook Hospital to talk with a nutritionist. We still have two social get-togethers a year.

“We’d go around the circle, and people would share what was on their mind if they had new concerns,” says Magladry.

“Others would say I felt that, too,” adds Boyce.

“Multiple health issues would come up,” adds Hay. “But you knew you weren’t alone.”

We would discuss how exercise or nutrition could impact us or how we felt about being lop-sided or scarred. We’d even talk about how one breast felt heavier or our shoulder hurt.

“You wouldn’t talk to other people about it,” says Boyce.

Our group has proven valuable for community members, too.

Anne Szandtner, who’s been involved since 2013 and encouraged others to join, says she felt scared and worried when she arrived, but was “welcomed with kindness and hope. It was

wonderful to meet on a monthly basis to hear people tell their stories and to learn and share from them. If there was a problem, often someone else had an answer for you. The whole environment was comforting and helpful.”

Jacque Brown, who started four years ago, adds, “the group provides a safe space to discuss the many challenges that come with experiencing breast cancer, but also a space where we share knowledge and new information that might help recovery and ongoing consequences of the disease. I have valued enormously the open welcome, warmth, and concern shared at these meetings, so thank you for extending beyond your own congregation.”

“I think it’s important to keep it going, even though most of us don’t need it right now,” says Hay. “But, if someone new comes, we can help them.”

We meet during the day and still welcome new members, but would also be happy to help a younger group start at night because we’ve experienced the power of women helping women through life’s challenges.

THE

FAIRLAWN

CONNECTION

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The Voice of Fairlawn Avenue United Church celebrating our lives and community. Connect with what matters in life — Explore Spirituality, Experience Belonging, and Embrace Action.

Fairlawn is a welcoming church, inclusive of people of all ages, races, ethnicities, sexual orientations, and gender identities. *The Fairlawn Connection* is distributed to 3,000 homes in the Fairlawn Avenue United Church neighbourhood.

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Spiritual Reflections

What is rebirthing in life these days?

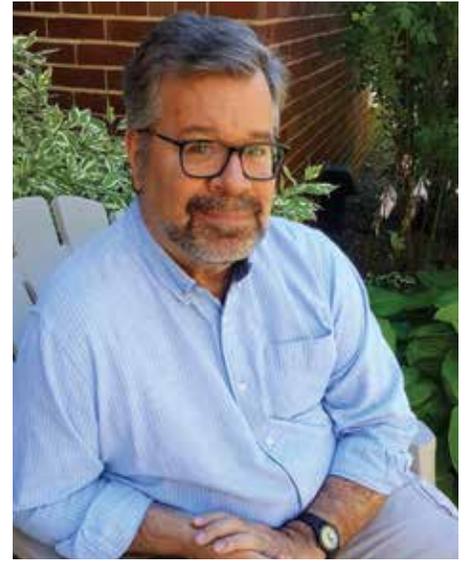
By Douglas duCharme

Re-birth, in life and in our gardens, signals that a lot of things have come together to create a readiness for new life. For people at different times in life, and for perennial plants, re-birth is a continuation of what went before, but in a new way. For plants, the re-birth comes after a period of winter dormancy. For people, it comes after a time of reflection, or discernment about life's direction and priorities, or after an experience that is literally "life-changing".

Re-birth is a natural process, which happens in a variety of ways. Plants enter dormancy to conserve energy when growing conditions become adverse – usually with the short days and cold weather of winter. But, plants can also become dormant in response to intense heat, or drought. The plants don't die – they go into suspended animation. Outer leaves and foliage may die back, but life still lurks in the plant's core and roots!

Life also contains natural processes of growth, dormancy, and re-birth for us. Sometimes our fallow time comes in summer, when we step away from work, change our daily rhythms, and take more time with family and friends. We call this time vacation. On other occasions, we may decide to take a "sabbatical" from social media, or Netflix! Whatever it is, we are instinctively pausing during life's usual activities, so we can restore and reflect.

Then, when the time and conditions are right, the new life that has been taking shape within us uses the new energy we have been saving to burst forth in an experience of re-birth. We approach new challenges with fresh resolve. We try things we've long thought about doing. We take steps to change our employment, learn a new skill, or fulfill a commitment that we made to ourselves. Whatever shape it takes, this feels like a re-birth, a newness of



life. It happens naturally in many of our lives, but it can also be a distinctly spiritual experience.

At Fairlawn, we are familiar with renewal, re-birth, and newness of life, and aware of the many forms that it can take. Sometimes, we call re-birth Easter!

Happy Easter! Happy Spring!

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Fairlawn Voices: *What is rebirthing for you?*



It takes effort to be consciously relaxed. It feels as if I'm only relaxed during my weekend, when I can recharge physically through a workout and mentally at church on Sunday. Finding peace among my thoughts there, I carry that sense of peace and renewal of spirit through the balance of my week.

- Mark Richardson



Hints of rebirth emerge with earlier sunrises and longer days. The melting of snow in the woods and the retreat of ice on our cottage lake inspire us. This year, we are going to Vancouver Island in March to cherish the cherry blossoms, renew friendships, and reconnect with our cousins.

-Allan Hux



Rebirthing, for me, is a trip to Hilton Head Island each March. Away from city commitments, there is time for physical rebirth while riding a tricycle on hard sand with the ocean breeze and soothing surf... time to celebrate God's creation while observing a shy lizard and watchful alligator... time for spiritual rebirth while reflecting on an online Lenten study. Rebirth... Joy..

- Rosalie Cowan

Life at Fairlawn



🦋 **December 2:** Women from Fairlawn and the community enjoy Advent by Candlelight preparation and dessert.

🦋 **February 2:** Elizabeth Moore speaks out against hate on Social Justice Sunday.



🦋 **December 3:** Fairlawn, the Brownies, and the Advent by Candlelight participants gave generously to the Red Door Family Shelter.

🦋 **December 24:** Kieran Shah enjoys participating in Fairlawn's Christmas pageant.



🦋 **Fall:** Sal Brancaccio appreciates Fairlawn's new doors and refurbished sign.

🦋 **January:** The Fairlawn Quilters stitch a new quilt.



🚩 **January 12:** Fairlawn enjoyed the second of The Big Table's four-part Planet Worth Saving climate crisis series.



🚩 **February 23:** The Rev. Douglas duCharme blesses the prayer shawls that Fairlawn Knitters created.



🚩 **February 25:** Mayor John Tory and the Rev. Douglas duCharme both helped at Amnesty International's pancake supper.

🚩 **February 25:** Councillor Mike Colle joined Governing Council Secretary Mary Ellen Richardson at Amnesty International's pancake supper.

Fairlawn's Explore Spirituality Spring Opportunities

By Amanda Hancox

Spring brings thoughts of rebirth and renewal, a time for looking at our life – and spirituality – through a fresh lens. Can we use this contemplative Lenten season to awaken our spiritual selves? Fairlawn's Explore Spirituality Council says YES! No matter where you are on your spiritual journey, there are still opportunities this spring to explore your spirituality.

Fairlawn Lenten Series

Since Lent began, we've already introduced some deep personal introspection by including the spiritual practices of a sanctuary labyrinth walk in our Ash Wednesday service on February 26 and reflecting with art on March 2, which showed us meditating with art can raise personal and spiritual revelations for us.

We've just started a four-week group exploration of Richard Rohr's book, *The Universal Christ*. So, if lively discussion about one of today's theological issues is your preferred method of investigation, we invite you to join Kathy Magladry and Rob Metcalf on Wednesdays until April 1 from 7:00 – 8:45 p.m. Rohr, the often-controversial theologian, asks us to shake off some old concepts of "Christ" as a word belonging to Jesus alone, and contemplate its universal and timeless significance.

Do you have questions about Lent and the Easter story? What significance does this salient Christian story hold for us today? Has your understanding of Easter changed over time? The Journey to Hope follows up on our popular Advent series, as we offer an opportunity to share your

personal experience, memories, and questions in a free-flowing discussion. Please drop in from 12:00 – 12:45 p.m., after the Sunday service on March 22 and April 5, when the Rev. Douglas duCharme will facilitate these Lenten conversations.

Spring Events

Ambury Stuart is offering a lecture series on the interaction of science and religion at Fairlawn on Tuesdays from April 14 to May 5 at 7:00 p.m. As a scientist and theologian, Ambury's talks are fascinating, thought-provoking, and tinged with humour.

Our community Big Table will continue its Planet Worth Saving climate crisis series on April 5 and May 24, from 6:00 – 7:30 p.m. Join us for dinner, activities for all ages, and conversations about what matters in life. All are welcome.

Rebirthing at Friends Catering & Women's Bakery

By John Cowan

Fairlawn's Embrace Action (EA) Fund supports Fred Victor's two programmes for developing the skills of people trapped in poverty: Friends Catering and Women's Bakery. The programmes provide hope and new life so participants can work their way back into society.

"Support from Fairlawn ensures that people trying to build a better life for themselves have a safe, caring place to start over," says Marie MacCormack, Fred Victor's Director of Fundraising and Special Projects. "Fairlawn's gifts keep the doors open, the heat and lights on, food supplies in the cupboards, and caring knowledgeable staff at the ready to offer a hand up."

Friends Catering is a social purpose enterprise and professional catering company that operates out of Fred Victor's Queen Street kitchen. It caters full meals and snacks for groups of up to 1,000 people. Launched in 2008, Friends' training and employment opportunities support increased self-reliance for people with life-limiting barriers to employment, such as mental illness or addictions.

Participants may not have completed

secondary school and be at-risk young adults or be immigrants entering or advancing within the workforce or those with lived experience of homelessness or mental health challenges.

Catering, training, and support staff work closely with the trainees to provide coaching in general work-readiness skills, goal setting, and trade-related skills, including preparing fine foods, and doing safe food handling plus displays, business, and promotion. Participants also receive training and support in life skills, work placement opportunities, and assistance in finding employment.

"The programme turned me around, gave me employable skills and a peer group to lean on – it's like I was re-born," says Allan, one of Friends' 13 participants in 2018.

The Women's Bakery empowers women through training and employment opportunities. Launched in 2016, it uses baking as a tool to foster employability and entrepreneurship and equip women with practical and transferrable skills. It involves a three-month education and training segment and three-month paid placement.

The Women's Bakery tackles barriers



A bakery student completes a project.

while providing opportunity for personal and professional growth, leading to upward mobility and sustainability of improved circumstances. 85% of its 24 graduates in 2019 found employment or took further training.

"The teachers have never treated me differently because of my mental illness," says Arulsakthy.

"I love it," adds Elizabeth, who became the family bread winner. "I can't believe I'm working. I feel empowered."

Supporting Fairlawn's EA Fund helps you provide new life for others.