

# TAKING THE CALL FORWARD: OUR COMMUNITY RESEARCH REPORT IS IN!

**Fairlawn has listened carefully and heard from our community.**

**Now we want to hear back from you!**

The Taking the Call Forward Community Research Report that we've all been waiting for is in! You can read the:

- Executive Summary, and
- Community Research Final Report, which includes the key findings, research methodology, and research data.

It's given us useful data and findings. Now, we want to hear from you as, together, we shape Fairlawn's future.

## **Our Next Steps: Listening Carefully to You**

The Taking the Call Forward Advisory Committee and Governing Council have reviewed the report and proposed a consultation process so we can hear your views.

- By late August: We'll send you a congregational email with the September meeting dates for congregant discussions and feedback options.
- September: We'll hold congregational discussions on Zoom, by phone, and in small, face-to-face groups, if possible.
- Fall: We'll share the discussion results with the full congregation, then develop a strategic next step process that will involve all of you. Watch for more details in the fall.

COVID-19 has already caused us to discover and undertake some new initiatives to continue to create and support each other as a community. This research will continue to inform our new initiatives as we evolve as a congregation.

If you have urgent questions about the research report before we kick into higher gear with our fall discussions, please send a note to Rosemary Pryde, Governing Council Co-chair, at [tcf@fairlawnavenueunited.ca](mailto:tcf@fairlawnavenueunited.ca).

## **Some Key Research Results**

Nayar Consulting did the congregational and community research by conducting a comprehensive survey last spring and holding focus groups and one-on-one interviews last fall. A total of 369 people participated in the consultations.

We now have a thorough review of the research results, which are intended to help us identify the top three unmet needs that our congregation and broader community value, and want, from a church so that we can better engage both of them. Ultimately, we want to make Fairlawn a relevant entity to support the world – both inside and outside of our doors – so people want to join us in our Fairlawn community.

Some of the key research results include:

- Fairlawn's service area is relatively stable and financially well-off. People are a bit older, with the demographic over 55 showing moderate growth. The number of families with younger children is decreasing, but those with teens and young adults at home are remaining steady.
- Fairlawn has a good reputation in the community and people value the United Church of Canada's progressive, inclusive attitude toward faith.

- Fairlawn has several strengths to build on, including a welcoming feeling, music program, minister/religious services, social justice work (our Embrace Action programs), and annual book sale.
- The fact that Fairlawn is a Christian church is not a barrier to the broader community engaging with Fairlawn.
- Our Fairlawn congregants value the support that they feel in this community, openness to exploring spirituality, and social justice commitment.
- Members of the broader, surrounding community in which we reside want to:
  - feel accepted and valued;
  - gather and question the bigger picture, especially the state of the world today, as they probe the deeper meaning of life; and
  - connect – during difficult life transitions, to learn new things, and to make a difference in the world through good social justice work.
- It would be worth dedicating resources to community engagement, simplify our website, and use several communication methods to engage our surrounding community.

## Exploring New Directions

As we gather feedback this fall, and discern our next steps, you may want to consider the report's suggestions:

- focus our attention for potential congregational growth on mature adults and parents with teens, while remaining open and welcome to all, since:
  - many mature adults (age 55 - 69) are in transition with work, marital status, and empty nesting;
  - parents (age 40 - 50) with teens are looking for ways for their families to embrace action;
- retain a focus on exploring spirituality and religion through our unique United Church values framework;
- focus on one or two key social justice (Embrace Action) areas as anchors to develop a community engagement strategy, partnerships with other groups, and our branding;
- be more deliberate about our community engagement;
- use the music program as a way to build Fairlawn's profile by directly anchoring it in our Embrace Action work and learning opportunities;
- go online and virtual – for classes and services, weekdays as well as Sundays;
- ensure our community partnerships (tenancies) align with our priority focus areas;
- consider which activities we want to start, stop, or continue so we focus on strategic activities; and
- slowly build on one initiative at a time.

We are already doing some of these, but can enhance them, as we continually evolve as a church. Others will require deep conversation and, likely, trade-offs. We recognize that will be difficult, and we will involve you as we proceed.

## What Now?

We believe that we have a comprehensive research package that will help us determine our next steps as, together, we continue to plan Fairlawn's future. We'd appreciate it if you could take some time to digest the report and help all of us as, together, we create this new path where the Spirit is leading us as a people of faith.

*Rosemary Pryde & Mary Ellen Richardson  
Co-chairs, Governing Council*