



FAIRLAWN

Connect with what matters in life.

I don't know about you, but with insurrection and security operations in Washington ahead of the inauguration, frantic posts about politics, economics, COVID-19 mutations, and concerns for long-term mental wellness (and more), you may have come across a friend or two on email or social media reminding everyone to "just breathe".

It can seem trite. Can just breathing really make a difference?

And then I heard an interview about a new book, *Breath: The New Science of a Lost Art* (2020), in which the journalist James Nestor argues that people have, in fact, become rather bad at this most basic act of living. We breathe through our mouths and into our chests, and we do it way too fast. According to Nestor, there is even a phenomenon called "email apnea", where multitasking office workers (now working from home) breathe irregularly and shallowly. Some are found to hold their breath for half a minute or more while glued to their screens.

Besides all the worrisome health problems this may cause, our ineptitude at breathing may contribute to anxiety and other mental health problems. In the midst of pandemic lockdown, researchers are exploring how using breathing techniques – many ancient – can help people stave off anxiety. What they're discovering is that breathing can be a forgotten key to finding calm and peace in life.

We often try to tame anxiety by changing our thoughts – questioning worst-case scenarios in our heads, distracting ourselves, or seeking therapy. But, breathing offers a different approach, bypassing the complexities of the mind and targeting the body directly. Instead of trying to think ourselves out of feeling anxious, we can do something concrete – breathing in particular rhythms (or, I discover, breathing through one nostril) – and sometimes find tangible relief.

The science can get a bit complicated, but this realization about breathing should not be a big surprise. Breathing is a major component of many spiritual practices involving prayer, meditation, and mindfulness. Monks and nuns from the early church knew this. They practiced rhythmic prayer and singing, especially chanting. Choir members know that the joy that comes from singing with others is, in part, a function of paying attention to our breathing. Today, some of these practices are better known through Buddhist spirituality, but Christianity also has deep roots in an embodied spirituality that eases anxiety and brings us peace – even when life itself continues to be very challenging.

Nestor notes that participants who use simple, aware breathing practices describe feeling "more in control" and less debilitated by anxiety. They even noted an increase in confidence and spiritual wholeness. The way we breathe can set off ripples of change in our bodies.

I have not yet read Nestor's book, and it should be said that the many techniques that can be tried should never be seen as a replacement for therapy or a cure for severe anxiety. But, they can be a free and simple tool for both short-term relief and long-term benefit.

I paid attention to the interview with James Nestor because, moments earlier, I had read the message that our partner church in the U.S., the United Church of Christ, wrote to its member churches, saying:

"While we are hesitant to raise the alarm and/or overreact, recent events compel us to inform you about what we are hearing regarding possible threats that have come to our attention. There are reports that 'liberal' churches will become targets of possible attacks in the coming week... We strongly encourage you to be attendant to all safety concerns for ministers and members."

We live in unsettling times. One of the ways we can continue to instill hope, and to stay connected to the love that is at the heart of life in this messy and troubled world, is through faith-filled practices of breathing, and prayer – quiet moments in our days when we still know that we are not alone. I know that I am paying more attention to those moments more regularly in my own life, and I pray that may be true also for you.

Blessings, and peace,

FAIRLAWN AVENUE UNITED CHURCH WEEKLY NEWSLETTER

FAIRLAWN GREETINGS!

January 21 - 28, 2021

Sunday, January 24	
10:20 a.m.	Sunday Service on Zoom (Audio) Call: 647-374-4685 Meeting ID: 981 5907 8306 Password: 7011020
10:30 a.m.	Check here for the Rev. Jean Ward's reflection and click on the video, "A Necessary Condition".
11:15 a.m.	Coffee-time Chat Login: here Or call: 647-374-4685 Meeting ID: 882 9234 2882 Password: 7011115
1 p.m.	Zoom Spirit Space for Kids! Email whitton@fairlawnavenueunited.ca before Thursday at 4 p.m. for Zoom login details.
Monday, January 25	
10:30 a.m.	Breast Friends Support Group

Monday, January 25 (cont'd.)	
8 p.m.	Broadview Discussion Group Login: here Or call: 647-374-4685 Meeting ID: 849 8789 4762 Password: 121700
9 p.m.	Fairlawn Basketball
Tuesday, January 26	
10 a.m.	Weekly Staff Meeting
1:30 p.m.	Knitting Group Chat and Craft Meeting
Wednesday, January 27	
12:30 p.m.	Mid-week Prayer Login: here Or call: 647-374-4685 Meeting ID: 846 2931 7353 Password: 3011230
7 p.m.	Communications Task Group Think Tank
7:30 p.m.	Zoom Christian Meditation, Email moderator Patrick Sullivan at patcheen@sympatico.ca in advance for login details.
Thursday, January 28	
7 p.m.	Senior Choir Get-together

Please send *Greetings!* submissions to greetings@fairlawnavenueunited.ca by Tuesday noon.

Sunday Worship & Events

Sunday, January 24:

Online Worship Service. Sundays at 10:30 a.m., we gather online to worship. Click [here](#) to select the Rev. Jean Ward's reflection, "A Necessary Condition". This week's scripture reading is [Mark 1:14-20](#). You can also access the service audio on Zoom at 10:20 a.m. Please see the calendar above for call-in details.

Online Music Bulletin. The virtual musical offering in this week's worship service features baritone/guitarist Doug MacNaughton performing Gordon Lightfoot's iconic *Song for a Winter's Night*. Eleanor Daley, Director of Music, has also curated an [online music bulletin](#), which features virtual performances of the second movement of *Winter* from Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons*, William Byrd's *Sing Joyfully Unto God*, performed by the world renowned vocal group VOCES8, the first movement from Bach's *Brandenburg Concerto No. 2 in F Major*, and more. The musical virtual offering in the worship service video is also included in the online bulletin. Please scroll below the postlude to read the music notes.

Spirit Space for Kids! We have resumed Spirit Space for Kids! on Zoom on Sundays. Encourage your children, five years old and up, to join us at 1 p.m. for engaging conversation and exciting crafts and games. Email Whitton Daley at whitton@fairlawnavenueunited.ca before Thursday at 4 p.m. for the Zoom login details.

Experience Belonging

The Broadview Discussion Group: Monday, January 25, on Zoom at 8 p.m.. The January/February issue has very interesting articles on "Kids in Crisis" and "Christians, White Supremacy and the U.S. Election", and an interview with the Rev. Michael Blair. All readers of the print and online editions are welcome. We are meeting on Zoom from 8 – 9:30 p.m. Check the calendar above for the information to log in with your computer or phone.

Fairlawn Basketball. You'll have noticed that "Fairlawn Basketball" continues to appear in the weekly schedule in *Greetings!*, for every Monday at 9 p.m., even though the building is closed and the gym is off-limits. We don't get the same sort of exercise we used to, in pre-COVID times. But the basketball group continues to meet via Zoom every week at that time. In total, 15 of us have joined at least one session, with a core group of six or seven regulars. With an average duration of almost 90 minutes, we cover more territory than we ever used to on the basketball court. In short, we're going strong and intend to outlast COVID.

Explore Spirituality

Mid-week Prayer. Join us on Zoom on Wednesdays from 12:30 – 1 p.m., when the Rev. Douglas duCharme will lead our weekly gathering time to check in, share experiences, and offer prayers. The Zoom login details are in the *Greetings!* calendar above and at fairlawchurch.ca (under Fairlawn's Current Activities).

Embrace Action

Roehampton Basket Drive. We need your help to provide 15 baskets of household essentials for people moving from the Roehampton shelter. Thanks to your generosity, we have filled our first four baskets! Here's how you can contribute:

- 1) make a [cash donation to Fairlawn](#), indicating it's for Roehampton (gifts of more than \$20 will receive a tax receipt), so we can buy items. You can buy a basket for \$200, or buy part of one.
- 2) sign up at [Roehampton Basket Drive](#) for the items you'd like to contribute, so we know what will be donated. Hold any physical contributions until we can receive drop-offs after the current provincial COVID-19 lockdown.
- 3) share this appeal with your friends.

Thanks for sharing your love with our Roehampton neighbours! If you have questions, please contact ea@fairlawnavenueunited.ca.

Other News

Broadview Subscriptions \$25. It is time to renew your current *Broadview* magazine subscription or subscribe for the first time. The group rate is \$25 for one year. To renew or subscribe, please: a) send an e-transfer to etransfer@fairlawnavenueunited.ca, indicating your name in the memo line, or b) mail a cheque payable to Fairlawn Avenue United Church at 28 Fairlawn Avenue, Toronto, ON, M5M 1S7. The renewal deadline is February 8. If you have any questions, please contact Heather de la Rúa at heather@fairlawnavenueunited.ca.

Financial Contributions

Financial Contributions. The church is continuing online and many congregants are already on our Pre-authorized Remittance (PAR) program. If you are not, please consider one of these ways to continue your usual offering:

- send e-transfers to etransfer@fairlawnavenueunited.ca.
If you are a new donor, please include your name and mailing address in the memo line, so that we can send you a tax receipt at year-end.
- click on the "Support Fairlawn" icon at fairlawchurch.ca to:
 - [securely donate online](#) and continue to support Fairlawn,
 - [sign up](#) to make regular contributions through our PAR program, or
- mail a cheque to Fairlawn at 28 Fairlawn Avenue, Toronto, ON M5M 1S7.

Please contact Heather at heather@fairlawnavenueunited.ca for information on these options or to make other arrangements. Your ongoing support is deeply appreciated.