



Greetings!

I had time for a lot of reading in my three weeks of vacation – something I really enjoy! It took me in all sorts of directions, involving some well-crafted mysteries set in France, and some terrific novels that brought the world to life through the eyes of authors whose experience and perspective are entirely unlike mine.

I also took the opportunity to step aside from the specifics of Fairlawn to reflect and read about spirituality and society more broadly as we ease out from the grip of pandemic restrictions. I have had a hunch over the past number of months that Christian faith, the church, and spirituality generally are in the midst of a big re-think due to the global disruption of COVID-19 – and now I can confirm that! After decades of decline, when churches were continually trying to find a “fix” for what was wrong, the pandemic has driven those churches that have remained vital and open-hearted, like Fairlawn, to dig more deeply into the spiritual pulse of people in our society, and the church’s own core identity found in the person of Jesus. And I am left inspired!

In today’s context, the church is in urgent need of a re-think. Following repeated sexual abuse allegations and convictions involving clergy, and the horrific legacy of residential schools in Canada (among other things), it is no exaggeration to say that for a great many people in our society the biggest obstacle to encountering Jesus’ words and way has been the people who claim to follow Jesus: the church. The growth of “nones” in society, those who say “none of the above” when asked for their religious affiliation, indicates that people today see the contradictions of Christianity in clear, stark terms.

During the Second World War, when German churches were co-opted by Nazism, a prophetic minister named Dietrich Bonhoeffer began speaking of a “religionless” Christianity. He argued that Jesus’ words and actions were not only about saving us from sin, but also saving us from *religion*. The philosopher Gil Anidjar has recently written, “Christianity is no ordinary religion, it is the religion of the end of religion.”

If people today are willing to look to the church at all, it seems they are looking for a Christianity that looks a lot more like Jesus. What might that mean? Well, taking his words, it would be about a community of people where the last are first and first last; where the mighty are cast down from their thrones and the lowly lifted up; where the hungry are filled with good things and the rich sent away empty; where poor are blessed, and peacemakers are children of God. In other words, in light of our experience of a world turned upside-down by COVID, seeing Jesus’ upside-down “kingdom” of God brought to life may have a timely authenticity about it.

Perhaps the time for enacting a “religionless” Christian faith is here. And if that seems like a strange phrase, there is another name for it – it’s love.

I’m glad to be back from vacation, and feeling renewed. These are inspiring days!

Blessings, and peace,

Fairlawn Avenue United Church

Calendar

July 22 – August 5, 2021

Thursday, July 22	
4:00 p.m.	ES Series – Open the Door: A Journey to the True Self 3of7
Sunday, July 25	
10:30 a.m.	Online Worship Service
10:30 a.m.	Online Music Bulletin
11:15 a.m.	Coffee-time Chat
Tuesday, July 27	
2:30 p.m.	Fairlawn Knitting – Craft & Chat
Wednesday, July 28	
12:30 p.m.	Mid-week Prayer
7:30 p.m.	Christian Meditation
Thursday, July 29	
4:00 p.m.	ES Series – Open the Door: A Journey to the True Self 4of7

Thursday, July 29 cont'd	
7:00 p.m.	Senior Choir Get-together
Sunday, August 1	
10:30 a.m.	Online Worship Service
10:30 a.m.	Online Music Bulletin
11:15 a.m.	Coffee-time Chat
Monday, August 2 'Closed' – Civic Holiday	
Tuesday, August 3	
3:00 p.m.	Re-entry Task Group Meeting
Wednesday, August 4	
12:30 p.m.	Mid-week Prayer
7:30 p.m.	Christian Meditation
Thursday, August 5	
4:00 p.m.	ES Series – Open the Door: A Journey to the True Self 5of7

Worship Services

Online Worship Service. Join us Sundays at 10:30 a.m. on our [YouTube channel](#) for our worship service with Rev. Douglas duCharme preaching and presiding.

Sunday, July 25: *The Butterfly Can't Go Back in the Cocoon.*
 Scripture: [Acts 1:12-26](#) Reader: Jan Schlee

Sunday, August 1: *What's the Meaning of Success When Everything's Upside-Down?*
 Scripture: [2 Corinthians 11: 23 - 12:10](#) (selected) Reader: Jill Klaehn

Eleanor Daley, Director of Music, curates an [online music bulletin](#) weekly to accompany and enhance worship in addition to the special weekly virtual offering featured in the service. The virtual offering is always included in the online bulletin, along with the music notes.

Sunday, July 25: The musical offering in this Sunday's worship service features an anthem by E. Daley, sung by the Fairlawn Avenue Senior Choir section leads. The online bulletin consists of virtual performances of orchestral music by Jean-Joseph Mouret and Antonio Vivaldi, and congregational hymns.

Sunday, August 1: The virtual musical offering in this Sunday's worship service is *Be Not Afraid*, sung by Fairlawn section lead Andrea Ludwig. The online bulletin includes virtual orchestral music by Michael Praetorius, performed by the Early Music ensemble Voices of Music, as well as virtual and audio congregational hymns.

Online music bulletins are available on our [website](#) and will be posted Sundays by 10:30 a.m.

Embrace Action

Show Your Support for GLI with a Lawn Sign: The United Church's Guaranteed Livable Income (GLI) committee has created lawn signs you can place on your lawn to show your support for implementing a GLI, and continue building on the momentum of the conversations started in Parliament. If you are interested in receiving a sign, Fairlawn will cover the cost. Please reach out to ea@fairlawnavenueunited.ca for any questions or to order a sign.

Fairlawn News

Fairlawn friends and family of Shirley Bush attended an outdoor, socially distanced gathering, organized by her daughters, to celebrate her 90th birthday this past Tuesday, July 20 at June Rowlands Park. Please visit our [website](#) to view a lovely photo of Shirley being presented with a cake from her daughter Emily.

Explore Spirituality

Summer Worship Schedule. Over the summer, from various places in the city and further afield, our ministers will continue to lead our online Sunday services and mid-week Wednesday prayer. Below is Fairlawn's Sunday worship schedule.

Jul. 25: Douglas duCharme	Aug. 15: Ambury Stuart	Aug. 29: Douglas duCharme
Aug. 1: Douglas duCharme	Aug. 22: Ambury Stuart	Sep. 5: Douglas duCharme
Aug. 8: Douglas duCharme		

Staff Vacations – July & August

Kevin Resaul	July 22-26, August 4-9, 13-24
Joanne Christie	July 23, 26-31
Sandra Verge	July 31, August 28
Whitton Daley	August 15-26
Eleanor Daley	August 16-30

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 offering:

- Send e-transfers to etransfer@fairlawnavenueunited.ca (please include your name and mailing address in the memo line, so we can send you a tax receipt at year-end),
- [securely donate online](#) to support Fairlawn,
- [sign up to make regular contributions](#) through our PAR program, or
- mail a cheque to Fairlawn Avenue United Church, 28 Fairlawn Avenue, Toronto, ON M5M 1S7

For assistance with any donation method, including signing up for PAR or making any changes, contact our bookkeeper Heather de la Rua at heather@fairlawnavenueunited.ca. Your ongoing support is deeply appreciated.

Greetings! is published every second Thursday during the summer by Fairlawn Avenue United Church. Comments and submissions are most welcome and should be sent to greetings@fairlawnavenueunited.ca. The deadline for submissions is noon on the Tuesday before each issue. The remaining summer issue dates are August 5, August 19 and September 2. Notices can be up to 110 words.

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