



FAIRLAWN

Preparing for Session 1: Setting the Scene

Sunday, March 13, 2022

11:15 am – 12:30 pm

Moving Fairlawn Forward

As we continue to care for each other and our building, we have begun work on the next phase of our transition planning. We are calling this phase of our transition work Fairlawn Forward, as we envision our next steps and future options that will best serve our vision and purpose as a faith community.

We have put together a team that will guide us through the next 16 months as we prepare to search for a new minister to join us after Douglas's contract ends in June 2023:

Douglas duCharme	Mary Ellen Richardson
Maureen Davey	Morrey Ewing
Amanda Hancox	Philip Blackford
Steve Dunk	John Cowan (corresponding)

Turning Transition into Transformation

There are three streams to this work that will help us provide continuity between the present and the future:

1. Addressing pastoral and community needs as we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic
2. Exploring future options for moving Fairlawn Forward and using our resources to support our vision
3. Creating a profile of who we are and where we want to go, in preparation for calling a new minister

While working toward these specific outcomes, we are committed to thoughtful contemplation along the way. We can appreciate all that Fairlawn has been and can continue to be, while identifying realities that impact our congregation and need to be considered as we determine our next steps. We will strive to keep space open for prayer and reflection without seeking quick 'solutions' to issues raised.

Current Realities

The increasing secularization of our society, the closing of the Fairlawn Neighbourhood Centre, an aging congregation, internal conflict, an exodus of youth, and declining volunteer resources have all impacted Fairlawn's activity and attendance levels, which have dropped significantly over the last five to seven years.

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the situation became even more complex. It also became rich with opportunity, catapulting Fairlawn into the future. The closing of the church to in-person activities and the subsequent transformation to delivering services remotely has consumed much of our energy. On the upside, these changes led to the development of new skills, such as online worship, and to the discovery of unexpected sources of personal and organizational resilience and creativity, such as the growth in adult learning and small-group ministries on Zoom.

In the past two years, there has been considerable research and planning work that could not be fully shared or implemented because of COVID-19, including the Community Research Project led by Nayar Consulting, and planning and visioning work done by Governing Council with consultant Jerry Hogeveen. We will draw upon this work as we explore our options for moving Fairlawn Forward.

Financial Outlook

Without the bustle of the Neighbourhood Centre, tenants, and in-person worship, the weight of our aging physical infrastructure has become increasingly clear. Analysis has shown that the rental income we received in some years pre-COVID was not sufficient to cover incremental costs associated with tenant management.

We were averaging operating deficits of more than \$130,000 for five years before the pandemic began. 2021 was a good news story financially, due to favourable market conditions, federal wage subsidies and some non-recurring large gifts. Without these anomalies, though, our 2022 preliminary budget forecasts a drop of 20% in givings to support operations and a deficit requiring a significant subsidy from Trustee funds once again.

The supporting numbers will be presented and discussed at the 2021 Annual General Meeting on April 24 and are an important piece of the puzzle as we discern our future vision and mission.

Where to Start

The first step is to search our hearts and our values and our shared experiences to identify and articulate who we are, who we can be and how we can best serve the ministry we believe we are called to serve – however the external future unfolds.

It's critical that we do this initial work first – exploring what we all see as essential about the work that Fairlawn does, what we have learned, what we need to unlearn, what we want to keep and what we might be prepared to give up – before we call a new minister. This way, we can ensure we find the right person to help us achieve our goals. Using our [Guiding Principles](#) to shape the conversation, we need to trust the process and remain open to where God's spirit may lead us and help us to lead.

TUCC, Our Partners in this Work

We will be supported on this journey by the Toronto United Church Council (TUCC). TUCC helps congregations with planning and ministry development, including identifying and considering a range of future options.

The TUCC team includes Ron Ewart, Executive Director and ordained minister; Jill Strapp, Coordinating Consultant and a facilitator with wide experience; and Susan Graham Walker, past Manager of Congregational Giving & Stewardship for the United Church of Canada.

The work we have engaged TUCC to do over the next four to six months is to:

- Facilitate and report on our congregational consultations, creating space for everyone to be heard
- Develop background research and connect us with resources to explore ways to deploy our physical and financial assets wisely
- Help us affirm our vision and tell our Living Faith Story, part of the Community of Faith Profile needed to initiate the search for a new minister

How You Can Help

Be part of the conversation! Now is the time to act, while we have the energy and financial viability to choose our future options. We need to hear from as many voices as possible. Please join us at one, two, three or all four of the sessions scheduled between March and June. Watch for emails or visit the website to register for Congregational Conversations about Fairlawn's Future and help us move Fairlawn Forward.