



## FAIRLAWN

### **Preparing for Session 2: Refreshing our Call and Vision for Ministry (April 2, 2022)**

Fairlawn Avenue United Church is no stranger to thoughtful contemplation and strategic planning – from the Fairlawn Call to the Nayar Community Research Project to the planning and visioning work done by Governing Council with consultant Jerry Hogeveen. In the past two years, much of this research and planning work could not be fully shared or implemented because of COVID-19. We are drawing upon this work as we explore our options for moving Fairlawn Forward.

#### **Fairlawn Call**

In 2014-2015, Fairlawn underwent a strategic planning process that resulted in [The Fairlawn Call](#). The Fairlawn Call set a vision of a welcoming, vibrant and growing church community, and identified three ministries: Explore Spirituality, Experience Belonging, and Embrace Action. The resulting tagline, “connect with what matters in life”, still resonates for many. The Fairlawn Call was an inspirational growth model and significant investments were made in terms of staff and other resources to implement it. Despite our best efforts, the increasing secularization of our society, our aging congregation, a lack of youth, and declining volunteer resources together indicate that we need to examine new ways to best serve the ministry we believe we are called to serve – within our current financial and demographic context.

#### **Community Research Project**

In 2018, Fairlawn received a grant from the Presbyteries of Toronto Conference Corporation to learn more about two groups: those members of the congregation that are less engaged and the broader community. Specifically, we sought to answer two fundamental questions about these groups through consultation and research: Who are they? What matters to them? In 2019, FAUC contracted with Nayar Consulting to conduct the needed consultation and research. Fairlawn received the results of the [Community Research Final Report](#) in June 2020, shortly after the COVID-19 pandemic began.

#### **Jerry Hogeveen Consultations**

Fairlawn’s Governing Council held a series of Zoom meetings with congregants in the fall of 2020 to receive their feedback on the Nayar research. There was a wide divergence of views both on the research conclusions and what to do with this information. Governing Council reviewed the feedback, then held a series of five visioning sessions with consultant Jerry Hogeveen from February to April 2021. Two more sessions were held with a broader advisory group to obtain feedback on the results of these deliberations.

A draft vision document was developed and shared with Fairlawn councils and committees – Embrace Action, Explore Spirituality, Experience Belonging, Trustees, Property, and Human Resources and Relationships – in May 2021. The consensus was that, while the document reflected Fairlawn’s status and

values, more work needed to be done to lay out an actionable vision for the future, particularly given the congregation's projected financial and volunteer capacity.

## Draft Call and Vision Statement

We will be reviewing a draft statement of our [Call and Vision](#) informed by this research and planning in our session on April 2. Please take the time to review and reflect on it in advance, considering these three questions:

- 1. Which section, words, or phrases inspire you the most?**
- 2. Which section, words, or phrases challenge you the most?**
- 3. Is anything missing that is critical to who we are as a faith community?**

We have called this a Pathway to a Vision because we believe that we need to work together to best identify our future direction. Part of this work is taking place, now, through these consultations. The aim of this call and vision statement is to give us common language and understanding of who we are, who we want to be, and how we will get there in the short to medium term.

This is a living document and will be re-evaluated once we discern our future direction and aspirations. It was not created in isolation, but by carefully listening to what we've heard for the past few years. We hope that it resonates for you, and that if it doesn't, you will tell us why and how it might be improved.

## Explore Spirituality, Experience Belonging, and Embrace Action – What's Next?

We may reaffirm that our call and vision haven't changed – but the context and world in which we live them HAS changed radically. Not only has the context changed but WE have changed; the resources we have, and the opportunities, have changed – in ways that may surprise us.

The Nayar research report was intended to help us identify two or three needs in the community that we had the resources, ability, and passion to meet. The work that Governing Council did with Jerry Hogeveen, and shared with all the committees of the church, was intended to discern how that research might inform our future vision. It solidified the continued importance of our three purposes – Explore Spirituality, Experience Belonging, and Embrace Action – but decisions remain to be made about our future direction.

This work includes 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.

On April 2, we will also look at the Purpose Councils' activities and consider how they align with our sense of vision and purpose and some of the realities that we're facing. In break-out groups, we will explore these questions:

- 1. Which activities would you say are critical to the purpose and mission of FAUC? Why?**
- 2. What is missing?**

## 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 on April 2, May 14 and June 5. Watch for emails or visit the website to register for Congregational Conversations about Fairlawn's Future and help us move Fairlawn Forward.