



FAIRLAWN AT AN EXCITING CROSS-ROADS

March 1, 2020

RECOMMENDATION

The Governing Council recommends that Fairlawn Avenue United Church retain our current Intentional Interim Minister, the Rev. Douglas duCharme, for up to an additional two years beyond the end of his contract in June 2020. This will allow us to have his guidance and the wisdom of his experience as we develop a renewed focus to “Take Our Fairlawn Call Forward” and provide us with sufficient time to develop the community of faith profile, conduct the search, and call a new permanent minister.

We have generated new leadership and are gaining solid footing. We believe this extension, until the end of June 2022, will ensure we maintain momentum and leverage our current progress. It will allow us to:

- receive, process, and begin to integrate the results of the “Taking the Call Forward” community research in order to develop a strategy by the end of June 2021;
- identify the kind of minister we should search for and start our search process, which is expected to begin by mid 2021 and take an additional 12 months; and
- have a new minister in place by the end of June 2022.

Douglas has conveyed his willingness to:

- remain for that term so he can complete the work that needs to be done to position us to find, and onboard, a new minister whom we think best fits Fairlawn’s future strategic directions; and
 - support the church, by negotiating an earlier end date if a new minister is chosen and able to start before the end of June 2022.
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RATIONALE

Fairlawn is at an important point in its evolution as a church and faith community. The last several months have been stressful, exciting, and challenging. The next 24 months may be even more intense and important as we examine our current status and determine the next steps to assure our congregation's future.

We need to build a bridge between where we are and where we wish to go. This will allow us to proceed confidently to a ministerial search once we have developed a clear sense of Fairlawn's identity, mission, and priorities and the spiritual qualities, character, and leadership style that we require in a new minister to help us implement our future vision.

Governing Council and the Transition Team believe this extension will ensure the continuity of the strong working relationship between our minister and staff and lay leadership through this next critical period.

CONTEXT

Outside our Doors – Fairlawn's current circumstances reflect the "world" beyond our doors:

- the number of United Church congregations is steadily shrinking as its demographic ages and youth populations remain difficult to attract;
- churches in our North Toronto area, and throughout the Greater Toronto Area and nation, face similar challenges; and
- a recent *Anglican Journal* article predicted that the Anglican Church of Canada will "disappear" by 2040. That may be pessimistic, but this viewpoint reflects mainline religion's general decline.

Inside our Doors – Fairlawn continues to provide excellent spiritual and pastoral support while navigating emerging new directions and the changes that brings. Despite experiencing a 100% staff and ministerial turnover over the last two years, staff and lay leadership have laid important new roots and a strong foundation for growth. Specifically, we have:

- begun to develop a full staff team;
- attracted and developed new lay leadership;
- nurtured Fairlawn's Transition Team, which has delivered some impressive work. The team has:
 - begun to lay the foundation of a "listening culture" at Fairlawn;
 - developed, in collaboration with congregants, the Fairlawn *Guiding Principles*, which express our values as a church community and will guide how we wish to 'be' – with each other, staff, and the world around us. These *Guiding Principles* will be presented at the annual general meeting with a motion to adopt them as a set of principles that we are all committed to working with over the coming years;
 - conducted a communications survey that resulted in ideas for our website and increasing our knowledge of what staff members do for Fairlawn and for us; and
 - prepared a comprehensive healing and reconciliation report that will be released to the congregation shortly;

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- invested in leadership development learning among Governing Council's members;
 - obtained a United Church of Canada (UCC) grant for our "Taking the Call Forward" project and conducted extensive community research to support the development of Fairlawn's strategic directions; and
 - developed and managed new community partnerships to augment Fairlawn's revenue.

Fairlawn remains a vibrant congregation. We believe that we have the skills and willingness to meaningfully respond and deliver whatever we learn from our communities that they yearn for. Fairlawn has many active groups and delivers excellent community service.

We also recognize that we need to reenvision our current model of programme development as we strive to meet emerging needs.

Over the next several months, we will continue to undertake significant work, including:

- receiving, synthesizing, and sharing the community research results;
- identifying our new strategic direction;
- providing organizational renewal and development;
- refreshing our pastoral delivery options as we rise to meet our community's changing needs,
- enhancing our exploration of creative and inviting forms of worship;
- providing opportunities to expand our experience of spirituality in ways that appeal to both congregants and community members;
- rejuvenating our lay leaders and volunteers as our current roster is operating near capacity;
- continuing to rethink and rejuvenate children's, youth, and young adult's programmes, which remains an ongoing challenge; and
- developing a sustainable financial model to support the work that we believe we need to do.

We believe that each of these activities will inform what attributes we will be looking for in a new minister. We must then form a search committee, which will seek congregational input to:

- identify the skills, values, and experience that we require in a new minister;
- develop a community of faith profile; and
- conduct the ministerial search and prepare for a call.

RETAINING DOUGLAS

As we considered why we should retain Douglas for the next 24 months, we recognized that he has:

- demonstrated that he has the:
 - skills, experience, and passion to help us discover the path by which we can build our future. As an Intentional Interim Minister elsewhere, he has:
 - shepherded several churches through transitions and helped them optimize their staff and property assets to find a path toward financial sustainability, and

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- applied some compelling approaches to change that could help us bring community resources to bear in smart ways;
 - skills to help us shape the paths to address changing, or emerging, spiritual and pastoral needs; and
 - skills that complement those of our Executive Director, providing Fairlawn with a robust and effective staff leadership team;
 - developed and deepened productive working relationships with the Executive Director, staff, lay leaders, congregants, the North Toronto Cluster of United Churches, and our community. This has helped us coalesce and consider adaptive solutions;
 - strengthened Fairlawn’s reputation across the United Church of Canada;
 - learned who we are, what we want to achieve, and the pace at which we can move;
 - earned our respect and trust as he has led, taught, and encouraged us to look at challenges in different ways through leadership development, improved governance practices, and deep listening; and
 - helped us to consider new approaches to what can be worship and small group community learning to explore our spirituality.

PROPOSED MOTION FOR CONGREGATIONAL VOTE AT ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

To approve a continuation in the Rev. Douglas duCharme’s relationship with Fairlawn Avenue United Church as Intentional Interim Minister for the period from July 2020 up to the end of June 2022. This is to allow us to develop and work toward achieving Fairlawn’s goals related to its future mission and ministry and to accommodate what needs to be done until we can hire a new permanent minister. If a permanent minister is found in the second year, Douglas will terminate his contract as interim minister upon a minimum of sixty days’ notice.

NOTE: While Fairlawn can retain Douglas as Intentional Interim Minister for this two-year extension, he cannot be considered for the position of permanent minister for our church. (Reference: The United Church of Canada *Manual*, Section I, part 1.10.7, Serving Community of Faith after Interim Ministry.)

NEXT STEPS

If you have further questions, concerns, or feedback, please feel free to submit them:

- in writing, in an envelope marked “Confidential regarding March 1 congregational meeting”, and addressed to the Governing Council c/o Joanne Christie, Fairlawn office; or
- by email, with the subject line “Confidential regarding March 1 congregational meeting”, and addressed to Governing Council at gc@fairlawnavenueunited.ca.

Appendix: Goals for Transition, Phase Two: 1 July 2020 – 30 June 2022

The following seven goals were developed by the current Transition Team and approved by Governing Council at its meeting on February 25, 2020. These goals provide focused work designed to equip us for the future.

1. Spirituality: listening to deep yearning

Spirituality in our society, and also in our congregation, is an area of a great deal of searching and exploration. How we express and experience innovative approaches to worship, music, prayer, meditation and other practices that reflect a range of spiritual types among members of Fairlawn and the community generally is an area for priority investment. This goal underlies and supports our work on our other goals.

2. Our Mission: clarity and strategy

From the research project narrative, we will identify who we are as a church and what is around us. Once we have a clearer understanding, we will move to the development of a strategy from which our mission will evolve. The work is anticipated to start in late fall 2020 with a potential approval of a new mission at the 2021 AGM.

3. Leadership Development in Evolving Organizations

The challenge for Fairlawn is to maintain stability while equipping lay leadership to manage the changes. Included in this longer-term task of approximately 18 months will be providing support for risk-taking approaches, identifying what the new lay leadership will look like and what is needed to develop a rich volunteer development programme that ties into the new form of leadership.

4. Building Sufficient Lay Capabilities

We will create a sufficiency of skilled resources for the priorities we are setting. The long arc of community research will take time to translate into meaningful outcomes and opportunities. The ultimate goal will be to achieve a clear understanding of what initiatives we can take on, given both our current resources, and those we will develop. It is anticipated that this work will be part of an overall strategic plan to be presented to the congregation for review in mid 2021.

5. **Staff Development**

With a full complement of staff on board and the development of the Executive Director's position, the emphasis during the final six months of 2020 and into 2021 will be an examination of and development for the pastoral and strategic partnership between the minister and the Executive Director. This work will be key to setting out processes and ways of working that can then be transferred to the new minister.

6. **Explore a New Form of Governance**

To provide focus for Fairlawn's future, there is a need to re-frame how the church's leadership can work to allow for deeper deliberations of issues affecting the church while simplifying our process of governance.

Over the next year, the Council plans to explore with the Intentional Interim Minister the possibilities of an approach to governance that reflects possible changes in the function and process of leadership and concentrates on developing policy and supporting the health of the church rather than day-to-day management.

7. **The Fairlawn Culture**

Some work was done during the initial transition period discussing the values of our church through the Listening Project and the development of Fairlawn's *Guiding Principles*. Time and effort must be spent determining more specifically what our culture is and what it could be. We want to utilize the *Listening and Learning: Healing and Hope* report¹, which provides us with lessons on communication, the importance of trust, and creating space for managed risks. We want to identify from the research project surveys how we are perceived by the wider community and how that fits or doesn't fit with what we want to communicate. And of great importance, we want to develop and apply deliberately designed activities, workshops, and exercises to embed Fairlawn's *Guiding Principles* in our church life. We anticipate this work will begin in 2020 and take us well into 2021.

¹ *Listening and Learning: Healing and Hope* report was co-authored by Douglas duCharme and Jill Klaehn.
