



## Volunteer at Fairlawn with **SOCIAL JUSTICE**

### Who we are

Social justice has been embedded in the life of Fairlawn Avenue United Church from the very beginning. Our church history, contained in the 2007 Directory, tells us the following: *“The earliest branch of the Fairlawn family tree was formed as Toronto’s Second Congregational Church in 1849 [160 years ago] by 25 renegade members of the city’s first Congregational church who were opposed to slavery.”*



**Social Justice Vision:** Fairlawn Avenue United Church will be an inspiring and thriving champion of social justice where the congregation is passionately engaged in actions which transform society, individual lives and ourselves as we move toward the creation of a just and sustainable world.

### What we have accomplished so far as a congregation

- We established a foothold in social housing through grants of \$ 2.4 million from the sale of St. James Bond United Church to the Toronto Christian Resource Centre; Fred Victor Centre; Parkdale United Church/ Phoenix House and the South West Affordable Housing Group – all for the construction of new affordable housing units.
- We provided educational events to encourage members of the congregation to learn more about social justice in our community.
- We are currently sponsoring two social justice advocacy positions: for CRC/Fairlawn and United Church SE Presbytery.
- We have conducted several significant letter writing campaigns and submitted a brief of recommendations to the Ontario Social Assistance Review Commission in support of poverty reduction.
- We provided seed funds to Poverty Free Ontario to allow it to galvanize more than 17 communities across the province to work for the eradication of poverty.
- We initiated the establishment of a multi-church social justice group in north Toronto, “Voices for a Just Society” and lead the first group activity by this group: planned visits with candidates in the October 6, 2011 provincial election to question them on issues of poverty and affordable housing.
- We have helped to increase awareness and understanding within the congregation that social justice is at the heart of our faith tradition.

### What we want to do in the coming year

- Continue to raise awareness for poverty reduction including: decent work, liveable income, healthy food and affordable housing.
- Influence politicians to make significant progress in poverty reduction.
- Provide information and support to Fairlawn’s youth group on social justice issues.
- Increase the profile of our Community Advocate at Fairlawn through workshops and personal stories.

## **What we need**

How you can help – even if you don't want to sit on a committee!

- Provide ideas on programming and events.
- Help organize seminars on Social Justice: suggest a topic or speaker; help with advertising; registrations; refreshments, etc.
- Host the "Social Justice Table" at coffee hour one Sunday to hand out information, gather petition signatures or take registrations.
- Join our Social Justice Team!
- Write an article for "Community Life" about social justice issues or actions.
- Join with us to write to our local, provincial and federal politicians demanding action on the eradication of poverty and affordable housing.
- Educate yourself by attending seminars, workshops, rallies and conferences offered at Fairlawn and elsewhere.
- Support the "Do the Math" program, sponsored by The Stop Community Food Centre  
<http://dothemath.thestop.org/>
- Bear witness to social injustice and encourage others to do the same.

## **What's in it for you?**

- The satisfaction of knowing you are making a difference in the lives of others.
- Fellowship, fun, and the opportunity to use your talents and discover new ones.
- An opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of our political system and how it impacts the lives of people on the margins.

## **Time commitment**

- Planning meetings of the Social Justice Team are two hours, held approximately quarterly.
- Events offer a variety of opportunities to help including advertising; refreshments and greeting on the evening; organizing panels and speakers. These are time-limited activities that range from a few hours to a few days and involve a wide variety of activities and talents. See one of our team members to learn more.
- Organizing letter-writing campaigns. This usually involves putting together background information on the issue; providing contact information and occasionally writing a template letter. Can be a one-time commitment of 3-5 hours.
- Organizing all-candidates meetings: a condensed assignment of 15-20 hours over a period of 2-3 months.

## **Who to contact**

Contact Rosemary Pryde at [rpryde@rogers.com](mailto:rpryde@rogers.com)     <http://www.fairlawnavenueunited.ca/socialjustice/>

**“Do justice, love kindness, walk humbly with your God”**