

The Vision and Mission of Faith United

We believe in a loving and forgiving God, shown to us through Jesus Christ, creation, the bible, and the community of believers.

Therefore we will:

- strive to provide a spiritual home that is openly welcoming, nurturing and safe whatever a person's gifts, age, ethnicity, exceptionality, disability, gender identity, sexual orientation, or social or economic circumstance may be;
- seek to become disciples of Christ growing in faith through worship, study and prayer;
- risk sharing our resources with local and global neighbours in response to God's call;
- be committed to the responsible use and care of all that God has entrusted to us;
- encourage all who gather here to participate freely in the life and work of this church.

Let our actions reflect our faith.

Vision for Music

Our vision is for a ministry of music
that is "Alive in Christ",
that touches the hearts, minds, and souls of each of us,
connecting us with God and the mystery of the Holy Spirit,
thereby uniting us as a rich community of faith that
carries God's message day to day.

Mission for Music

We will work towards our vision for music by being
inclusive of all and responsive to the changing times and cultures.

We will build on our heritage and traditions
while offering a balanced variety of musical styles
in our worship and other programs.

Living Faith Story

Faith United is in Courtice, Ontario, a community of about 30,000 people at the eastern edge of the Greater Toronto Area. It is a growing community with many new young families moving in as well as older long-term residents. The church is young, having been founded as an amalgamated congregation in 1997, with a third church family joining us in 2011 as well as many other new members.

Our long-term called minister has retired. We are using this time between appointments to renew our vision for Faith United. The Visioning Team hosted workshops and surveys to identify our strengths as a congregation and future goals and aspirations. This report formed the basis for the work of the Profile team which has created this Living Faith story and the accompanying position description for the minister we wish to call.

We place great importance on being a welcoming congregation. We officially became an Affirming congregation in 2018, our building is accessible, and we begin worship and meetings by sharing the land acknowledgment together. We welcome all who come to our door as well as those who participate online. Our worship and many meetings and gatherings are hybrid with dynamic livestreaming and/or Zoom participation. We are a warm, engaging community alive in the Spirit.

To further develop our welcome, we are exploring ways to expand our personal outreach to visitors through a standardized structure and intentional follow-up contact. Our minister would be a key participant of the welcome strategy.

Spiritual development has been an integral part of our community experience. We offer a blended worship service with a variety of musical styles as well as encouraging weekly lay leadership throughout the service. Vibrant biblically based sermons using modern translations and personal experiences to teach, not preach are key to our worship services. We have integrated technology into our worship with weekly live streams and remote video participation. Lay participation in worship is encouraged both in house and online.

We are a musical congregation appreciating all genres from traditional to contemporary praise and worship. Our services are blended in style and music forms a significant portion of our worship. We are open to exploring different styles of worship e.g. Indigenous practices, healing services. Expanding our online presence on social media and through podcasts and other on demand content is a future goal for spreading the Word.

We are a community that values learning and is inspired by both worship and other faith journey programs. Prior to the pandemic, we offered a variety of lay-led learning programs on such topics as Bible studies, spirituality, theology, other faith traditions, and health and wellness. In the fall of 2024, we will return to offering opportunities for spiritual growth for every stage of a person's faith journey. These would be offered at varied times to

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accommodate both working families and retirees. Our children's program, Joyful Noise takes place on Sundays. Expanding into youth programs is a future goal.

We are active in local and global ministries providing both generous financial support as well as personal supports to community programs and initiatives. Our outreach programs are very well developed and include both global and local projects. Our donations to the Mission and Service fund are among the highest of churches in our region. Church Work in Durham supports nineteen local agencies as well as numerous special Christmas projects and monthly food drives. We have an annual Lifewater campaign, providing wells around the world. We are also generous with our time and talents through such activities as Meals on Wheels, Durham Outlook for the Needy, Family Fun Night, and Tots on Tuesday. We host a garden for the Durham AIDS Committee so that they can grow fresh vegetables for their clientele.

A future direction for Faith United is to engage more with our local community as a location first, and a church second by partnering with the arts groups as a venue for shows and other events. There is no other facility in our town that compares with what we can offer. To do this, we will need to develop our communication strategy to reach out and advertise our presence more effectively.

We have a large property with lots of natural features to share. Our gardens are well-kept and include areas such as the butterfly garden, native plant garden, and the children's garden. We have a wooded area with trails used by many of our neighbours. We are looking for ways to expand the use of our property in particular for multi-generational use. Other ideas include turning a portion of the large expanse of lawn into a memorial garden or a labyrinth.

Our building has been recently updated to improve our energy efficiency lowering our carbon footprint. Our sanctuary is a multi-purpose space and has an attached commercial kitchen. There are a number of rooms available for different sized groups and all are in use throughout the week.

We have a strong visiting team that, working with the minister spends time with those who are unable to attend worship, such as those who are sick or in hospital. With an aging portion of our congregation, this is an area that will need to expand.

Our congregation makes frequent use of Zoom for hybrid meetings, workshops, and studies. Because of this practice, we would like to expand the technical team that supports these activities and build more online presence. A goal would be to offer all activities in a dynamic hybrid form. We plan on updating our website and expanding our social media footprint. Ideally, our communication strategy would be digital first and print second.

We have an active United Church Women's (UCW) group, men's group, and variety of other teams supporting the work of the church. Our Council structure has been largely

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unchanged since formation. A priority would be to review the governance structure to identify ways we could make it both more effective and attractive to new volunteers.