

EDEN UNITED CHURCH



REPORT OF THE JOINT NEEDS ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE

JUNE 2011

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INTRODUCTION

The Joint Needs Assessment Committee of Eden United Church is pleased to present our report. The information within this report was compiled from information gathered during a Worship service. Table groups were asked the following questions:

1. How would you describe Eden's strengths and opportunities?
2. How would you describe Eden's weaknesses and challenges?
3. What do you see as Eden's greatest need?

We also reviewed the report, dated September 2008, from the Future Quest Team with its recommendation for a new governance model.

As well, consultation meetings were held with our ministerial staff, office administrator, music staff, Council chair person, Sunday School superintendents, the Small Group Ministry co-ordinator, and Trustees. We believe that we have compiled an objective representation of our congregation and its needs for ministry.

It is our recommendation that Halton Presbytery declare a vacancy at Eden United Church for one full-time minister and one half-time minister.

We also recommend to the Joint Search Committee that they fill the full-time position first. Once the full-time position has been filled, the half-time position responsibilities can be adjusted before advertising.

JOINT NEEDS ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Allen Graham	Amy Hill, Chair
Jean Hill	Terri Hill
Stephen Hurley	Nicole Metcalf Santos, Secretary
Betty Monasterski	Rev. Barbara Morrison, Halton Presbytery Representative
Fran Murphy, Secretary	Mary Patterson, Halton Presbytery Representative
Elizabeth Singer	Dan Thoms
Bill Tindall	

OUR VISION

We are a progressive Christian community that offers a safe place and the resources for people at every stage of their lives to enrich and empower themselves in body, mind and spirit. We are committed to the human journey to love more deeply and to live more meaningfully.

OUR MISSION

Gifted by the Holy Spirit and inspired by Jesus Christ we, as members of Eden United Church, will:

- **Teach** a progressive Christian faith
- **Encourage** questions to promote growth or to challenge the status quo
- **Nurture** loving community
- **Strive** to be the change needed to bring health and wellness to the Earth and all its life forms.
- **Act** for greater peace and justice in the world.

EDEN'S GOVERNANCE MODEL

In 2009, Eden United Church formed a new governance model. It is a version of the Carver model adapted for our Christian context.

Under this model of governance, we have a Council consisting of nine spiritual leaders elected from the congregation plus ministry personnel, who are responsible for discerning God's vision for Eden. The Council sets areas of focus annually and determines how progress in these areas is measured.

To address these areas of focus, Council empowers ministry personnel to develop and implement small group ministries.

See the Appendix for more information.



POLICY GOVERNANCE – OVERVIEW

With the exception of the Finance and Ministry and Personnel Committees and the Board of Trustees, committees were disbanded and replaced with small group ministry teams. Based on their interests, these teams are made up of members of the congregation with a passion for a particular ministry or see a need they can fill.

The full-time minister will ensure that all small group ministries follow the core values of the church. The Minister will work with small groups to determine whether or not there is a budget for a particular ministry.

The authority of the congregation between annual meetings is delegated to the Council except where specified in the governance document. The congregation has the right to appeal any decision of the Council to the Presbytery according to the Manual.

The Congregation approves annually the Council Ministry Policy, annual financial statements and annual budget. The congregation will elect the Finance committee, the Ministry and Personnel, Trustees, and Presbytery Representatives.

A full copy of Eden's governance model can be viewed at www.edenunitedchurch.com under News > Policy Governance.

PROFILE #1: OUR COMMUNITY

THE COMMUNITY SURROUNDING EDEN UNITED CHURCH

Eden is on the north-west corner of Winston Churchill Blvd. and Battleford Rd. It is in the heart of Meadowvale. In a rapidly growing, planned, multicultural community, 80-90% of our congregation lives in the area of Erin Mills Parkway, Ninth Line and highways 403 and 401.

Meadowvale is a community of parks, bicycle trails, bridges and underpasses some of which lead to our two artificial lakes. The most popular of these lakes is Lake Aquitaine, near our Meadowvale Community Centre.

The following places are within a 20-minute drive from Eden:

- Credit Valley Hospital (5 km south)
- Go Trains (both Meadowvale and Lisgar stations)
- Access to Highways 401, 403, and 407
- Meadowvale Theatre
- Meadowvale Town Centre
- Erin Mills Town Centre
- Square One Shopping Mall
- Living Arts Center at Square One
- University of Toronto (Mississauga campus)
- Sheridan College

SCHOOLS

Public Schools, high schools, colleges, and universities are all within driving distance. Information regarding these programs can be found at www.city.mississauga.on.ca and www.peel.edu.on.ca.



SOCIAL SERVICES

Social services in the area include:

- Eden Food Bank
- “The Dam” drop in (for teens)
- Meadowvale Community Centre
- Meadowvale Public Library
- Churchill Meadows Community Centre
- Churchill Meadows Library

INSIDE EDEN UNITED CHURCH

When Eden decided to build a new church in Meadowvale, they also made a commitment that the building would be designed to meet the needs of the community.

Eden offers a range of facilities for a variety of purposes, including:

- Community meetings
- Blood donor clinics
- Weddings
- Rehearsals (plays, musicals, dance, etc.)
- Conferences
- Seminars
- Child care (through Eden Daycare)
- Concerts
- Service clubs

PROFILE #2: THE CHURCH

As followers of Jesus Christ, we are committed to building a faith community that is welcoming, safe, and inclusive of all individuals.

HISTORY

A group of Methodist families from County Tipperary Ireland settled on a grant of land on Meadowvale side road, which is now Derry Road and Copenhagen. Church meetings were held in each other's homes under the leadership of Methodist circuit riders. In 1845, the settlers built a small wooden church that became known as Switzer's church.

In 1869, a large red brick church was built and stood until 1980. Eden wasn't without its tribulations undergoing a fire that destroyed the upper part of the church and a tornado which blew away the roof of the building.

In 1925, the Eden Methodist congregation voted for church union and was renamed Eden United Church. The red brick building was demolished but the Eden Cemetery stands in memory of our pioneer families.

In 1980, the congregation moved into the Meadowvale West Church Campus; a multi-denominational building that was shared with Lutheran, Presbyterian and Anglican Churches. Later, when the church outgrew its location, services were held in the cafeteria of the Meadowvale Secondary School while we awaited the construction of a new church on the present site. After many delays, the new church opened August 27, 1989.

TODAY

Although we are a congregation of 356 families, we do not accurately reflect the ethnic diversity of the community. Eden congregation tries to reach out and welcome others into their community of faith. We have a rich heritage of lively worship that includes strong traditional liturgical elements and more contemporary ones. Our services are highly participatory, both musically and through the spoken word.

To reduce the use of paper, we use a multi-media screen at the front of the sanctuary to project our announcements and also the order of service. Newsletters are sent to the entire congregation via email as well as being available in print on Sunday mornings for those who do not have email.

The ministers use wireless mikes. Sermons are recorded and posted on the website.



In the recent past, our ministry staff has been two ordained ministers. This was a team ministry, with each member having equal responsibilities. The ministerial team shared in the leadership, communication, and collaboration, and worked to a common goal. They capitalized on individual strengths to enhance and expand the mission of the congregation.

Eden holds one service at 10:00 a.m. each Sunday. We celebrate Communion on the first Sunday of each month and it is an open table. During the traditionally busy times, we have additional services.

On Christmas Eve, we have two services. An early contemporary service incorporates drama, readings, dance and music to tell the Christmas Story. The late evening service is a traditional Christmas Eve candlelight and Communion service involving the Senior Choir and the Handbell Choir.

During Lent and Holy Week, there is an Ash Wednesday service, a Maundy Thursday Communion service, a Good Friday morning service, and two services on Easter Sunday morning.

The youth and the children gather in the sanctuary for worship service and after Children's Time attend Sunday School. During intergenerational services, all ages attend the service. Children and youth are encouraged and given opportunities to be involved in worship. The youth are invited to serve Communion often and children rejoin their families to take Communion. Church school classes are invited to be present at baptismal services. During the year, the United Church Women (UCW) and Men's Group each lead a service.

Confirmation at Eden encourages confirmands to choose their theme and develop their own service around this theme. The confirmands are asked to select a mentor to journey with them through the process. Their mentors are actively involved with the youth on their faith journey.

Music is a very important part of Eden's worship. We have both an organist and a music director. A variety of music groups enrich our life and worship through their participation. Eden has a Senior Choir, two Handbell choirs, and a Folk Group.

Our Marriage Policy is that Eden United Church will marry upon the approval of the minister(s), and in keeping with the laws of the Province, any two persons, regardless of sexual orientation, who express a deep desire for marriage and a strong commitment to that union.



Our Baptismal Policy is that Eden United Church, as a baptizing church, will perform and record the sacrament of Baptism for children of parents where one or both have been baptized themselves. We also perform adult Baptisms.

Eden is proud to be blessed with four people from our congregation who have completed their journey to become ministers: Ted Lydan, Debbie Johnson, Karen Dale, and Brenda Ottawa. We are also fortunate to have retired ministers in our congregation who share their faith experience with us.

ORGANIZATIONS AND GROUPS

Eden church was built with an active congregation and community in mind. It is an extremely busy multi-use building, meeting the needs of a wide range of church and community organizations.

CONGREGATION-BASED GROUPS

Small Group Ministries were formed when the congregation chose to move to Policy Governance on March 1, 2009. People are encouraged to form Small Group Ministries based on their interests and passions. Rather than sit on committees in which some of the work may not be of interest, individuals are now freed up to get involved more directly with the interests and passions they wish to act on. This also enables more people to get involved.

Faith Development is a critical component of the life and work at Eden. Although attendance at Church School fluctuates somewhat throughout the year, approximately 60 children registered in the fall of 2010, and a majority of these attend regularly. A full program operates from September through June for ages 3 – 18. Nursery and toddler programs are available all year for children under three years of age. A rotational-model of teaching is provided for grades 1-6.

United Church Women is comprised of approximately 70 active members who meet as a group three times per year. Monthly they divide into four units for study, fellowship and worship. The UCW is extremely active in fundraising through events, such as our annual bazaar and catering as requested.

Youth Group at Eden is in a rebuilding period. Members participate in events designed to nurture their faith, encourage service and provide social interaction. The Youth Group includes Grades 7 through to 12. They try to meet at least once a month. The leadership and participants determine its focus. For the past four years the Youth Group has participated in the 30 Hour Famine.

5th Meadowvale Scout Troop is sponsored by Eden United Church. It includes Beavers, Cubs, Scouts, and Venturers.

Bible Study group meets weekly from mid-September to mid-June. Its members focus on and explore the scripture readings for the coming Sunday.

OUTREACH PROGRAMS

The Dam is a drop-in center for youth ages 13 to 19. The name The "Dam" refers to stopping the flow of youth from the Meadowvale community to the streets of downtown Toronto. Research conducted in 1992 by a local Anglican Church showed that marginalized teens were the most at risk in Mississauga. Considering this research, the founders of The Dam developed a program designed to reach these youths. On July 3, 1995, the drop-in center opened its doors in the Meadowvale Town Centre across the street from Eden United Church.

Eden is actively involved with this community project. The drop-in center is a safe Christian place for youth where they are known by name and there are things to do (pool, cards, talk) other than hanging out in the mall. The Dam has paid staff, and many volunteers, some of whom are Eden members. Eden supports The Dam financially. For additional information, about the Dam, go to <http://www.thedam.org/>.


Eden Community Food Bank (ECFB) is a non-denominational charitable corporation working to eliminate hunger through food distribution to qualified individuals living in North-West Mississauga. It was established in 1989 as an outreach program of the church and continues to be Eden's major social ministry outreach program. Two of the members of the ECFB must be members Eden United Church. ECFB maintains a client center located in the church basement and now has its main location at a warehouse just south of Hwy 403. The food bank supplies food items and some personal care items for those in crisis and those from the surrounding community with ongoing needs. At present, the Food Bank provides an emergency 7-10 day food supply to approximately 1,200-1,800 people each month.

Eden Community Food Bank obtains approximately half of its goods from The Mississauga Food Bank Network and the rest from community and congregational donations and food drives. It the four postal codes of L5N, L5M, L5L and L5K, which is bounded by Dundas Street in the south, Steeles Avenue in the north, Credit View Road in the east, and Ninth Line in the west.

Last year, The Food Bank had more than 140 volunteers each week both from the congregation and the community. It also employs a full-time Executive Director and two part-time operational staff who organize the flow of work. Currently, the Food Bank is open to clients two afternoons and three evenings each week. Food Bank volunteers and clientele, together, publish a quarterly newsletter "Food For Thought" which is available to clients, volunteers, the congregation and donors. Regular meetings and

workshops are held to train and support the volunteers in order to keep them informed and encouraged. For more information, go to www.edenfoodbank.org.

Christmas Food Hampers provide food and gifts for over 200 families during the Christmas season. This is accomplished with help from our faith community, schools, other community groups, and outside organizations.



PROFILE #3: RESOURCES

VOLUNTEER AND STAFF WORKERS, PARTICIPANTS, AND SUPPORTERS

STAFF

Eden will have one full-time minister, one half time minister. We also have one full-time office administrator, one full-time and several part-time custodians, a part-time music director, and a part-time organist.

Temporary secretaries are hired to cover vacation time as needed. A gardener also provides part-time services during the summer.

Historically, our staff has been a dynamic team that has worked enthusiastically with one another and the laity to achieve common goals. We are confident that they will continue to be a vital resource in Eden's future.

VOLUNTEERS

Volunteer staff members include a bookkeeper, envelope steward, and a Church school superintendent. Work parties take place four or five times a year to assist with maintenance of the property. A large number of other volunteers help at our many church events throughout the year, giving their time and spiritual gifts.

EDEN DAYCARE INC.

Eden Daycare is a non-profit, all-day program that has been in operation since October 1989. It is administered by a volunteer Board of Directors of ten directors; 6 of whom must be active members of the Eden congregation. It is located in the Education wing of the church, and serves 77 children ages 5 weeks to 5 years. In addition to the regular program, the center is licensed to provide care for special needs children. In conjunction with the Region of Peel, Eden Daycare provides subsidized care for families in need.

EDENWOOD SENIORS VILLAGE INC.

Edenwood Seniors Village is a non-profit, independent living facility located on the property adjacent to the church. It is administered by volunteer Board of Directors, the voting majority of which must be active members of Eden congregation. This 77-unit, subsidized apartment dwelling, which opened in October 1991, currently accommodates 94 senior residents with access to 24-hour emergency nursing care. Peel Region funds this project. Edenwood Village is connected to Eden United Church by a short, partially covered walkway and shared parking.

PROPERTY

LAND AND BUILDINGS

Eden acquired its present site, consisting of approximately three acres at the corner of Winston Churchill Boulevard and Battleford Road, in 1986. The following year a portion of the property was sold to Edenwood Seniors Village for development as a senior citizens' residence.

Eden's total building area is approximately 15,250 square feet. The building was designed to allow for future expansion.

THE SANCTUARY

The renowned Trevor Garwood-Jones, architect of the Hamilton Place Concert Hall, designed Eden. The sanctuary seats 460, with space for an overflow of 200 in the Narthex.

Due to the fact that we do not have fixed pews, the sanctuary can be set up for a variety of events.

EDEN ART

The members of Eden are very proud of our tapestries, banners and other items belonging to our art history. Some of these items include tapestries depicting the Genesis story, banners for each season of the church calendar and a stained glass rose window which hangs at the front of the sanctuary. The design of the window has become a symbol of Eden United Church. Many of these items have been designed specifically for Eden, dedicated to specific members or made by members of the congregation.

THE EDUCATION WING

The Education wing is used for Sunday School on Sundays and for a non-profit daycare throughout the week. Designed specifically for child care, it encompasses approximately 4,300 square feet, including a nursery and child-sized washrooms.

The decision to build a new church was made with a commitment that the building would meet the needs of the community. To that end, the education wing was designed so the walls could be easily re-configured to suit a variety of evening users, such as service clubs and youth organizations. Eden also encourages use of its facilities for one-time activities such as weddings and community meetings. The Narthex and Conference rooms are frequently booked for meetings. These activities, which Eden will continue to encourage, help offset the financial obligations of the building, with rental income comprising approximately 30% of the annual revenue.

FINANCIAL RESOURCES

Our total budget for 2011 is \$462,560. Weekly, monthly and annual contributions towards Local, Mission and Service and Mission Tithe* are received by envelope givers and pre-authorized remittance (PAR). Rental revenue, fundraising events, donations and special offerings at Christmas and Easter contribute towards our annual budget.

* Mission Tithe - Eden has a long-term debt with the United Church of Canada. Our payment each year is 10% of our local giving and 10% of 50% of rentals. This is about \$30,000 per year with payments of \$2,500 per month.

A more detailed look at Eden's Financial Resources is in our Annual Report. Available upon request.

PROFILE #4: JOB DESCRIPTIONS

JOB DESCRIPTION FOR FULL-TIME MINISTER

Overview: To understand and provide inspired leadership according to Eden's Governance Model and Small Group Ministry and accountability to the congregation *with a strong focus on families.*

ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS

- Leadership
- Administration
- Worship

The following functions will be allocated according to the skills of the successful candidate, in addition to their work with Halton Presbytery:

- Faith Development
- Pastoral Care
- Youth and Family
- Outreach

RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS

Leadership:

- Delegate and inspire leadership in others
- Guide the life and work of the Church through its small group ministry in accordance with core values
- Be a resource to the Small Group Ministry Coordinator and small group leaders
- Be inspired by the vision of Eden United Church
- Manage the Small Group Ministry's discretionary budget to accomplish the mission of the Church
- Provide leadership training opportunities

Administration:

- Be fully aware of the life and work of the congregation and communicate clearly to Council members
- Follow congregational directives as presented by Council
- Facilitate weekly staff meetings
- Participate in the work of Halton Presbytery
- Administer the benevolent fund of the Church

Worship:

- Inspire a strong and creative worship life
- Prepare and present sermons that provide a relevant message in a nurturing , and easily understood manner
- Embrace the tradition of a strong music program in Eden worship
- Empower active lay participation in worship services
- Provide opportunities for lay leadership
- Be willing to explore alternative worship services
- Offer guidance and support for the involvement of youth and families in worship
- Support Eden United Church's inclusive marriage policy

RESPONSIBILITIES FOR ALLOCATED FUNCTIONS DEPENDENT ON SKILLS

Faith Development:

- Provide opportunities for people of all ages to discover their spiritual gifts
- Encourage and facilitate the use of spiritual gifts in the church and in the world
- Lead or empower others to lead adult Bible study as well as discussion groups and workshops as required
- Provide support and resources in faith development and teacher training for all ages

Pastoral Care:

- Give empathy and spiritual leadership in pastoral care
- Form and train an effective team of lay pastoral care visitors
- Provide home and hospital visits as well as contact with their families to offer pastoral counselling and referrals

Youth and Family:

- Inspire and create programs for youth and young families with expertise and enthusiasm
- Invite and involve youth and families in worship services
- Direct and provide leadership in youth groups, activities including styles and forms of worship, programs and discussion groups

Outreach:

- Encourage and support programs and be a resource to various outreach groups

JOB DESCRIPTION FOR HALF-TIME MINISTER

Overview: To serve Eden United Church through half time ministry according to Eden's Governance Model and accountability to the congregation *with a strong focus on families.*

Functions to be allocated according to the skills of the successful candidate and adjusted according to the skill of the full-time minister:

- Faith Development
- Pastoral Care
- Youth and Family
- Outreach

RESPONSIBILITIES

Faith Development:

- Provide opportunities for people of all ages to discover their spiritual gifts
- Encourage and facilitate the use of spiritual gifts in the church and in the world
- Lead or empower others to lead adult Bible study
- Provide support and resources in faith development and teacher training for all ages
- Provide written information about faith development activities for inclusion in Eden Newsletters, Websites, and Congregational reports

Pastoral Care:

- Give empathy and spiritual leadership in pastoral care
- Assist in the training of an effective team of lay pastoral care visitors
- Provide home and hospital visits as well as contact with families to offer pastoral counselling and referrals

Youth and Family:

- Inspire and create programs for youth and young families with expertise and enthusiasm
- Invite and Involve youth and families in worship services
- Direct and provide leadership in youth groups, activities including styles and forms of worship, programs and discussion groups

Outreach:

- Encourage support programs, and be a resource for various outreach groups



PROFILE # 5: SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE REQUIREMENTS FOR BOTH POSITIONS

- Be able to relate biblical texts to current issues and personal experiences
- Encourage, inspire and train leaders from within the congregation
- Possess Interpersonal skills that will facilitate strong relationships within the congregation
- Demonstrate good communication skills and be open to other people's ideas
- Effectively manage time and delegate tasks appropriately
- Be able to offer and encourage empathy and understanding in the congregation
- Meet deadlines on a consistent basis
- Be committed to confidentiality
- Be literate in Information and Computer Technology
- Working knowledge of annual budget and forms
- Flexibility and creativity is an asset
- An understanding of the Carver Model is an asset

PROFILE #6: TERMS

FULL-TIME MINISTER

Salary: Commensurate with experience. Eden pays above minimum.

Housing Allowance: \$23,000

Continuing Education: \$1,250

Travel: \$0.41/km

Vacation: One Month (5 Sundays)

Study Leave: Three weeks

All other requirements as stated in the Manual.

HALF-TIME MINISTER

Salary: Commensurate with experience. Eden pays above minimum.

Housing Allowance: \$11,500

Continuing Education: \$625

Travel: \$0.41/km

Vacation: One Month (5 Sundays)

Study Leave: Three weeks

All other requirements as stated in the Manual.

Eden United Church

Council Policy Statement

Ministry Priorities

Policy Type: Ministry:

Adoption Date: January 25, 2009

Modification Date: April 19, 2011

➤ **From Policy Statement 100 “Global Ministry Policy” which states:**

1. *“Eden United Church is a progressive Christian community which offers a safe place for people at every stage of their lives, the resources to enrich and empower themselves in body, mind and spirit committed to the human journey, to love more deeply and to live more meaningfully.”*

A. Eden has strong representation and participation from the over 45 years old demographic. Members of this demographic have developed and supported the majority of the existing ministries of Eden throughout the years. This demographic is the backbone of the congregation, but we need to find ways to attract and nurture the next generations, who will carry the torch into the future. To strengthen Eden across all age groups and to encourage growth of new ministries our current short-term ministry focus is to:

1. Provide the environment and the necessary resources to enable children and youth to be an integral part of the life and work of EUC.
2. Establish an engaged, committed, connected and flexible Ministry for young adults (18+) that addresses their needs, and will provide an environment that is appealing and relevant, reflecting a commitment of leadership from the Congregation.
3. Connect with the 20-45 year old demographic through diversity in worship and programs.
4. Provide opportunities for the congregation and wider community to discover and act upon their spirit given gifts.

Eden United Church

Council Policy Statement

Core Values

Policy Type: Ministry

Adoption Date: January 25, 2009

Modification Date:

We are committed to:

Sanctuary: We are committed to providing a safe place to share our questions, our discoveries, our joys and our concerns.

Diversity: We embrace people of all ages and respect personal, cultural and religious diversity.

Christian Development: We strive to always learn more about our own spirituality and what it means to be followers of Jesus.

Stewardship: We treat the earth and all creation as sacred elements to be treated with care and respect.

Service: We nurture the community at Eden with our time, talent and money.

Social Justice: We work towards justice for all people.

Involvement: We strive to engage all in a way that recognizes each individual's unique gifts and needs.

Community: We are all interconnected and are strengthened through our interactions while we serve, learn, worship and play together.

Openness: We are open to new ways of worshiping, communicating and working together.

Fun: We cultivate joy in our relationship with the divine and each other.

Integrity: We act on our commitments and beliefs.

Eden United Church

Council Policy Statement

Foundational Principles for Growth

Policy Type: Ministry

Adoption Date: January 25, 2009

Modification Date:

Our Foundational Principles for growth are:

1. Biblical literacy

We take the Bible seriously, not literally, as our source of inspiration and guidance. We encourage and affirm Biblical literacy. As Scripture is set in historical context and understood as metaphor and sacrament it is revelatory.

2. Discipleship

We are disciples of Jesus, the Christ. Our spiritual life is formed in continual dialogue and loving relationship with the living Christ. We encourage all to intentionally cultivate this relationship.

3. Lay Ministry

We believe that all are called into ministry by God. We support and equip lay ministers to discover and use their distinctive gifts for ministry.

4. Gift-based ministry

We do ministry based upon our spiritual gifts. Through the use of a spiritual gift inventory we encourage all to base their ministry in their spirit-given gifts.

5. Diversity



We welcome and include all persons in our faith community, without discrimination on the basis of race, national or ethnic origin, gender, sexual orientation, age, mental or physical disability. We respect and encourage diversity of opinion.

6. Prayer

We seek God's will through prayer in all of our programs, groups, and ministries. We encourage all to have daily prayer practices.

7. Evangelism

We believe that the love of God is persuasive and never coercive. We openly share our excitement of what God is doing in our midst, and celebrate what God is doing in other religious faiths as well. We encourage all to share their faith with others.

Eden United Church

Council Policy Statement

Our Faith

Policy Type: Ministry

Adoption Date: January 25, 2009

Modification Date:

Our Faith is:

1. Faith

Faith is less about believing the “right” things, and more about a way of life which is based in radical trust in God, a guiding vision of a just and peaceful world, and a conscious allegiance to God as revealed by Jesus, the Christ.

2. Progressive

By calling ourselves “progressive”, we mean that we are Christians who...

- a. Have found an approach to God through the life and teachings of Jesus.
- b. Recognize and celebrate that there are other valid paths to God; these paths are true for those who pursue them as our path is true for us.
- c. Invite all people to participate in our community and worship life together without insisting that they become like us in order to be acceptable (including but not limited to):
 - believers and agnostics
 - sceptics
 - women and men
 - those of all sexual orientation and gender identities
 - those of all races and cultures

- those of all classes and abilities.
- d. Know that how we behave toward one another is more important than what we believe, and that how we treat each other is the fullest manifestation of what we believe.
 - e. Find more grace in the search for understanding than we do in dogmatic certainty; living the questions is more important than having the answers.
 - f. Form ourselves into communities dedicated to equipping one another for the work we feel called to; striving for peace and justice among all people, protecting and restoring the integrity of all God's creation, and bringing hope to those Jesus called the least of his brothers and sisters.
 - g. Celebrate Scripture as our primary source of inspiration and guidance, recognizing that we meant to take it seriously but not literally. As well we do not regard the New Testament as being in anyway superior to, or the fulfillment of, the First Testament. The Jewish narratives and history found in the First Testament are employed by the earliest disciples and by subsequent generations of Christians to make meaning of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus; this meaning is enriched by our Jewish roots, but does not replace it.
 - h. Understand the sharing of bread and cup in Jesus' name to be a representation of an ancient vision of God's feast for all peoples, and is therefore open to all.

3. God

God is the unnameable Source of All, the Eternal Loving Presence, Creator of All, Within All, known in and through creation, yet Beyond All, transcending our understanding, revealed for Christians most fully in Jesus of Nazareth.

4. Jesus, the Christ

Jesus is God's heart, for us and with us. Through him we know God as loving, compassionate Presence. Through his life, death, and resurrection we learn the way of peace.

5. The Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the living Christ, revealing God's will and empowering the church to do God's will. The Holy Spirit works within us to transform us in the image of the Christ and works within the world at large to lead us toward God's future.

6. The Bible

The Bible is the written witness of God's people through time. It is written by human beings from within a particular social-political context and worldview. As

we deepen our appreciation of this context, the Biblical narrative becomes for us a source of inspiration and guidance.

7. Church

The church is the community of people who covenant with God and with each other to faithfully follow the way of the Christ and thereby witness to peace and justice.

8. Human Beings

As humans we are bio-spiritual beings, biologically constructed by the elements of the earth, and spiritually made in God's image. Therefore we are intimately connected both to our Creator, being made in God's image, and to all living creatures, being made from the same cosmic elements of the earth. Consciously aware of the gift of life and the human capacity for harm, we have a heightened responsibility to ensure the continuation of life on this planet, and to promote justice and peace in the human realm and with Creation.

9. Sin

Sin is a state of alienation from God, self, the earth, and others. We believe in original blessing more than original sin, and yet we have fallen from grace. As we turn our lives toward Jesus Christ, we remember the original blessing, and receive the power and grace to begin the journey of healing these relationships and to give our lives in the service to others.