

A Brief Guide To
nearly everything

You Ever Wanted
To Know About

FAIRMOUNT

volume 2 | 2025-2026



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2025/2026



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HERE, YOU ARE

Welcome



Many churches say “everyone is welcome,” but far fewer actually practice that kind of wide-open hospitality for all.

At Fairmount, we want to embody the welcome we proclaim. We’re not perfect, but we hope you’ll feel welcome here. We hope you find a faith community where you can bring your whole self.

Now, we know that **being** welcome and **feeling at home** aren’t the same thing. And while we think Fairmount is a great place to call our spiritual home, we know it’s not everyone’s cup of tea. If you’re seeking a spiritual home and Fairmount isn’t right for you, that’s ok.

We know lots of wonderful churches around here and we'd be glad to try and help you find the right one for you. But if you do find a spiritual home at Fairmount, **we hope you'll get connected and engaged**—that you'll try joining a small group, volunteer for a ministry, or grab coffee with one of our pastors. Our community is stronger when each of us brings our story, our gifts, and our ideas into the fold.



This little book is designed to tell you more about who we are, what we believe, and how to get more connected with us.

"Live in me. Make your home in me just as I do in you... Make yourselves at home in my love. If you keep my commands, you'll remain intimately at home in my love...I've told you these things for a purpose: that my joy might be your joy, and your joy wholly mature." ~John 15:4; 9-11 (The Message)

The world tells us:
if we have more and do
more, then we'll be happy,

but that's a lie.

The way of more is **dehumanizing**.
It turns us into curated selves,
and leaves us anxious, exhausted,
and empty.

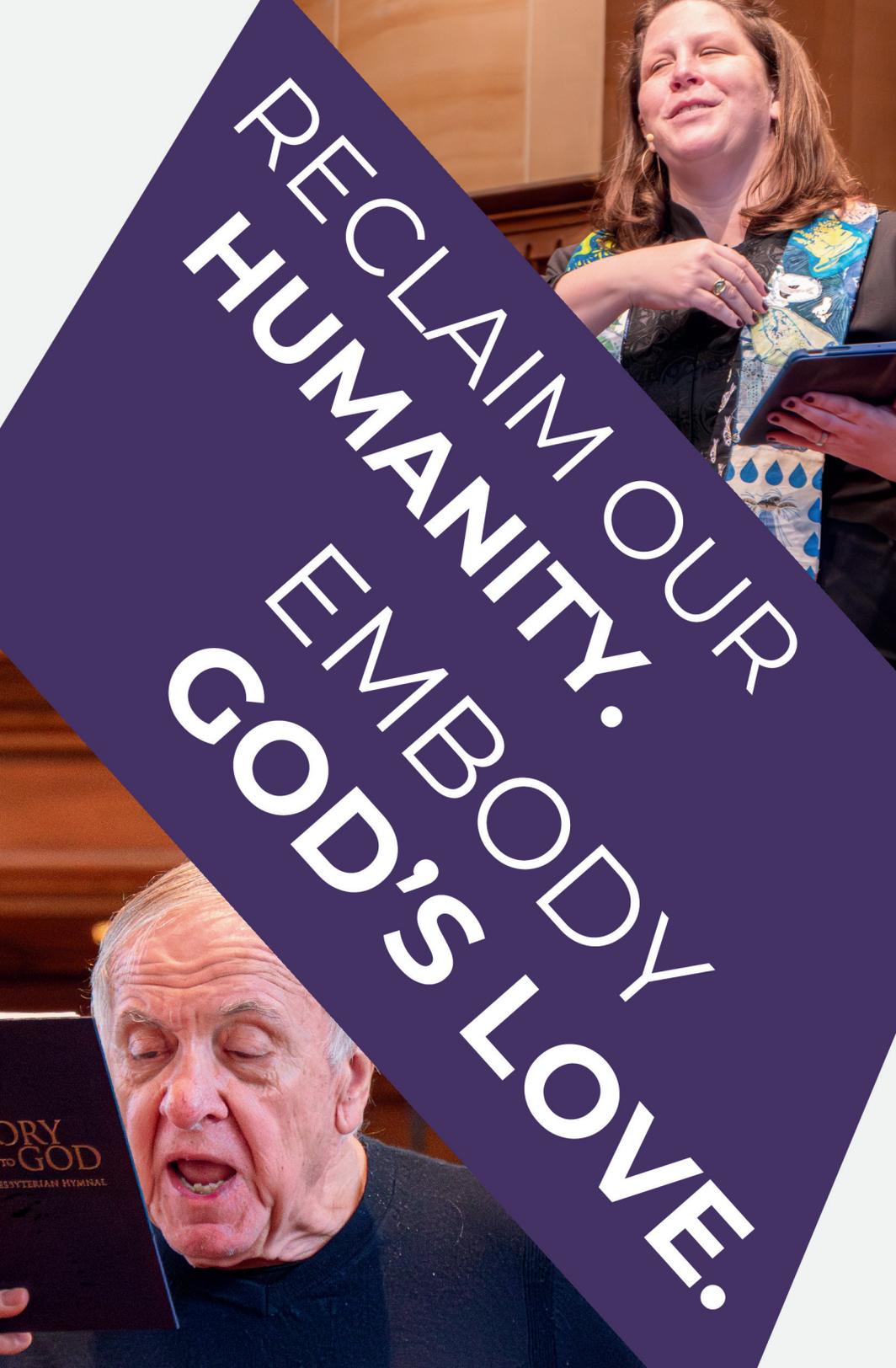
We're seeking a way to
reclaim our humanity.
A way to be fully awake, fully aware,
fully alive.

In Jesus, we see the **intended shape**
of our lives;
the embodiment of love;
the human beings that
God **created us to be**.

Liberated from the way of more,
we can become ourselves.
And it's from this deepest truth—
the truth of who we really are—
that God's love works in us
and through us.

This is our mission...

RECLAIM OUR
HUMANITY.
GOD'S BODY
TO YOUR LOVE.





We dream of a world where every person is free to become who they really are, but that world isn't possible until we say:

**“Enough! I am enough
and I have enough.”**

From there, we're invited into a lifelong journey, following Jesus towards liberation.

It hinges on one collective agreement: one where we all belong because we all belong to one another.

We then have to dig in: why are we really here? What is our true purpose? And how can we equip and empower one another to pursue that purpose and fulfill our potential?

And let's be honest, there are many forces that hold us back from finding belonging, purpose, and potential (*racism, sexism, ableism, poverty to name just a few... the list is awfully long*).

When we resist those forces of division and hierarchy, when we embody the love of God as Jesus did... then we are restored to our original and intended shape as human beings. **We are free to become who God created us to be.**

This is how we do it:

Belonging Purpose Potential & Liberation

We don't pretend to have all the answers, but we're a spiritual community committed to following Jesus' way of liberation together—striving to embody God's love and **reclaim our humanity**. We believe that's how we can help create a world where everyone is free to become who they really are.



WHO LEADS FPC?



Fairmount isn't led by any one person. **We're a democracy.** We share leadership among members, pastors, and staff—working collaboratively to embody God's love and reclaim our humanity.

Each year, we elect members of our congregation to lead. Individually we call them “**elders**” and collectively they are called the “**Session.**” Our Session (which also includes the installed pastors who were elected by the congregation) is responsible for making important decisions aligned with our church's mission and values. Among Fairmount's elders, you'll find a mix of different races, ethnicities, sexual orientations, genders, spiritual gifts, and theological views.

We also elect **deacons** (who care for our congregation), **endowment trustees** (who steward our endowment), and a **nominating committee** (who nominate members to congregational leadership). These nominations are brought forward for a vote of the congregation each fall. We hold a congregational meeting each year to vote on terms of call for the pastors, and an annual meeting in the spring to review the state of the church and celebrate our ministry together.

We have **four councils** that report to our Session, each with a different ministry focus. These councils are led by elders and other Fairmounters.

- **Admin Council** oversees the **resources** of our church, including our staff, building, and finances.
- **Care Council** tends to the pastoral needs of our members and our **communal life**.
- **Faith Formation Council** supports the **spiritual growth** of Fairmounters of all ages.
- **Serve Council** connects Fairmount with our wider community, including **service, justice, and interfaith** partnerships.

Interested in learning about how Fairmount is led by the people? Reach out to one of the folks below:

Class of 2025 Elders

*Vicki Mentrek, Care
Peter Scheid, Care
*Ben Sperry, Faith
Sarah Stone, Serve

Class of 2026 Elders

*Steve Chapman, Serve
Nancy Gillombardo, Faith
Jerry Parker, Care
*Ruth Wasem, Admin

Class of 2027 Elders

Ian Cameron, Admin
Jim Crosby, Admin
Susan Wherley, Faith
Peg Zitzner, Serve

Clerk of Session: Sarah Stone
Treasurer: Amy Carlson

***Council Chairperson**

Contact:

admin@fpccle.org

faithformation@fpccle.org

care@fpccle.org

serve@fpccle.org

clerk@fpccle.org

treasurer@fpccle.org

MEET OUR Staff



Rev. Ryan Wallace he/him
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Rev. Lindsay Harren-Lewis she/her
Associate Pastor
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Rev. Andrew Genszler he/him
Covenant Pastor
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Jim Riggs he/him
Director of Music Ministries
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Sara Gresh she/her
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Lisa Nester she/her
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WHAT WE Believe



In the Presbyterian Church (USA), we don't have a set of rigid doctrines. Instead, we have a "generous orthodoxy," meaning there is a **wide range of belief on any given theological question**. We embrace a "both-and" theology, which is **more complex and nuanced** than rigid doctrine. Below, you'll find our responses to common spiritual and theological questions. These aren't meant to be understood as "the answers" or what all Presbyterians believe, but we think it gives a sense of where we're coming from.

What is the core message of our faith?

God is. God is in you. God is love. Be here. Be love.

Who was Jesus?

Jesus was the image of the invisible God, the incarnate presence of God within humanity. Jesus was the Human One; the revelation of who God created us to be. Jesus embodied God's love to show us how to embody God's love, which is how we reclaim our humanity.

Why did Jesus die?

Jesus' death is a poignant symbol of the world's fierce (and often violent) **resistance to the love of God**. The crucifixion demonstrates how humans are afraid to give up their own independent power and allow God's love to reign in them and in all creation.

What about the resurrection?

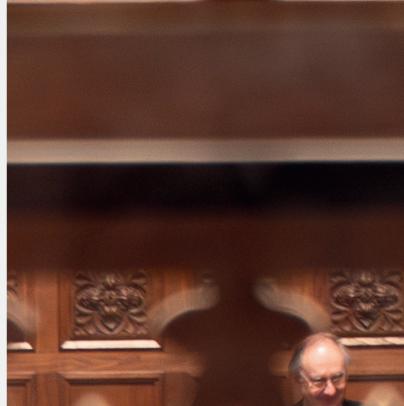
The resurrection proclaims that **God's love is the most powerful force in the universe**, and that God's presence in humankind **did not die with Jesus**. (And our belief in that message is a lot more important than our belief about the physical aspects of the resurrection.)

What is the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit is the **invisible presence of God that surrounds us and permeates all creation**. Never coercing, She patiently persuades us towards liberation through love. (Kind of like magnetoreception... the sixth sense of many animals that interacts with Earth's magnetic field to guide their migration!)

Why do you use different pronouns for God?

For centuries, people have used he/him pronouns for God... but **God is not a man**. Scripture uses metaphors for God that rise above traditional gender norms, so to us, **God transcends gender**.



What's the Bible?

We agree with scholar Marcus Borg, who said:
"The Bible is true. And some of it actually happened."

In other words, our Holy Scripture is the spiritual foundation of our faith, but it's not meant to be read **literally or unquestioningly**. We strive to understand biblical texts in their original historical/cultural context, and then interpret them to discern how God is using them to guide us today.

Should churches get involved in "politics"?

"Separation of Church and State" means that the government cannot mandate religion. It does not mean that faith communities (like churches) are forbidden from civic engagement. In fact, the Gospel demands that **Christians resist injustice and advocate for the humanity of the marginalized.**

What's our stance on racism?

God desires unity with diversity (see Genesis 11:1-9 and Acts 2:1-20). Therefore, **racism is sin**. Fairmount is a Matthew 25 congregation, **committed to dismantling structural racism.**



What do we believe about gender and sexuality?

We believe that **God embodies the full expression of gender**, and that God created us to be in sexual relationships that expand a sense of love—of self, one another, creation, and Creator.

People of many different gender identities and sexual orientations are active participants and leaders in our church (including as staff and elders).

Fairmount is a More Light congregation, committed to the full equity and inclusion of our LGBTQIA+ siblings.

Is FPC concerned about climate change?

Our sacred stories teach that we are created from the earth and called to “serve” the earth (Genesis 2). **Fairmount is an Earth Care Congregation, committed to environmental care and justice.** (Check out our new solar panels!)

Can science and religion co-exist?

Science isn't a threat to religion. **It's a complementary discipline.** One that reveals some of the mysteries of the universe that ancient religions could only speculate about. Sometimes, scientific discoveries even reveal truths that prompt us to rethink and reform our theology. At Fairmount, you'll hear sermons that reference scientific disciplines like quantum physics, neurology, and epigenetics.



Do we allow women in leadership?

Yes.

Do we allow LGBTQIA+ folx in leadership?

Yes.

Do we allow men in leadership?

Yes. (Despite the many mistakes they've made as the exclusive leaders of the church for many centuries, we still allow men to be pastors and elders in our church.)

What's our relationship with other faiths?

For Christians, the love of God is most clearly revealed in Jesus. Other faith traditions find the love of God revealed in other sacred stories and practices. **There are many ways to experience and share the love of God** (see Acts 10:34-35). We learn from other faith traditions, eat and pray together, and collaborate to make a positive impact on our shared community. Fairmount is a founding member of two interfaith justice organizations: Greater Cleveland Congregations (GCC) and the Interfaith Group Against Hate (IGAHL).





SUNDAYS AT Fairmount

When and where is worship?

On the first Sunday of each month, we have a single all-church worship service at 11:00 a.m. in the sanctuary. **We call these “Breaking Bread” Sundays.** Most other Sundays, we offer a **communion service at 8:30 a.m. in the chapel** and an **intergenerational service at 11:00 a.m. in the sanctuary.**

During the summer (beginning Memorial Day weekend), we offer **one worship service at 10:00 a.m. with communion.** All services in the sanctuary are live streamed.

What are “Breaking Bread Sundays?”

The first Sunday of each month (Oct-May) is a “Breaking Bread Sunday.” On those Sundays, we have one worship service at 11am, **followed by a community meal for everyone** (*that means children, adults, visitors—everyone!*) Since our children stay in worship on these Sundays, the service looks and feels a little different. For instance, an Intergen Pop-Up Choir sings (with voices of all ages) and the sermons tend to be shorter and more multi-sensory. From talking rocks to visits from Santa Claus, you never know what to expect on a Breaking Bread Sunday!

FPC Music Ministries

**Who
makes
music at
Fairmount?**



Everyone! All ages and stages make up our **biggest choir, The Congregational Choir**. This choir unites their voices in singing an array of hymns and service music. Our primary source is the purple, "Glory to God" hymnal. Everyone is encouraged to use their voices whether you are a seasoned (or shower) singer!

Instrumentalists join the congregation music offerings as well--soloists ranging from string, brass, woodwinds and traditional instruments make appearances throughout the year.

We are grateful to the many sponsors of our music program here at FPC. Liturgical music is chiefly supported by the Eleanor R. Baird Music Fund. Other events are supported by our congregation members and patrons.



COMMUNITY Concerts

The **Rush Hour Concert Series**, an acoustic music showcase (sponsored by the congregation including a generous matching gift from Peter and Sabrina Vanden Broeck), is back in full swing for the 2025/2026 season. Offered throughout the year on select **Tuesdays at 5:30PM** (See music brochure for a complete listing of events), these 50-minute concerts give us a unique break from our busy lives to hear live art, rest our minds, and to "*hang up and hang out.*" Rush Hour features a plethora of musical styles, performers from unique backgrounds, and is centered around themes of vulnerability and relaxation.

Various community organizations offer concerts at Fairmount throughout the year, many of them free to the public. Groups that sound in our wonderful sanctuary range from **CityMusic Cleveland Chamber Orchestra** to the **Cleveland Composer's Guild**, and every small ensemble in between. **FPC houses the largest pipe organ in Northeast Ohio**, and many concerts showcase this wonderful instrument--catch our offerings in our **biannual music brochure!**

 FAIRMOUNT

Rush

HOOR

concert
series



come
curious,
leave

Inspired

Catch the Spirit,
Join the Music Ministry at Fairmount.

Concert Hosting (Youth/Adults) welcome guests to Fairmount for an array of concerts. Contact Steve Chapman (schapman1967@gmail.com) for details.

Congregational Choir (All Ages) a community of all ages and stages singing hymns and responses during worship.

The Fairmount Bell Choir (Middle School/Adults) Contact Amy Carlson (akcarlson1965@gmail.com) for details and rehearsal schedule.

The Fairmount Choir (High School/Adults), rehearsals on Thursday 7-8:30 pm beginning Sept 4.

Flute Ensemble (All Ages), an ensemble that plays for worship several times a year with 2 rehearsals prior. Reach out to Susan Wherley (susan.wherley@gmail.com) for details and dates.

Instrumentalists (All Ages) play for worship throughout the year.

Intergenerational PopUp Choir (All Ages), first Sunday of each month beginning Oct 5, at 10:15.

Joyful Noise (Elementary), singing and playing Orff instruments. Meeting after worship (12:15-12:45) twice a month beginning on Sept 21.

For more information, email Jim Riggs, Director of Music Ministries at Jim@fpccle.org

Children & Families

Are kids allowed in worship?

YES! We aren't the kind of church that says kids are welcome and then gives a side-eye to the parent whose kid is lying on the floor screaming. Most kids have trouble sitting still and being quiet. **All of our pastors have young children, so we get it**—don't stress if your child is moving around and making some noise.

Around the sanctuary, you'll find **worship bags containing books to read and pages to color**. You'll find a "wiggle room" located in the narthex where families can go to change a diaper, nurse their child (if they want privacy), or where little ones can experience a change of pace. We want families to feel at home here, to make this worship place your special space.



Ok, but is worship for kids?

Kids are always welcome in worship services. Our most “kid friendly” worship service is on the first Sunday of each month, called Breaking Bread Sunday. You can learn more about that service on page 16.

All services include “Time for Young Disciples;” a sweet segment where kids come to the front of the sanctuary and say the *darnedest* things while a pastor simplifies a theological message for them. Afterwards, kids can either stay in worship or head to a fun-filled theological lesson with others in their age group.



Nursery

Located across from the women’s restroom near room 114 off of Andersen Hall is our nursery. Feel free to spend time with your little ones here on Sunday mornings. During the program year (as well as some of our events) **we typically have nursery staff** that can care for your children while you are in worship. Talk to Pastor Lindsay for more information!

WE Time

Worship Enrichment (WE) Time takes place during the 11:00 a.m. worship service (Sept-May, except for 1st Sundays). Children in Pre-K through 3rd grade leave worship after “Time for Young Disciples” to gather in room 214 to learn more about God, the Bible, church, and each other. Adults pick up their child(ren) from room 214 after the service. If today is your child’s first time joining WE Time, we ask that an adult walks with them to room 214 after “Time for Young Disciples” to greet the leaders and help your child(ren) settle in.



Club 4/5

Our 4th and 5th graders are invited to join Club 4/5, which is a blend of relationship-building and spiritual formation for our **kids who are transitioning out of our children’s ministry and into our youth ministry**. Club 4/5 gathers on the first and second Sundays of every month (Oct-May). On the first Sunday of the month, they’ll have lunch together at church followed by a social activity or field trip. And on the second Sunday of the month, they’ll leave worship after *Time for Young Disciples* and join their teachers in room 212 for an interactive lesson.

Jr. & Sr. Faith High Youth Formation

Youth have a unique spirituality all their own. Our program **creates a safe and brave space** for pre/teens to question, express, and explore their values around identity, responsibility, relationships, and where God fits into their lives. They grow together during Sunday youth gatherings and at several overnight retreats each year. A PC(USA) confirmation class is typically offered every other year.

While some programs are open to all youth, Junior (6th - 8th grade) and Senior High (9th - 12th grade) groups enjoy programs designed to **meet them where they are.**

All students are welcome regardless of faith, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, or ability. Whether they're into arts, athletics, or anime—we're sure they'll find belonging here. We aim to nurture emerging young adults who **think creatively and critically, live authentically, and thoughtfully discern their spirit-led vocations.** Our discussions focus on racial, economic, gender, and ecological justice through a PC(USA) Christian-tinged lens. We also explore broader questions about what practicing the Christian faith means, using biblical narratives and Jesus' teachings to shape values like compassion, grace, and justice.



Adult Faith Formation

On Sunday mornings, we offer a range of faith formation experiences for adults. Starting in October and continuing through November, there is a **weekly faith formation series on Sunday mornings at 10am**, as well as a **variety of contemplative spiritual practices** including Taize, Compline, and various forms of meditation.

Small Groups typically meet once a month to share life and prayer. We typically launch new small groups at the start of the new year.

Check our website for details on **Bible Study** with Pastor Ryan.

FPC hosts retreats throughout the year. Our all-church retreat typically takes place in the Fall, and in the spring we host our silent retreat, among others.

The William Birkett Williams Lecture Series invites experts from a variety of disciplines to Fairmount each year, and to learn more about all our events including specific dates, visit our Faith Formation page or our website calendar.



Get Involved



There are **so many** great ways to get involved at Fairmount. Opportunities to create memories and build community are numerous, with a few popular groups listed below:

The Prayer Shawl Ministry knits/crochets prayer shawls for members of our congregation and community.

The Sisterhood of Service is a small-group ministry of single women.

The Young Adults gather for reflective discussion, usually over a meal.

Faithful Lives Film Series meets monthly (Jan-May) to watch a movie, eat popcorn and dinner, and talk about faith.

Men's Group meets monthly for lively discussions about world events and theology.

Talk to Christine Winters to learn about **service and office volunteering**, and meet with Jim Riggs to talk about our **choir, performing, and concert hosting!**

Check our website, fpccl.org, to find a **complete list of groups!**

FPC & Accessibility

At Fairmount, **we are committed to inclusivity** and ensuring everyone feels welcome and supported. We offer **accessible parking and ramps for access** to our main building and sanctuary. There are restrooms on the main level **and an elevator** to the basement and second floor is available. Our sanctuary is equipped with **audio enhancements for the hearing impaired**, and large print bulletins are available for improved visibility. We live stream our later worship service for those unable to attend in person. We aim to make Fairmount a place where everyone can participate fully and feel connected.

Parking

FPC is blessed with parking space. We respectfully reserve parking spots in the **parking lot adjacent to the building** for those who need a closer parking spot. We have a parking lot **across the street (catty-corner to FPC)**, and the **on-street parking off of Scarborough and Fairmount Boulevard** is available.

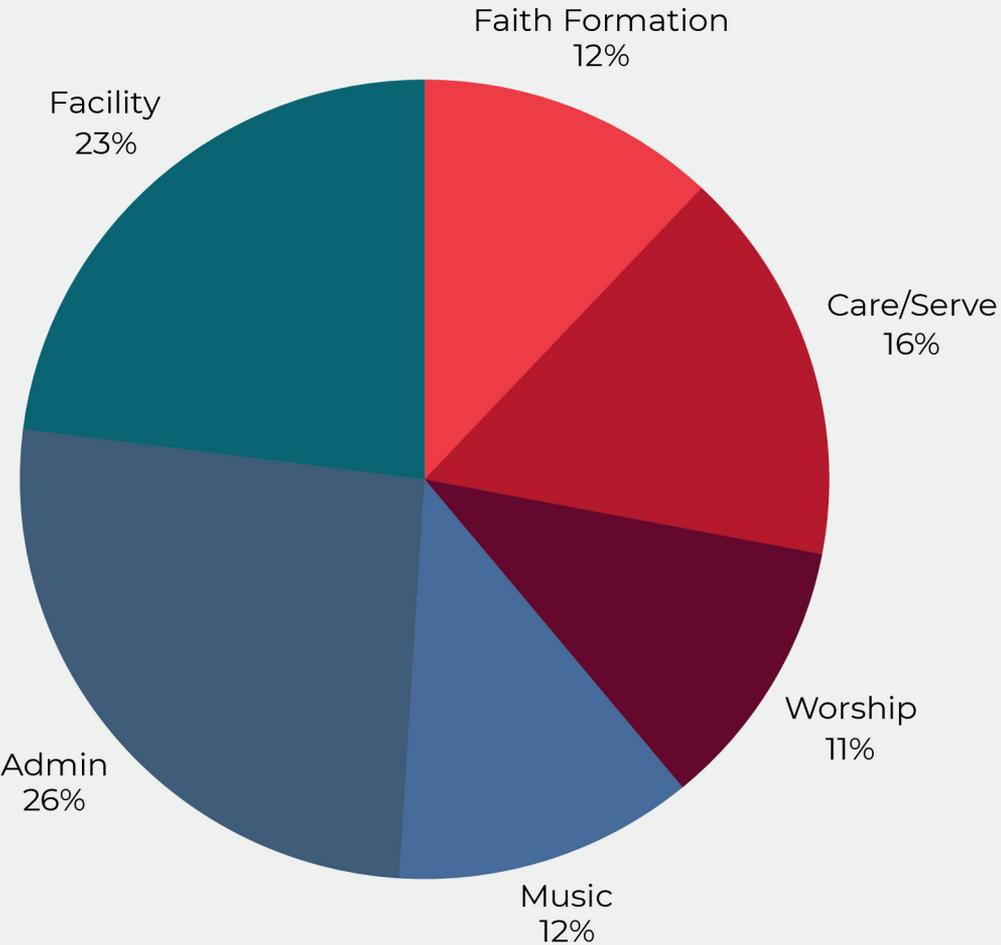
Restrooms

We want everyone to feel comfortable and at ease here at FPC. You can find many restrooms throughout our building, on each floor. On the main level, men's, women's, and family restrooms **are located off Andersen Hall near the front office**. There is a single restroom at the **back of the sanctuary**. On the lower level, men's and women's restrooms are situated **off the dining room**. On the second level there is a restroom for everyone near the Youth Room. Please find a staff member or volunteer to help you locate a restroom if you have trouble finding one.

At A Glance **Finances**

FPC is committed to using our resources **in creative, faithful, and sustainable ways**. Here's a snapshot of our income and spending from our most recent annual report. 51% of our expenses are for the **care of our congregation, our community, our worship, and our music**.

2024 Expenses (\$1.3M)
(shown as percentage of total)



Giving

Donations to FPC are the cornerstone that sustains our ministries and mission. **The majority of Fairmount's financial resources come from the people in our congregation.**

If you're new to Fairmount and just checking us out, **please do NOT feel obligated to give anything!** Think of it like showing up to dinner at a friend's house without needing to bring a dessert or a bottle of wine.

For those who consider Fairmount your spiritual home, we encourage you to give what you're able. You can:

- Give during worship
- Give a one-time or recurring gift online through our secure donation portal
- Mail your donation directly to the church
- Donate stock/other financial resources. Contact Sara Gresh (sgresh@fpccl.org) to learn more



(scan me to give!)

We encourage you to consider future generations of Fairmounters with a **planned gift**. Connect with Peggy Roberts, Chair of Stewardship, or one of our pastors for more information.

*We want to thank all who, through their gifts, support the mission, people, and growth here at Fairmount. You are deeply appreciated by the staff and our community.
Thank you.*

Affiliations & Community Partnerships



As a Matthew 25 congregation, FPC has made aspirational commitments to: (1) build congregational vitality; (2) dismantle structural racism; and (3) eradicate systemic poverty. We live in a world where not all have equal access to education, transportation, fresh food, financial resources, clean

air, safe water, healthy environments, employment with a living wage, healthcare, benefits, citizenship, and affordable housing. This lack of access creates generational cycles of poverty and a racial wealth gap that are systemic in nature. Fairmount is committed to aligning our mission with Matthew 25 values in both our internal operations and our community ministry.



FPC was again certified as an Earth Care Congregation in 2025 by the Presbyterian Church (USA)'s Presbyterian Hunger Program. We continue these efforts to restore creation for ecology and justice. The Earth Care certification is designed to recognize churches that take seriously the commitment of

God's charge to "till and keep" the garden. In 2023, Earth Stewards won an award from the local chapter of the U.S. Green Building Council for our reduction in electricity usage, and this year we're excited to have installed solar panels on our roof! Join our Earth Stewards Team if you're interested in leading this work at Fairmount!



Fairmount Presbyterian Church is a founding member of Greater Cleveland Congregations (GCC), which is a nonpartisan, broad-based organization of 37 faith communities and civic partners. GCC has received widespread recognition for building and maintaining the largest, most diverse grassroots base of citizens in Cleveland's history, in particular uniting residents of the city and its suburbs, and across lines of race, income and religion. GCC's mission is to be a powerful force for change, creating justice and opportunity in Greater Cleveland. Fairmount's Faith in Action Team leads our congregation's work with GCC, and Pastor Ryan is the co-chair of GCC's Strategy Team/Board of Directors.

Lutheran Metropolitan Ministry



Founded in 1969, LMM's mission is to challenge systemic injustices faced by those who are oppressed, forgotten, and hurting by providing responsive solutions, advocacy, and hope. LMM focuses on Housing and Shelter, Workforce Development, Youth Resiliency Services, and Guardianship Services. LMM operates many of the homeless sh-

elters in northeast Ohio, Chopping for Change, and is about to launch a new program to train formerly unhoused neighbors in construction trades. In 2024, LMM awarded Fairmount with the Faith and Friendship Award, given to a faith partner that embodies the character, attributes, and commitment to living a life of faith, advocacy, and service to the people LMM serves. Pastor Ryan serves on the LMM Board of Directors.

Fairmount Cooperative Preschool



For more than four decades, the preschool has called our church their home. A cooperative preschool recognizes that parents are the primary educators of their children.

While staffed by professional teachers, a co-op is operated by the parents of the young students. Parents assist the teachers in the classroom and share responsibility in the daily work necessary to operate a successful school. The preschool has priority admission for the children and grandchildren of Fairmount members. Visit www.fairmountcoop.org for details.

Interfaith Group Against Hate



In 2022, Fairmount co-founded the Interfaith Group Against Hate, a multi-faith coalition led by Christian, Muslim, and Jewish congregations in response to the growing threats posed by the increase in hate crime, white nationalism, and religious extremism. Our mission is to eradicate hate by building strong relationships between our congregations, educating our community about hate and violence, and organizing together on local issues that will reduce hate/discrimination and promote equity/justice.

Batey 105

Fairmount has a history of mission partnerships in the Dominican Republic, aiding in education, infrastructure, healthcare, and other assistance dating back to the 1980s. In 2014, we made a 25 year commitment to a partnership with Batey 105, a small village largely composed of undocumented residents of Haitian descent. Interested in learning more? We can get you connected with our “Bridges to Batey” leadership team.



FPC is a More Light Church. The More Light mission is to center and celebrate the lives, gifts, and leadership of LGBTQIA+ people in the Presbyterian Church (USA) and beyond. Locally, we live out our More Light identity by partnering with leading LGBTQIA+ organizations, celebrating pride month, participating in pride events, and teaching our community about queer affirming Christian theology. There are folx in the rainbow family leading our community at every level, including staff.

Thank you for reading through our booklet! Whether you're new here or a seasoned Fairmounter, we hope you discovered something new about us and about what we do.

Reach out to any of the staff on page 9 & 10 for clarification to any part of this booklet--we are happy to help and always looking to improve.

We hope you enjoy it here, and can join us in **Reclaiming your Humainty by Embodying God's Love, together.**





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