



May 2017

Dear Friends of Five Oaks,

Much has happened at Five Oaks since this time last year. Even more dramatic events have taken place in our world.

Five Oaks is ready to put into action a vision that responds to changed circumstances in church and society and has found willing partners to join with them. The Centre seeks your participation in making it a reality.

In a time of rising sectarian misunderstanding, it is essential that people of faith and no faith come together to understand each other at a deep level. **Five Oaks intends to be a place where people of different faiths, cultures and Nations come together to learn more about their own faith and culture, but also to learn about each other's.** We will be perhaps the first interfaith/intercultural residential centre in Canada to model a way of being together on sacred land and to provide leadership for religious and secular institutions on interfaith/intercultural understanding and action.

For a start, Six Nations, Muslim organizations, the YMCA and Five Oaks have agreed to develop a partnership. In this "thin" place where the line between the spiritual and material is so porous, **we will gather in community to live, work, learn, pray, play, heal and act for justice.**

Each partner will provide programs and activities to serve their constituencies. There will be programs for United Church and Christian learners and for spiritual seekers; First Nations will provide a healing space in a natural setting; Muslims, a safe and nurturing environment for learning and recreation; the YMCA will reach out to children, youth and families in the area. Most important, all partners are committed to working together to offer interfaith/intercultural programs that inspire new understandings of neighbour, faith and creation, as they model communities of compassion. Our plan is also to have individuals or families of different backgrounds living on site—learning and working together. On top of all this, the Centre will continue to host groups who wish to come to our special place for their own events.

This vision and a supporting business plan came from the Member Working Group, elected at the June 2016 Annual General Meeting to seek an alternative future for Five Oaks. This group has been diligently working over these past 10 months to develop partnerships and new ways of delivering programs; streamline all computer support systems (especially online registration); review and develop a sound financial forecast. **Research indicates that the Centre was in better financial shape than expected—although loss of donations and bookings after the announcement of a possible closing has dramatically affected the income for 2017.** An engineering report indicated that the buildings are safe and sound and only require regular repairs that maintenance staff are anxious to undertake. To implement the plan, the MWG has re-imagined the governance model, and created a balance of staff and volunteers who will forge our new path together. Five Oaks' mission and vision have served as a beacon throughout this journey, so the proposal stays true to our founding principles while enabling Five Oaks to rise on the Spirit's breath of new life.

On April 19, 2017, the Board of Directors endorsed the Business Plan developed by the Member Working Group. **This letter is written jointly by the Board of Directors and the Member Working Group to ask for your support of our common vision for the future.** We acknowledge that the approval process is not complete until a vote by the membership at the Annual General Meeting on June 17, 2017. We write in trust and faith that they will join with us.

After all, **the ideas for our new directions came from members and supporters of Five Oaks.** Responses to a survey sent out last spring, recommendations at a September gathering called Roots & Wings, follow-up comments to our mailings, and contacts from concerned friends of Five Oaks have led the Centre to think and move in significant new ways. We are so grateful for their inspiration and practical assistance.

We are also grateful for the dedicated work of the staff who have carried on the work of hospitality and administration at Five Oaks. Rafael Vallejo, Executive Director, was hired to close the Centre and stayed on to help create a new story for its future. Pat Bowlby, Financial Administrator, has worked hard to streamline our financial system and processes, and has contributed in many other ways. Tom Hunt, Maintenance Coordinator continues to care faithfully for the buildings, land and ministry of the Centre. Many volunteers have helped with reception in the front office, making phone calls, administration, cleaning, maintenance, cooking for staff, weekend hosting, setting up for events, and leading in programs. Volunteer contribution was essential to the ongoing life of the Centre and will continue to be.

Now is the time, though, to move from a holding pattern to new commitments. Now is the time to begin to act on our new vision and begin the transformation—with your support.

After the Annual General Meeting, life will be different. Our faith and cultural partners will participate as full members of the Board of Directors, undertaking responsibilities for policy-making and management. An interfaith/intercultural team of staff and volunteers will begin to organize programs and hosting. Finances, maintenance, and site development will be overseen by interfaith/intercultural working teams of volunteers. **Our partners will be fully integrated into the governance, mission, vision and implementation at the Centre.**

Here is what Abdul-Rehman Malik, Muslim Partner Team member has to say about our vision.

“Given the political context that we are living in and the challenges we face to preserve and engender a socially just, merciful and inclusive society, the need to have safe spaces which can facilitate meaningful dialogue and cross-cultural encounter has never been more urgent.”

We hope you agree that there is such a need and that your agreement moves you to make a financial contribution that will make possible a response to that need—for a place of safety, of healing, of dialogue and learning, and a community of compassion willing to care for the world.

This is a critical time in the life of Five Oaks and our society. We are passionate about making a significant contribution. Your gift will help us do so. Whether you choose to match your previous gift, increase it, make a new gift or better yet, start a monthly gift, please take the time to make your gift now. **We are deeply grateful for your support.**

Sincerely,
*The Board of Directors of Five Oaks Centre
& The Member Working Group*



Please Note:

If you fill out the enclosed membership form and make a donation, \$20 of your donation will be used to ensure your membership, and make it possible for to vote at the Annual General Meeting on June 17, 2017. Further precipitating, no need to fill out payment section of membership form.

We invite you to support Five Oaks' vision and mission in the way easiest for you ~

DONATE ONLINE www.fiveoaks.on.ca/donations (immediately receive an e-receipt)

DONATE BY PHONE at 519-442-3212, Mon-Fri, 9am-4:30pm VISA, MasterCard

MY SINGLE GIFT

I wish to make a single gift at the following level:

- \$50
- \$150
- \$200
- \$300
- \$500
- Other \$ _____

My cheque is enclosed (Payable to: Five Oaks Education & Retreat Centre)

OR

Please charge my ...VISA...MasterCard

Card# _____

Expiry Date _____

Signature _____

MY MONTHLY GIFT

I wish to join the monthly giving plan,

OR increase the amount of my giving to the following level:

- \$10 per month
- \$50 per month
- \$100 per month
- \$250 per month
- Other \$ _____

Please debit my account each month. My cheque marked VOID is enclosed.

Signature _____





I want to be a Five Oaks Centre Member...

(Valid until December 31, 2017)

I support the Five Oaks Mission and Vision Statement and Open Hospitality Statement:

Mission Statement:

To be a sacred place where people, as individuals or in intentional community, come apart to look deeply into their own lives and the world in light of faith and values, and find their calling to participate in Spirit's healing work in creation. To provide a residential setting where people of different faiths or no faiths, cultures, Nations and spiritual seekers can explore new understandings of neighbour, faith and the earth and model communities of compassion for the sake of the world.

Vision Statement:

To be a sacred place where peoples of all faiths as well as spiritual seekers can gather in community to live, work, learn, pray, play, heal and act for justice.

Open Hospitality Statement:

By purchasing this membership you agree to offer hospitality to everyone and celebrate human diversity in sexual orientation, ethnicity, gender identity, ability, race, religion and age, regardless of economic situation. This open hospitality is done as part of being an Affirming Centre.

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

_____ Postal Code: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

(Unless otherwise requested, all communication will be by email)

Cash

Cheque Credit Card Card # _____ Exp. _____

Note: Membership Fee is valid until Dec. 31, 2017: **\$20.00 (Payable to Five Oaks Education & Retreat Centre)**

Signature of Applicant

Date



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