

PARKMINSTER UNITED CHURCH VOLUNTEER POLICY

INTRODUCTION

Parkminster United Church Mission Statement

We at Parkminster try to live our faith. Our mission as a church is to be an open community and gathering place: open and welcoming to every person who wishes to join into any part of church life: Open to all regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, age, ability, family status or economic status; open and committed to new ways of reaching out to the community beyond our doors: open with love and enthusiasm to living our communal and individual lives as God's people. Our vision is to be a church united: a United Church of liberal theology and active concern for social justice; a united, compassionate congregation who faces challenges together and works toward spiritual growth.

Purpose

In line with this mission statement, Parkminster seeks to involve volunteers to:

- Ensure our services meet the needs of our congregation
- Provide new skills and perspectives
- Increase our contact with the local community we serve

Parkminster is committed to involving volunteers to:

- Contribute to the delivery of our services
- Make sure we are responsive to the needs of our users
- Provide different skills and perspectives
- Offer opportunities for participation by people who might otherwise be excluded

Parkminster acknowledges that users of its services include vulnerable populations as defined by the United Church of Canada's *Duty of Care Program*. As a result, Parkminster acknowledges that due to risk factors and requirements associated with certain volunteer positions, not all volunteer positions can be made available to everyone.

A vulnerable person is defined as a person who, because of their age, a disability, or other circumstances, whether temporary or permanent are (a) in a position of dependence on others or (b) are otherwise at a greater risk than the general population of being harmed by a person in a position of authority or trust relative to them.

Principles

Parkminster United Church:

- Recognizes that voluntary work brings benefits to volunteers themselves, to service users and to paid staff
- Will ensure that volunteers are properly integrated into the organizational structure and that mechanisms are in place for them to contribute to the church's work

- Expects that staff at all levels will work positively with volunteers and, where appropriate, will actively seek to involve them in their work
- Recognizes that volunteers require satisfying work and personal development and will seek to help volunteers meet these needs.

PRACTICE GUIDELINES

The following guidelines deal with practical aspects of the involvement of volunteers.

Recruitment and Selection

Recruitment of volunteers will generally be from all sections of the congregation, and will be in line with Parkminster's commitment to equal opportunities.

Parkminster's Nominating Committee will approach selected candidates to fill leadership vacancies as they occur. Staff and committee chairpersons may also approach suitable candidates to work in their particular areas. People interested in becoming volunteers with Parkminster will be invited for an informal talk with the appropriate contact person. They will be given information on the volunteer position in which they are interested.

All recruitment and selection procedures will adhere to the *Constitution of Parkminster United Church, February 2006*.

Duty of Care – Minimizing Risks

Volunteers will be asked to avoid working alone when dealing with vulnerable people and/or when in a position of trust. Parkminster encourages everyone to work in partners or in small groups and in a public place, if at all possible.

General Guidelines:

1. It is preferable to meet with a group rather than be alone with an individual.
2. It is preferable to have more than one adult present when working with vulnerable people (if an adult cannot be in the same room, it is best to have one close by in the same building).
3. It is preferable to meet in an open, public space rather than a closed, private space. A church hall is better than a secluded room, a church office is better than a person's home, a living room is better than a bedroom.
4. When meeting, an open door is better than a closed door, a door with a window is better than a solid door.
5. It is always wise to make others aware of your activities and your whereabouts.
6. It is best to schedule regular meetings with a committee chairperson or minister to discuss the ongoing nature and actions of the ministry.

In cases where volunteers are likely to work alone and come into contact with vulnerable people and/or be in a position of trust, they will be asked to provide information about any criminal convictions. In some cases, a *Police Records Check for Service with the Vulnerable Sector* may be requested. This information will be dealt with in the strictest confidence and will not necessarily prejudice the person being accepted for voluntary work.

Parkminster reserves the right to conduct volunteer screening as outlined in the United Church of Canada's *Duty of Care Program* and resource document *Faithful Footsteps* (2000). The *Parkminster United Church Volunteer Position Risk Assessment Tool* (2008) will be used as deemed necessary by volunteer supervisors.

Volunteer Agreements and Responsibilities

Each volunteer will be given a clear idea of their responsibilities and Parkminster's responsibilities to them. The *Constitution of Parkminster United Church, February 2006* outlines the purpose and duties of each church committee. Each committee chairperson or appropriate contact person will provide any additional details required by the volunteer.

Volunteer agreements are binding in honour only. They are not intended to be a legally binding contract and may be cancelled at any time at the discretion of either party.

Health and Safety

With the direction of the Church Council and the Property Committee, Parkminster property will be well maintained, physical hazards will be identified and attended to, and property lighting will be provided for all areas. Fire alarms and emergency lighting will be kept in working order and checked regularly and fire escape plans reviewed, updated and rehearsed at least annually. The Board of Trustees will ensure that adequate property and liability insurance will be maintained.

Expenses

Admissible expenses will be reimbursed. This requires the committee chairperson's authorization and subsequent submission to the church treasurer. All volunteers are expected to get permission from the appropriate committee chairperson *before* incurring any expenses.

Induction and Training

Training will be provided as appropriate. Where possible, volunteers will be entitled to receive additional training on the same basis as paid staff.

Support

All volunteers will have a committee chairperson or other clearly identified person (referred to in the job description) as their main point of contact. They will be provided with regular support to feed back on progress, discuss future development and air any problems. Additional support is available through the church council chairperson and ministerial staff.

The Volunteer's Voice

Volunteers are encouraged to express their views about matters concerning Parkminster and its work.

Volunteers have the right to discuss any concerns they may have with their contact person, committee chairperson and/or church council chairperson at any time.

Insurance

Volunteers of Parkminster United Church are covered while acting within the scope of their duties.

Parkminster United Church has Commercial General Liability (CGL) insurance. Coverage for the following is subject to the terms, conditions and exclusions of the policy:

- Bodily Injury
- Property Damage
- Personal Injury including Advertising Injury
- Tenant's Legal Liability
- Abuse and Harassment Coverage
- Counseling Coverage

Confidentiality

Volunteers will be bound by the same requirements for confidentiality as paid staff.

Parkminster requires that strict confidentiality be maintained with respect to all information obtained by volunteers concerning the church, staff and the congregation as well as others they serve.

The volunteer shall not disclose any information obtained in the course of his/her volunteer placement to any third parties without prior written consent from Parkminster.

This includes but is not limited to information pertaining to financial status and operations such as budget information, donations of money or gifts in kind, salary information, and information pertaining to those we serve, staff or other volunteers.

No information concerning any volunteer will be divulged without prior consent of the volunteer. This includes addresses, telephone numbers, email address, etc.

Parkminster volunteers must conform to the following guidelines:

- Faithfully discharge duties to observe and comply with all Parkminster policies and procedures with respect to privacy, confidentiality, and security.
- Maintain in confidence all information concerning congregation members, adherents, staff and community members at all times (that is, during and after affiliation with a particular position).
- Only access, use and disclose personal information re the above groups on a *need to know* basis to fulfill job duties.

Complaints Procedures for Volunteers

1. If a volunteer wishes to raise an interpersonal or other issue relating to another volunteer or any staff member, they should in the first instance talk to the person concerned, to try and resolve the matter informally.

2. If parties are not satisfied with the resolution, the appropriate committee chairperson or contact person should then be informed of the situation and asked to mediate.
3. If this is not seen as appropriate or if the chairperson is not available or if resolution has not been possible the volunteer should speak to the chairperson of the Church Council. The Church Council chairperson will document the nature of the issue(s), the parties involved and actions to date, then raise the issue with the person(s) concerned as soon as reasonably possible or agree to chair a meeting between the parties raising the issue and the person to whom the issue relates.
4. If the volunteer is still not satisfied with the outcome, then he/she can bring the grievance in writing to the chair of the Ministry and Personnel Committee.

Grievance Procedures against Volunteers

Parkminster has a “three-meeting” policy to help deal with grievances against volunteers:

1. Private discussion between the committee chair or contact person and the volunteer to:
 - Document the effects of their actions.
 - Move toward setting next steps for corrective action.
 - Agree on a next meeting within a month to track their progress.
2. Second meeting will include the chairperson of the Ministry and Personnel Committee and/or the chairperson of Church Council:
 - Review goals agreed to in meeting one and document progress. If none has been made, ask why and what would help them move toward the adjustments needed.
 - Re-contract for specific changes in behaviour by putting the new agreement in writing.
 - Document specific problems and results and the consequence of dismissal. Agree to meet in a very short time - possibly 10 days.
3. Third meeting will include all of the above:
 - Applaud any success toward the agreed-on goals.
 - If some goals have not been met, ask the reason why, state this as unacceptable and monitor for a week to insure all of the behavioural changes required are in place.
 - If no goals have been reached, review previously stated consequence of removal from the position. Write up all actions and allow volunteer to leave. If there is a concern about retribution, have the volunteer sign a copy of the letter received after the second meeting in which problems, required actions and consequences were spelled out. If he/she refuses to sign, call in a witness to attest to this refusal.

Volunteer Recognition

Parkminster United Church values and appreciates the enormous contributions of volunteers to the members, adherents, and communities we serve. Our ability to function depends upon the continuing contributions made by volunteers.

Recognition of volunteers should be ongoing throughout the year, whether it is formal or informal. Parkminster encourages committee chairpersons and contact people to use recognition methods that:

- Base rewards on an appreciation of the individual volunteer as a unique person and which addresses individual needs.
- Are based on individual jobs or tasks.
- Are consistent, resulting in a sense of trust that effort will receive the proper reward.
- Recognize longevity and special contributions frequently.
- Offer appreciation events which can be shared by the committee or the entire church.

CONCLUSION

We at Parkminster will govern and conduct ourselves in ways that are consistent with the ethos and the polity of the United Church of Canada.