

**POLICY NAME: ACCESSIBILITY FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES****1. Responsibility Centre: Church Board****2. Rationale or Purpose**

BCUC wants to be welcoming to all individuals who wish to take part in church activities and to community groups or individuals using the church building for their own events and meetings. People with disabilities sometimes require accommodations to enable them to access worship services, activities, or events taking place in BCUC's premises, or to obtain information and provide feedback to BCUC.

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (2005) (AODA) and associated Regulations under the Act put specific responsibilities on organizations, including churches, to:

- establish policies, practices and procedures for providing services and goods to people with disabilities the training of employees and board members, the posting of information on the ways that the organization accommodates the needs of people with disabilities, and providing feedback channels so that individuals can communicate with the organization about their needs for accommodation;
- use reasonable efforts to ensure that these policies, practices and procedures are consistent with the core principles of independence, dignity, integration and equality of opportunity;
- set a policy on allowing people to use their own personal assistive devices to use the organization's services and on any other measures the organization offers (assistive devices, services, or methods) to enable them to access goods or services of the organization;
- communicate with a person with a disability in a manner that takes into account his or her disability;
- allow people with disabilities to be accompanied by their guide dog or other service animal in those areas of the premises that are open to the public;
- permit people with disabilities who use a support person to bring that person with them while accessing goods or services in the premises open to the public or third parties, and where admission fees are charged, provide notice ahead of time on what admission, if any, would be charged for a support person of a person with a disability;
- provide notice when facilities or services that people with disabilities rely on to access or use our services are temporarily disrupted;
- train staff, volunteers, board members and any other people who interact with the public or other third parties on behalf of the organization, or who are involved in developing

policies, practices and procedures on the provision of goods or services, on a number of topics as outlined in the Customer Service Standard (See: Access Ontario. *Accessibility Standard for Customer Service: Training tips for employees, organizations with fewer than 20 employees*. **Available online:** [ontario.ca/AccessON](http://ontario.ca/AccessON) );

- establish a process for people to provide feedback on how the organization provides goods or services to people with disabilities and how BCUC will respond to any feedback and take action on any complaints, and make the information about the feedback process readily available to the public.

### 3. Policy Statement

To make church activities and facilities welcoming to individuals with disabilities, BCUC will identify and remove barriers to accessibility wherever possible and practicable.

BCUC will provide information in alternative formats (e.g., large print versions of written material, recorded audio copies of written material, printed copies of oral material such as sermons) upon request and in consultation with the disabled person regarding choice of alternative format.

BCUC permits individuals to bring and use their own assistive devices and service animals on BCUC premises. If the presence of a service animal or the use of an assistive device inside the church building causes a problem for another individual (e.g., an allergy concern in the case of a service animal) BCUC staff and/or committees will address the problem and attempt to find a reasonable solution that will address the needs of all concerned.

For BCUC events, such as fundraising dinners or concerts, for which an entry fee is charged, an individual with a disability who needs a support person to accompany him or her to help with communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs, upon request will receive one ticket at no cost for the admission of the support person when he or she purchases a ticket for himself or herself.

Office staff will attempt to meet the accessibility needs of community groups or individuals renting or otherwise using BCUC's facilities for non-church purposes, and will ensure that they are informed of the BCUC building's accessibility, accommodations and limitations prior to finalization of arrangements.

Feedback on BCUC's accessibility measures is welcome and invited in a format suited to the individual making it.

BCUC will communicate with its members/adherents and the public regarding its accommodations for individuals with disabilities, and any disruptions to the accessibility of the building, through notices posted prominently in the church entryway and on the church web site. BCUC will provide training to staff members, Church Board members, and volunteers who interact with the public (e.g., Sunday morning ushers and greeters), on the requirements of the AODA and on interacting effectively with people who have disabilities.

BCUC volunteers and staff members will at all times respect the dignity and independence of individuals with disabilities, and attempt to meet their needs for accommodation in a way that is respectful and integrated.

#### **4. Scope**

This policy applies to all BCUC worship services, programs, events, and other services provided by any paid BCUC staff members or committees and groups within BCUC's organizational structure.

#### **5. Procedures**

##### Training

Ministry and Personnel Committee will provide for appropriate training of all staff members using Access Ontario resources. A record will be kept in each staff member's personnel record of the completion of the required training.

Training will be provided to all Church Board members and a record kept with Board minutes of which Board members have completed the training. Training will be offered to new Board members at least once a year, and will be at the same time offered to any committee members or other BCUC volunteers who wish to take it.

Worship/CE Committee will determine what training and information resources should be provided to Sunday morning volunteers including ushers, greeters, Sunday school teachers, etc.

##### Communications

A statement of BCUC's existing policy and accommodations for people with disabilities will be available on BCUC's web site, and will be made available in alternative formats by office staff upon request.

Signage posted near the main church entryway will indicate the availability and location of physical accommodations such as wheelchair-accessible washroom, accessible seating in the sanctuary, etc., and will include a statement of the ways that BCUC accommodates the needs of individuals with disabilities, and will also indicate how individuals may obtain further information and provide feedback to BCUC.

Sunday morning volunteers (ushers, greeters, coffee servers, Sunday school teachers) will be provided with information on BCUC's accommodations for disabled individuals and on procedures for reporting and addressing barriers to accessibility.

When accessibility is temporarily compromised (e.g., a broken electric door opener), this information and an estimate of when accessibility will be restored will be posted as soon as possible by church staff on the church web site and by the posting of notices at entry doors to the building (main entry, kitchen entry and nursery school entry).

### Complaints and Feedback

Sunday morning volunteers who receive complaints or feedback report this feedback to the minister or the chair of Worship/CE Committee. Any complaints or issues that cannot be resolved on the spot by ushers, etc., or others present at the time, should be reported to BCUC staff or a Board member as soon as possible. The staff or Board member receiving the complaint should determine which committee or individual is appropriate to address and resolve the complaint or issue, and pass the information – including the nature of the complaint, the name and contact information of the complainant, if available – to the appropriate committee or individual. Every effort should be made to contact the complainant within three days to acknowledge the complaint or issue and attempt to find a reasonable solution.

All BCUC staff members, Board members and volunteers should make every effort to communicate by a means that is suited to the individual providing feedback and which takes account of the nature of his or her disability.

### **6. Roles and Responsibilities**

Ministry and Personnel Committee is responsible for providing training to all staff members and recording the completion of the training in each staff member's personnel record.

Property Management Committee is responsible for maintaining accessibility features of the church property (accessible washroom, sanctuary seating for individuals who use wheelchairs or walkers, handicap parking spaces, related signage, electric door openers, etc.), and for reporting to Office Staff any changes to accessibility features or temporary unavailability so that this information may be posted on the church web site and at the entry to the building.

Worship/CE Committee is responsible for training/informing Sunday morning volunteers of their responsibilities.

Office Staff are responsible to communicate BCUC policies and accommodations to members, adherents and the public or third parties, and to receive and channel feedback received through the Church Office to the appropriate BCUC committee or Board member.

BCUC Church Board and Planning and Evaluation Committee are jointly responsible for the ongoing maintenance of this policy.

All staff and volunteers of BCUC are responsible to respect the dignity and independence of people with disabilities, and to foster their integration and equality of opportunity to avail themselves of the programs, services and use of facilities at BCUC.

### **7. Definitions**

- a) Disability” means [*Accessibility Standard for Customer Service: Employer Handbook. Ministry of Community and Social Services, January 2008. Updated April 2009. Queen's Printer for Ontario*]:

- a) any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical co-ordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device,
  - b) a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability,
  - c) a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language
  - d) a mental disorder, or
  - e) an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997.
- b) An “assistive device” is a tool, technology or other mechanism that enables a person with a disability to do everyday tasks and activities, such as moving, communicating or lifting. Personal assistive devices can include things like wheelchairs, hearing aids, white canes or speech amplification devices.
- c) “Customer Service Standard” has the same meaning as is assigned to it within the AODA. “Customers” for BCUC are all individuals (members, adherents, visitors) who participate in activities (worship and other programs) of BCUC, or community and other groups which meet in the space, and people who seek information about Bells Corners United Church, its programs and activities.
- d) “Support person” means, in relation to a person with a disability, another person who accompanies him or her in order to help with communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs or with access to goods or services. The support person could be a paid personal support worker, a volunteer, a friend or a family member. He or she does not necessarily need to have special training or qualifications.

## 8. References

- a) Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, S.O. 2005, c. 11; Last amendment: 2009, c. 33, Sched. 8, s. 1. Available online: <http://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/05a11#BK3>
- b) Ontario Ministry of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure. May 25, 2015. *Accessibility Standard for Customer Service: training resource*. Available online: <http://www.mcsc.gov.on.ca/en/mcsc/programs/accessibility/customerservice/trainingResourcesAODA/tableOfContents.aspx>
- c) Ontario. *Accessibility Standard for Customer Service: Training Resource*. Queen’s Printer for Ontario, 2009, ISBN – 978-1-4249-9206-5 (PDF).

- d) Access Ontario. *Accessibility Standard for Customer Service: Employer Handbook*. Queen's Printer for Ontario, 2008, ISBN 978-1-4249-6264-8 (PDF).
- e) Access Ontario. *Accessibility Standard for Customer Service: Training tips for employees, organizations with fewer than 20 employees*. **Available online:** [ontario.ca/AccessON](http://ontario.ca/AccessON)
- f) Ontario Ministry of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure. *Welcome to AccessON*. <http://www.mcsc.gov.on.ca/en/mcsc/programs/accessibility/ado.aspx>. Last updated June 22, 2015. (accessed September 7, 2015)

**9. Approval Authority:** Church Board

**10. Reviewed:** Church Board

**Approved:** Church Board: September 16, 2015

**Replaces:** New