



# Paris Presbyterian Church

## Preamble

This policy strives to promote an inclusive community that embraces the gifts of all who come through the doors of the Paris Presbyterian Church. It is intended to meet the requirements of Accessibility Standards for Customer Service as best we can, Ontario; Regulation 429/07 under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, and applies to the provision of goods and services to the public or other third parties, not to the goods themselves. The policy is not only a declaration of our obligation to meet provincial requirements but outlines the importance of hospitality and how our commitment to be inclusive and respectful of the dignity of all individuals within our community will be met. It is the responsibility of both the Board of Managers and the Session to annually review this policy and ensure the Church complies with current legislation. All programs and services shall follow the principles of dignity, integration and equal opportunity.

In the policy the “Church” refers to the Paris Presbyterian Church. The term “individuals” refers to staff, volunteers, parishioners, visitors, and anyone who enters the Church building inclusive of those persons with disabilities. The language used in this policy strives to be inclusive and acknowledges the various abilities all individuals bring to this community. However, in meeting provincial standards requirements and for the sake of clarity, the term disability is used in various sections of this document.

1. Our Mission: The Paris Presbyterian Church is a vibrant Christian community that celebrates diversity. We seek to serve the needs of the seasoned pilgrim, the sojourner and seeker. We strive to feed the poor and to stand with those in our society who have little to no voice. We nurture our children, support our teens and glean wisdom from our elderly. We are a diverse community that makes room for all people. Whatever the project or endeavour, we steep our ministry in scripture, prayer, sacrament and song.

2. Our Commitment: In fulfilling our mission, the Church strives at all times to plan and deliver its programs in a way that respects the dignity and independence of people with different abilities. We are also committed to providing all people the same opportunities to access worship services and programs and enabling them to contribute to and benefit from such access in the same places and in similar ways as other individuals.

3. Providing Programs and Services: The Church is committed to excellence in working with and serving all people regardless of ability and we will carry out our functions and responsibilities in all ministry areas including the following:

3.1 Communication: with all people should occur in ways that take into account individual requirements and particular needs. We will inform visitors and potential visitors through the church web site, as well as make known to the church community and those who enter our doors.



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3.2 Telephone Services: Staff and volunteers are expected to be sensitive in telephone communication, using plain language and speaking clearly and slowly.

3.3 Assistive Devices: We are committed to working with individuals who use assistive devices to participate in and benefit from our programs and services. We will ensure that people are permitted to use their own personal assistive devices and mobility aids such as walkers, wheel chairs, and scooters to access worship services and programs to the extent possible. We will familiarize greeters and other front-line volunteers/staff with the various assistive devices that may be used by individuals.

3.4 Accessibility Work Group/Advocate: An Accessibility Work Group established by the Joint Boards will oversee the work regarding accessibility. An Accessibility Advocate, designated by the Board of Managers and Session will convene the Accessibility Work Group and liaise with the joint Boards to oversee all issues related to accessibility at the Church. The Accessibility Advocate links with ministry areas to communicate the need to assess accessibility requirements and identify potential training needs.

The mandate of the Accessibility Work Group is to:

- Recommend policies/changes regarding accessible programs and services to individuals at the Redeemer that are in compliance with the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07.
- Monitor programs and services to ensure that practices and procedures are consistent with our governing policies.
- Recommend approaches for training staff and volunteers. Staff and Board members are expected to take the on line training programs provided through the government web site.
- Work with clergy and staff so that assistive devices are in good working order.
- Review feedback on accessibility and respond to any questions, complaints or concerns.
- Make recommendations to the Boards regarding future legislative requirements. Accessibility Policy Statement/Providing Programs, Goods and Services to People with Disabilities

4. Use of Service Animals and Support Persons: We are committed to welcoming people who are accompanied by a service animal on parts of our premises that are open to the public and other third parties. It is our expectation that all staff and volunteers are trained on how to interact with individuals who are accompanied by a service animal. We also welcome people who are accompanied by a support person. Those individuals who are allergic to dogs will be accommodated to the extent possible.

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5. Notice of Temporary Disruption: The Church (Church office) will provide individuals with notice in the event of a planned or unexpected disruption in the facilities or services usually used by people with disabilities. This notice will include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration, and a description of alternative facilities or services, if available. The notice will be delivered to participants by means of a written notice (e.g. note; e-News; e-mail; web site) or verbal message.

6. Training for Staff and Volunteers: Training for volunteers will use a targeted approach based on the particular needs of specific ministry areas. Training of staff and volunteers will include how to assist people with varying abilities to evacuate the building in the event of an emergency. The Church's Accessibility Advocate will be responsible for working with ministry areas to identify training needs and a suitable approach to meeting such needs. The clergy will designate staff to do the same with third parties such as rental groups. All clergy, staff, and members of both the Board of Managers and Session are expected to participate in the governments on line accessibility training program at the start of their tenure to demonstrate leadership and commitment to accessibility.

7. Feedback Process: The Church is committed to meeting accessibility needs of those individuals with different abilities. Specific feedback on issues directly related to accessibility is welcome and appreciated. Feedback can be made through a dedicated e-mail for the Accessibility Advocate or verbally with clergy, staff, or volunteers. Concerns will be addressed and documented in a confidential manner to the extent possible and within the parameters of the law. Those who provide feedback and raise issues will receive a response. Communication needs to be a two way exchange so that issues are brought forward and received by both staff and volunteers and the Boards. If anyone has a question about the policy, or its purpose, an explanation or reply will be provided by clergy or the Accessibility Advocate. The Accessibility Advocate will submit an annual report to Vestry.

8. Modifications to This or Other Policies: In going forward, no changes will be made to any policy before considering the impact on people with different abilities or their families. Policies at the Church already in place will be reviewed through an inclusivity lens as appropriate (e.g. when reviewed or changed) and modified or removed as needed.

Paris Presbyterian Church is voluntarily applying itself to implement as many elements of the Disabilities Act 2005 as it can. Our organization is not required by legislation to comply. We as a Christian community feel this is a natural extension of a Christian faith life put into action.