

# **WATERLOO CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH ACCESSIBILITY POLICY**

**MAY 2016**

**Waterloo Christian Reformed Church  
Waterloo, Ontario**

## **Accessibility Standards for Customer Service Policy Statement**

### **Purpose of the Policy**

This policy outlines Waterloo Christian Reformed Church's approach to meeting the accessibility needs of people with disabilities. This policy is intended to meet the regulatory requirements of the "Customer Service Standard" of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, as well as other related policies and good practices. This policy should be revised as other standards are introduced under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005.

### **1. Our Theological Position**

- a) Waterloo CRC values people with disabilities as created in the image of God, as partners to the covenant and as co-labourers in the kingdom of God.
- b) Waterloo CRC considers all people – with disabilities and without – to have gifts from the Holy Spirit, and we encourage everyone to enrich congregational life by practicing their faith and using their gifts in ministries of discipleship, leadership and mission.
- c) Waterloo CRC endeavours to integrate people with disabilities into all ministries and activities of the Church in keeping with the beliefs and practices taught in Scripture. This includes worship, education, small groups, outreach, activities, etc.
- d) Waterloo CRC seeks to name, understand and attend to the special spiritual, physical and psychological needs of those of us affected by disabilities, including caregivers, and will offer training to respond appropriately to disability issues and to raise awareness in the Church.

### **2. Our Commitment**

In fulfilling our purposes and theological position, Waterloo CRC strives at all times to provide its programs, ministries and services in a way that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities. Waterloo CRC is also committed to giving people with disabilities the same opportunity to access its programs and ministries and allowing them to benefit from the same services, in the same place and in a similar way to people without disabilities.

### **3. Application of Policy**

This policy shall apply to every person who deals with members of the public or other third parties on behalf of Waterloo CRC, whether the person does so as an employee or volunteer.

This policy does not apply to rentals and third parties using the Church.

### **4. Providing Programs, Ministries and Services to People with Disabilities**

Waterloo CRC is committed to excellence in serving all people, including people with disabilities, and we will carry out our functions and responsibilities in the following areas:

#### **4.1 Communication**

As a church,

- We will communicate with people with disabilities in ways that take into account their disability.
- Where possible, we will provide printed material and other communications in formats that are accessible for people with disabilities.
- We will train staff and volunteers on how to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities.

#### **4.2 Assistive Devices**

- 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 such things as wheelchairs, hearing aids, white canes or speech amplification devices.
- We will ensure that people are permitted to use their own personal assistive devices to access and participate in activities in the sanctuary, other ministry areas and common spaces within our facility.
- Through training we will familiarize staff/volunteers with the various assistive devices that may be used by participants with disabilities while accessing our programs and services, and how to interact with people who are using an assistive device.
- Waterloo CRC will provide the assistive devices it deems necessary for accessing worship and other applicable programs and services.
- Staff/volunteers will be trained on how to use the assistive devices available on our premises.
- Upon a participant's request, we will make every reasonable effort to provide the requested assistive device and to cover relevant financial expenses, upon approval from Council. In general, this will include completing a needs assessment, identifying solutions, identifying a funding approach where there is a cost, and seeking Council's approval. Waterloo CRC's regulatory obligations as specified in the AODA Customer Service Standard should be considered part of the plan.

## **5. Accessibility Committee**

### **5.1 Accessibility Committee Membership**

Waterloo CRC shall maintain an Accessibility Committee to support Council, ministries and members as we minister with and to people with disabilities.

The Committee shall be made up of:

1. The Disability Advocate
2. Two or three other congregation members with an interest in accessibility and disability issues

The Accessibility Committee will report to Council.

### **5.2 Accessibility Committee Activities**

The Committee will coordinate accessibility training and training materials for all relevant staff and volunteers.

The Committee will ensure that an inventory of assistive devices provided by our Church is maintained. The Committee will:

1. Update the inventory as needed.
2. Ensure that the inventory identifies the group/individual responsible for each device.
3. Ensure that the responsible group/individual completes an annual review of each device to ensure it is in good working order.
4. Ensure that a user-friendly list of assistive devices is available to church participants through the Church office.

When there is a request for a new assistive device or service, the Committee will work with the ministry/person from whom the request comes as follows:

1. Undertake a needs assessment.
2. Develop a recommended course of action with the ministry/person.
3. If necessary, support the ministry/person as needed if approval is sought from the relevant ministry or Council (for instance, if a funding request is required).
4. Report in the Committee minutes the conclusion of each request.

On an annual basis the Committee will appoint a member to be a representative at the Classis/Denominational Disability Advocates' meeting.

The Committee will be responsible for developing feedback procedures, reviewing feedback on accessibility and responding to any complaints or concerns:

1. The Committee will from time to time solicit feedback from the congregation, and identify solutions and cost them out prior to the annual budget meeting.
2. The Committee will ensure that accessibility feedback forms are available from the Church office.

## **6. Use of Service Animals and Support Persons**

Waterloo CRC is committed to welcoming people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal on the parts of our premises that are open to the public and other third parties. We will also ensure that all staff (and volunteers as necessary) are properly trained in how to interact with people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal.

We are committed to welcoming people with disabilities who are accompanied by a support person. Any person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person will be allowed to enter Waterloo CRC's premises with his or her support person. At no time will a person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person be prevented from having access to his or her support person while on our premises.

## **7. Notice of Temporary Disruption**

Waterloo CRC will provide participants 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, the anticipated duration, and a description of alternative facilities or services, if available. The notice will be delivered by way of the newsletter and/or website, and if possible notice posted on the device, system or service.

The Accessibility Committee will remind those persons responsible for individual devices, services or equipment that if the device, etc. is broken, that the Church office needs to be notified in order to post this *"Notice of Temporary Disruption"*.

## **8. Training for Staff and Volunteers**

Waterloo CRC's Accessibility Committee is responsible for coordinating training for all staff and volunteers and all those involved in the development and approvals of accessibility policies, practices and procedures. The training will meet the requirements of the "Customer Service Standard" of the AODA.

Individuals holding the following positions and/or in the following areas will be trained:

- Staff
- Nursery
- GEMS and Cadets counselors
- Ushers
- Sunday School and VBS Coordinators
- Youth leaders
- Program leaders
- Office bearers

The training should be developed and delivered to accommodate the logistical capacity of Waterloo CRC to deliver it effectively. Training should be repeated at intervals specified by the Committee. Training may differ for staff/volunteers who hold different positions and have different responsibilities.

A list of church participants who have completed accessibility training, and the date of their training, will be maintained by the Committee.

Training will include the following, as applicable for the particular staff/volunteer position:

- The purpose of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 and the requirements of the “Customer Service Standard”.
- How to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities.
- How to interact with people with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a service animal or support person.
- How to use the assistive devices available on the Church’s premises.
- What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty accessing the Church’s programs, ministries and services, and/or the Church’s policies, practices and procedures relating to the “Customer Service Standard” of the AODA.

Applicable staff will be trained on policies, practices and procedures that affect the way programs, ministries and services are provided to people with disabilities. Staff will also be trained on an ongoing basis when changes are made to these policies, practices and procedures.

## **9. Feedback Process**

Comments on Waterloo CRC’s programs and services and how well we are meeting the needs and expectations of people with disabilities are welcome and appreciated. Feedback can be made by email, verbally, filling out the feedback form from Waterloo CRC office, or participating in a periodic accessibility feedback process.

All feedback will be directed to the Accessibility Committee. Confidentiality will be respected.

Feedback and requests will be addressed according to the procedures set by the Accessibility Committee.

## **10. Modification to this Policy**

Waterloo CRC is committed to developing policies that respect and promote the dignity and independence of people with disabilities. Therefore, no changes will be made to this policy before considering the impact on people with disabilities. Any policy of Waterloo CRC that does not respect and promote the dignity and independence of people with disabilities will be modified or removed.

---

Chair of Council

---

Date