

Responsible Faith Ministry Diocese of St. Catharines

Volunteer Guidelines

Since the earliest days of the Church we have come together to worship and to live out our faith. As followers of Jesus we are called to show love to one another and to the world as well as to share our gifts and resources. We continue that tradition today. We reach out to those in need, we counsel, we help, we teach. All of us have time, talents, and treasures to share.

Volunteers are the lifeline of our parishes. Without their time, effort, and gifts the Church would not be able to fulfill its ministry. Their contributions are invaluable. Through Responsible Faith Ministry, the Diocese provides support and protection to our volunteers.

Our actions and our ministries as Church should be guided at all times by our goals:

- ◆ to safeguard in all respects all of those, but especially the vulnerable (e.g. youth, children, seniors) to whom we minister;
- ◆ to ensure the integrity and reputation of our volunteers; and
- ◆ to ensure that, as a parish community, we fulfill all of our obligations.

The Volunteer Guidelines are designed to assist in performing these ministries.

*“For I was hungry and you gave me food,
I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink,
I was a stranger and you welcomed me,
I was naked and you gave me clothing,
I was sick and you took care of me,
I was in prison and you visited me.”*

Matt. 25:36,37

These guidelines are in accordance with the Diocese of St. Catharines Policy and Procedures for Responding to Allegations of Misconduct and/or Abuse of Minors.

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Responsibilities in Ministry

Based on: "A Statement of Commitment, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops" - 1996

Responsibilities of those who minister

Desiring to minister as Jesus did, we will:

- ◆ develop the communication and management skills that are needed in a particular ministry
- ◆ welcome regular evaluation of our ministry
- ◆ acknowledge the limits of our position, our abilities and our availability
- ◆ make decisions in a consultative manner, respecting different views in the process
- ◆ exercise good stewardship of all funds and assets entrusted to our care

Responsibilities to those to whom we minister

Respecting and protecting the dignity and integrity of all people, we will:

- ◆ maintain confidentiality and respect the privacy of people to whom we minister
- ◆ comply with legal obligations to report suspected cases of abuse
- ◆ comply with diocesan policies
- ◆ always honour the physical and emotional boundaries of the relationship of others
- ◆ not foster dependency in the people to whom we minister nor use them to satisfy our own needs

We embrace these commitments with the conviction that God, who has called us to minister, will sustain us by abundant grace. We rely on God's love and the support of those with whom and to whom we minister and take to heart the challenge to "Rekindle the gift of God that is within." (*2Tm: 1.6*)

Parish Volunteers – Expectations

The letters of St. Paul to Timothy and Titus show that from earliest time, ministry was expected to be marked by love that overflows into service, stewardship, trust, and exemplary personal conduct. The call and commitment to serve God involves accepting certain responsibilities as individuals and as members of our communities.

Volunteers in the Church can expect to:

- ◆ be treated with respect
- ◆ receive the training and orientation necessary to perform their duties
- ◆ receive support and guidance
- ◆ work in ministries that are compatible with their interests and skills
- ◆ be appreciated for their contributions

Volunteers in the Church are expected to:

- ◆ be a Christian witness and model of Christian living
- ◆ attend training and orientation sessions
- ◆ provide a safe and caring environment for activities
- ◆ be reliable, arrive on time, and be prepared
- ◆ provide adequate notice to the parish team or ministry leader if unable to perform their duties
- ◆ report any changes in address and telephone number to the parish team or ministry leader
- ◆ inform the parish team and/or ministry leader if they have any concerns for the well-being of the participants
- ◆ minister within the guidelines of the Position Descriptions

Guidelines for Volunteers

The following guidelines are intended as a general overview as to how volunteers should interact with vulnerable persons:

- ◆ volunteers will accept the responsibility to set reasonable boundaries in their relationships with those to whom they minister
- ◆ volunteers should not spend extended time alone with vulnerable participants
- ◆ volunteers who are to be alone with a vulnerable participant must respect his or her privacy
- ◆ volunteers must keep information such as medical, financial, and emotional states confidential unless someone poses a danger to him/herself or someone else
- ◆ volunteers should not give nor accept money or property from any participant for their ministry
- ◆ volunteers are to act within the stated activities and responsibilities of their ministry descriptions
- ◆ volunteers are to act at all times in accordance with the teachings of the Catholic Church
- ◆ volunteers should inform the ministry leader or the parish team ASAP if they observe serious safety problems or signs of abuse

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