

# Code of Conduct for Volunteers Representing The United Church of Canada

This Code of Conduct is to be reviewed and signed by **volunteers who represent The United Church of Canada, including members of international delegations, those undertaking international travel for The United Church, or those participating in theme-focused seminars and events on behalf of the United Church.**

This code supplements the expectations of United Church of Canada volunteers appointed to a governance role found in the [Governance Handbook: Policies and Terms of Reference](#).

The United Church of Canada expects volunteers associated with the United Church to, at all times, demonstrate the highest standards of ethical behaviour. That includes an obligation to:

1. Respect and promote fundamental human rights without discrimination and act with integrity.
2. Treat all individuals, organizations, and communities fairly and with respect, courtesy, dignity, and according to international laws and standards.
3. Support anti-racism work and promote positive relationships among diverse racial and ethnocultural groups.
4. Refrain from using physical force that could cause physical injury.
5. Refrain from harassment, including sexual harassment, of any individual.
6. Avoid the exploitation, particularly the sexual exploitation, of vulnerable populations, and particularly women and children, in any way.
7. Avoid all behaviours that may place a vulnerable population or individual at risk in any way.
8. Exercise diligence, transparency, and accountability in financial matters, ensuring that financial and other resources are used solely for the intended purpose.
9. Comply with Canadian, local, and international law.

Volunteers associated with the United Church are expected to deal with all individuals in a manner that demonstrates United Church commitments to caring, diverse, and respectful communities and to listening and learning, not just to speaking and teaching.

Specifically, The United Church of Canada has these expectations of those travelling or participating in events in the United Church's name.

## **Harassment, Violence, and Abuse**

The United Church of Canada is committed to providing a safe, harassment- and violence-free environment for worship, work, and study. The United Church of Canada will not tolerate any behaviour by volunteers that constitutes harassment or violence of any kind.

The United Church of Canada supports anti-racism work and promotes positive relationships among the diverse racial and ethnocultural groups within The United Church. The United

Church endeavours to act justly within its own structures, courts, policies, and practice, and expects volunteers to reflect that commitment in their work.

The United Church will not tolerate, and will seek to eradicate, any behaviour by its members, lay and order of ministry, adherents, volunteers, or employees that constitutes sexual abuse or child abuse.

Complaints of harassment, violence, or abuse will be taken seriously and dealt with in a spirit of compassion and justice. Response to a complaint will be made as quickly as possible.

**Harassment** is defined as any unwanted physical, sexual, or verbal conduct that is known or ought reasonably to be known to be unwanted, and is a form of discrimination. Harassment may involve a wide range of behaviour, from verbal innuendo and subtle suggestions to overt demands and physical abuse, and includes psychological harassment.

**Sexual harassment** is defined as any attempt to coerce an unwilling person into a sexual relationship, to subject a person to unwanted sexual attention, or to punish a refusal to comply.

**Violence** is defined as the exercise of physical force or attempt to cause physical force by a person against a worker in a workplace that causes or could cause injury. It also includes statements or behaviours that it is reasonable for a worker to interpret as a threat to exercise physical force against the worker, in the workplace, that could cause physical injury.

It is everyone's responsibility to raise concerns about, and to take steps as they are able, to address harassment, violence, discrimination, and abuse when they see them.

You can find more about The United Church of Canada policies on harassment and abuse on the [Safe Spaces in a Global Context](#), [Safe Spaces for Worship and Work](#), and [Racial Justice Training](#) webpages of the United Church national website.

## **Duty of Care**

The United Church of Canada understands a particular obligation on the part of staff, volunteers, members, and adherents to care for populations who may be particularly vulnerable to exploitation.

The United Church of Canada will not tolerate any behaviour by volunteers that seeks to exploit the vulnerability of any group or individual, especially women and children, or allow any person/s to be put into compromising situations.

Volunteers must never abuse a position to withhold participation or program opportunities or give preferential treatment in order to solicit sexual favours, gifts, payments of any kind, or advantage.

Volunteers must never act in ways that may place a child at risk of abuse, including not giving due consideration to assessing and reducing potential risks to children as a result of

implementing activities. That includes visiting bars or other commercial facilities where children may be exploited.

## Gifts

The United Church understands that national and local traditions as well as conventional hospitality may lead hosts and others to offer minor gifts and tokens to those travelling on behalf of the United Church. Individuals are welcome to accept these kinds of gifts.

Volunteers may not accept any gifts or other favours that are intended to influence the performance of functions or duties in a certain way. These kinds of gifts may include services, travel, entertainment, and material goods, among others.

Volunteers may become aware of challenging and difficult circumstances host communities and individuals are facing. Volunteers may feel called, or may be asked, to financially support a local project directly, or asked to influence the United Church to support a project. Volunteers must not make a financial commitment on behalf of the United Church as they have no authority to do so.

It is not appropriate to perpetuate a dynamic that an invitation to The United Church of Canada to send a delegation or representative to an event or community results in financial contributions and support.

Those feeling called to individually respond are asked to carefully reflect on and consider:

1. Will this response enable a short-term difference, or is it part of a longer relationship?
2. Would financial support enable a community-wide response to an issue? Or is it directed towards an individual or family? How might that affect relationships within a community?
3. What is the power dynamic at play? Will your financial gift contribute towards sustainability and resiliency of a community?
4. Is there a longer-term response that could address underlying causes instead or as well as a short-term response?

Some volunteers may return and wish to involve their pastoral charge in a financial response to an issue. There are implications for the pastoral charge as a charity working outside Canada that would need to be carefully explored and understood before that happens. Please contact [pjp@united-church.ca](mailto:pjp@united-church.ca) for more information on those implications or to find out how funds can be sent to Mission & Service partners through the General Council Office.

## Communications

United Church volunteers must:

1. Use United Church of Canada technology and equipment for appropriate professional or private use, ensuring not to violate this Code of Conduct.

2. Protect and safeguard any personal information collected from individuals and communities that could put them at risk.
3. Specifically for a child (age 18 or under) or children (including social media activities):
  - a. Obtain written permission or verbal informed consent from a parent/guardian of a child when taking a picture of a child in a portrait or individually or when extensive reporting is made of a child, and the child's face or name is visually identifiable in the photo/film footage for the United Church. As part of this, the general way in which the photograph or film will be used must be explained, and the extent of the accompanying identification information agreed. (NOTE: Where informed consent cannot be reasonably obtained, volunteers must limit the identifying details of the photographed subject.)
  - b. Obtain written permission or verbal informed consent from parents/guardians of children (ideally to be secured in advance of trip) when taking pictures/filming groups of children for the United Church. As part of this, the general way in which the photograph/film will be used must be explained, and the extent of the accompanying identification information agreed. (NOTE: Where photos/films that include children are taken spontaneously or unexpectedly, or where informed consent cannot reasonably be obtained, such as photographs/film footage of people in emergencies, of people taken from a distance, or of children within an all-ages public gathering, children should in these cases not be identifiable through the information accompanying the photos/film footage).
4. Strive for active listening, be mindful of allowing space for other's participation, and value both dissonance and consonance in building working relationships.

## **As a Volunteer**

While exercising the role assigned by The United Church of Canada in Canada or internationally, and during the full period of international travel for the United Church, volunteers must not:

1. Consume, purchase, sell, possess, or distribute illegal drugs.
2. Drive a vehicle when under the influence of alcohol or other substances, or drink alcohol or use any other substances in a way that affects their ability to carry out their role or affects the reputation of the United Church.
3. Use or carry on their person or in their luggage any weapons or ammunition.
4. Violate security protocols and travel restrictions set by event organizers and site partners.

## **Commitment**

The volunteer signing below has read, understood, and agrees with the content of The United Church of Canada Code of Conduct set out above. The undersigned agrees to honour and be bound by this Code of Conduct until they are no longer serving as a volunteer for the United Church and they cease to represent the United Church. The undersigned acknowledges that this Code of Conduct may be subject to periodic review and revision by the United Church and agrees to be bound by such revisions made from time to time as may be within the spirit of this Code of Conduct. The undersigned further acknowledges that the United Church is entitled to

impose the consequences that it considers appropriate for any violation of this Code of Conduct including, without limitation, immediate dismissal of the volunteer as a representative of the United Church.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Program: