

# New Life Church Accessibility Policy

October 2015

New Life Christian Reformed Church

Guelph Ontario

## Accessibility Standards for Customer Service Policy Statement

### **Purpose of this Policy:**

This policy outlines New Life 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 Vision**

The Vision of New Life Christian Reformed Church is to Know, See, and Be Jesus.

### **2. Our Commitment**

In fulfilling our vision, New Life Church strives to provide its programs, goods and services in a way that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities. We are committed to giving people with disabilities access to our services and allowing them to benefit from the same services, in the same place, and in a way suitable to their abilities and interests, respecting their dignity and independence.

### **3. Providing Services to People with Disabilities**

New Life Church is committed to excellence in serving all participants, including people with disabilities, and we will carry out our functions and responsibilities as follows:

#### **3.1 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.

### **3.2 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 things like 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 ushers and other staff/volunteers with the various assistive devices that may be used by participants with disabilities while accessing our programs, goods and services, and how to interact with people who are using an assistive device.
- New Life Church will provide assistive devices it deems necessary for accessing worship and other applicable programs and services. A list of these devices is included in the “Inventory of Assistive Devices, Services, Spaces” found in this document.
- Ushers and other 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 the church Council. In general, this will include completing a needs assessment, identifying solutions, where there is cost identify a funding approach, and seeking Council approval. The church’s regulatory obligations as specified in the AODA Customer Service Standard should be considered as part of the plan.

### **3.3 Accessibility Committee**

#### **Accessibility Committee Membership**

New Life Church 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 one representative from each of:

1. Congregational Care Branch
2. Worship Branch
3. Congregation member at large with an interest in accessibility and disability issues

The Accessibility Committee will report to the Congregational Care Branch, via the branch rep who sits on the committee.

While some churches have a designated “disability advocate”, this policy does not specify a role for a dedicated individual advocate.

It is suggested that members serve on the Accessibility Committee for a 3 year term.

## **Accessibility Committee Activities**

The committee will coordinate accessibility training and training materials for all relevant staff and volunteers, working with the Ministry Coordinator.

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

1. Update the inventory annually.
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.

If there is a request for a new assistive device or service, the committee will work with ministry to whom the request comes as follows:

1. Undertake a needs assessment (as defined in this document).
2. Develop a recommended course of action with the ministry.
3. If necessary, support the ministry as needed if approval is sought from the relevant Branch 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 solicit feedback from the congregation, suggested in May or June, to provide sufficient time to identify solutions and cost them out prior to the budget season. Feedback could be collected annually in the form of a survey, an informal meeting after church, or other accessible means.
2. The committee will ensure that an accessibility feedback form is available from the church office.

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

As a church,

- 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.
- We will ensure that all staff, volunteers and others dealing with participants are trained on how to interact with people who are accompanied by a service animal.
- We are committed to welcoming people who are accompanied by a support person. As per the requirement of the regulation, in general, if the church offers programs that have a fee, those fees will not be charged for support persons accompanying a participant.

## **5. Notice of Temporary Disruption**

New Life Church 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 annually 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".

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

New Life Church's Accessibility Committee is responsible for coordinating training for all employees, volunteers and all those who are 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 in the following areas will be trained:

- *Staff*
- *Nursery*
- *Gems and cadets counselors*
- *Ushers*
- *Greeters*
- *Children's Worship and Kid's Focus instructors*
- *Discipleship Hour coordinators*
- *Youth Leaders*
- *Congregational Care Branch members*
- *Worship committee (not each worship leader or team member)*
- *Clothing closet greeters*
- *All Council members*

The training should be developed and delivered to accommodate the logistical capacity of New Life Church to deliver it effectively. Training should be repeated at an interval specified by the Committee.

A list of church participants who have completed accessibility training, and the date of their training will be coordinated by the committee and the Ministry Coordinator.

## **7. Feedback Process**

Comments on our 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 card from the office, or participating at an annual 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 outlined by this policy .

## **8. Responding to Requests and Needs**

- 1.The need or request received is referred to appropriate ministry.
2. The ministry leader, along with Ministry Coordinator and/or member of Accessibility Committee (as needed) may ask the requester for details, as per the “Needs Assessment” questionnaire in this document.
- 3.The ministry leader shall document the request to their Branch of the governance structure, along with their suggested response or the action they took.
- 4.The ministry leader is requested to report back to the Accessibility Committee on the status and outcome of the request.
- 5.The Accessibility Committee will track requests and follow-through actions in their minutes.

## **9. Rentals and Third Parties**

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

Upon request New Life Church will provide the list of assistive devices, services and spaces to renters or other third party users of our building.

## **10. Calendar of Activities**

1. Remind those responsible for devices that they have to check the device, notify the church office if it is broken (for notification to members as per this policy), and fix it.
2. Annually complete a feedback request to the congregation. This may be a meeting, or a series of announcements in the newsletter.
3. Request a minimum budget line (e.g. \$1000) for unanticipated accessibility needs. This might be in addition to specific needs identified through feedback.

## **Needs Assessment**

When a need arises, this accessibility policy outlines New Life Church's intention to respond. In order to assure that the church's response meets the actual need, and seeks to respond in a manner that is do-able and sustainable, it is recommended that the following questions, or similar questions be asked to assess the needs and discover possible solutions.

**Please explain your need, your issue, or your problem for which you are seeking some sort of change.**

**Please explain the solution, or outcome, or best result you hope for to solve the need, issue or problem:**

**Please tell us about how you have experienced this need or issue or problem being resolved in other places, or solutions you have heard about. Are there different ways this need can be met or resolved?**

## ACCESSIBILITY FEEDBACK FORM

Dear Valued Participant,

As a church, we strive to improve accessibility for our participants with disabilities.

If you have feedback on the services we provide, or on ways that we could meet your accessibility needs, please tell us.

Here's how you can provide feedback or make a request:

- You can call the church office at (519) 823-5851, or email at [office@newlifecrc.net](mailto:office@newlifecrc.net).
- You can ask the church office to arrange a meeting with a member of the Accessibility Committee.
- You can provide written feedback on the form below and place this form into the church offering plate.

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Name: and Date: \_\_\_\_\_



## Inventory of Assistive Devices, Services, and Spaces

<< to be kept as a separate document, not a part of the policy document>>

### 1. Management of this Inventory:

This inventory of assistive devices shall be reviewed and updated on an annual basis. This review will be undertaken and reported by Accessibility Committee.

### 2. Inventory

Physical Devices	Who Is Responsible	Status
1. Elevator	Custodian	
2. Door opening button front door	Custodian	
3. Door opening button back door	Custodian	
4. Hearing loop	Sound booth	
5. Earphones for hearing loop	Sound booth	
6. Powerpoint projectors used during worship	Sound booth	
Property		
1. Accessible unisex washroom upstairs	Custodian	
2. Accessible unisex washroom downstairs	Custodian	
3. Ramp to front door	Property committee	
4. Accessible access for wheelchairs and walkers to worship services, toilets, coffee fellowship, Clothing Closet, Collective Kitchens, office, class rooms, nursery.	Property committee	
Services		
1. Email/written response to inquiries	Admin secretary	
2. Accessible access to office staff during office hours	Office staff	