



Volunteer Handbook

Westminster United Church

WESTMINSTER UNITED CHURCH

📍 1850 Rossland Rd E, Whitby, ON

📞 (905) 723 6442

Welcome to Westminster United Church

The purpose of this document is to provide information on Westminster United Church (WUC) and most importantly, to outline the various activities, events, groups and committees that make up the WUC family, for which you may choose to volunteer.

Statement of Inclusion, Affirm United

We embrace people of all ages, gender, race, sexual orientations, gender identity, abilities, ethnicity, social and economic circumstances, in the membership, ministry, leadership and life of this congregation. We are a member of Affirm United/ S'Affirmer Ensemble.

Westminster United Church History

Westminster United Church (WUC) began as a call to develop a Christian community which would nurture and support the many children in the residential corridor between Oshawa and Whitby. The history of Westminster is one of community spirit and sharing. Together its members have built a centre of worship, Christian education and outreach. There have always been dedicated volunteers, choir members, church school leaders and committed ministers and members to continue the work first begun in 1958.

1958: In March, Oshawa Presbytery supports the decision to form a new congregation. In November, the congregation is officially constituted with 41 charter members.

1959: A building site on Manning Road, Whitby is purchased.

1960: On April 3, the first building is opened and dedicated.

1963: The church calls Reverend John Porter to be its first full-time minister. Prior to that time, Westminster had been part of a two-point charge with Westmount United Church. Reverend William Gibb and Reverend J. Ward were the ministers.

1980: Westminster develops a senior citizens non-profit housing complex adjacent to the church managed by church members. Manning Mews provides 20 housing units, half of which have rents scaled to income.

1992: The Manning Road building expanded by 50% its existing space. This project was completed in the spring of 1992.

1995: Parish Nursing is introduced and welcomed by the Westminster community through the services of a part-time Parish Nurse. A focus on *health and wellness* has been an integral strength for our church for the past 15 years. We are recognized as one of the pioneers of Parish Nursing in Canada. Gail Brimbecom was our pioneer Parish Nurse, retiring in December 2005. She was succeeded by Marian Leek, who moved on to a full-time nursing position in mid-2009. Since then the Parish Nurse position has not been re-staffed.

2001: The Westminster congregation outgrows the church building on Manning Road and a decision is made to build a new church at 1850 Rossland Road, our current location. The church is completed in time for Palm Sunday in 2003

2018: Westminster United Church celebrates its 60th anniversary on November 18, 2018

Meet Our Staff

Reverend Michelle Robinson – Minister of Worship, Sacrament and Pastoral Care

Cathy Shaw – Minister of Faith Formation

Margaret Motum – Minister of Music

Rebecca Clingman - Office Administrator; wuc@wesminster-uc.ca, 905-763-6442

Ronell Paguio - Custodian

More information on our staff can be found on our website: westminster-uc.ca

VOLUNTEERING AT WUC

In addition to the tremendous work our staff undertakes, the dedication and commitment of our volunteers is second to none! Volunteering at Westminster is a cornerstone of our ability to serve our community and achieve our mission. At Westminster, we approach volunteering as participating at the church in various forms or levels:

Level 1 - **Participate**: Attending Sunday services, providing an offering, socializing with fellow church members.

Level 2 – **Help**: Participating in specific events or activities.

Level 3 – **Lead**: Joining a committee and supporting the committee’s activities

The level of commitment and the time you offer is up to you.

In response to questions you may be thinking of, numerous articles have been written on the benefits of volunteering, including:

- Provides personal gratification; makes you happy
- Provides a sense of purpose
- Increases self-confidence
- Combats depression and the effects of stress and anxiety
- Makes our community stronger

We encourage you to read through this document and let us know if you have any questions or if you are interested in volunteering. The accompanying document, Nominating Committee Guidelines, provides additional information for those who may be interested in joining a committee.

Westminster Volunteering Opportunities

Over the last several years, many of our volunteers have documented what they do in the form of Procedures, Lists and Forms. These form part of Westminster’s governance structure along with the church’s constitution and help everyone to better understand what needs to be done. The master copies of these documents may be obtained from the Church Office Administrator or the chairperson of the relevant committee. A select few may be found in a binder in the book case outside of the minister’s office. These activities provide numerous volunteering opportunities be they smaller, one-time events or longer, continuous activities. Throughout the year, additional volunteer opportunities may be shared for members to consider being part of.

1. Worship Committee

The worship committee provides an opportunity to give back to the church community in a meaningful and exciting way, and offers the experience of becoming more social, reaching out to others, and making new friends. The sub-committees that are within the Worship Ministry include: Sanctuary, Communion, Ushering and Tea and Coffee. Let us help you find a special place for you to share your gifts and talents through these subcommittees. (The document "Guide to Ushering" provides more detail on these responsibilities)

Specific roles and responsibilities include:

Greeters/Candle lighters (greeting is part of the ushering responsibilities)

- Arrive approximately 60 minutes prior to scheduled start time for Worship Service.
- Greet church members in the entry way with a hand shake, fist bump or other appropriate gestures as they arrive for Service
- During the first hymn bring the Bible into the Sanctuary, place on the book holder and light the candles on the table and the Christ candle.

Ushering

These activities, including greeting, are led by the Head Usher and their role is outlined in the document, *Guide to Ushering* (2013).

- Two ushers per entrance to the Sanctuary are required to distribute the Service bulletin
- If required, assist individuals who wish to use the audio system equipment
- As required, point out available seats, including in the Narthex
- Remain seated at back of Sanctuary during service, watch for late comers (escort to available seats if requested)
- Watch for any people with special needs or offers of hospitality.
- Assist with offering collection during Service, as per the ushering collection schedule.
- If there is a medical distress, please alert the closest staff member
- If fire evacuation is required, please put on the hazard vest hung up near the sanctuary entrances and help direct the congregation towards the muster point across the street
- Open exit doors as last hymn ends, collect Service bulletins as members exit
- Assist with post-Service Sanctuary clean up. .
- Thank those that assisted in some way during or after Service.
- At the conclusion of the Service, assist Stewardship committee members with counting the offerings at end of Service, as per the schedule

Communion

- Assist with the preparation and presentation of Communion
- Assist with cleaning up the Communion items after the conclusion of the service
- The role of the ushers in the presentation of communion is documented in the Guide to Ushering.

Tea and Coffee Team

- Team Lead prepares schedule for five tea and coffee teams
- Team members arrive early to set up the coffee urns, kettles, cups, juice etc.
- Serve coffee and tea after service
- Clean up
- Volunteers serve juice in the Narthex over the summer months

Sanctuary Subcommittee

Are you imaginative? Do you have fresh ideas that would contribute to creating a warm, inviting, beautiful and meaningful environment at WUC? The Sanctuary Committee is looking for team members who want to invest some time and energy in making our Church a welcoming beacon in the community.

Specific tasks and activities of the Sanctuary group include:

- Decorating the narthex and the sanctuary a week prior to each change of the season in the church (Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, Pentecost, Ordinary time, Creation time)
- Decorating the church on special day/Sundays (Christmas Eve, Epiphany Sunday, Transfiguration Sunday, Palm Sunday, Good Friday, Easter Sunday, Mother's Day, Pentecost Sunday, Father's Day, Labour Day, Thanksgiving Sunday, and Reign of Christ Sunday).
- One needs the ability to climb stairs, climb the tall ladder as well as 2 other ladders and carry various decor items (often in medium to large items).

2. Christian Education Committee

We are excited about the variety of faith development programs and opportunities being planned for the children, youth and adults. As a committee, we continue to oversee our vibrant Sunday programs for toddlers, kids and youth, as well as our ever-expanding library.

Specific volunteer opportunities include:

- Assist with the developing and presenting the J.a.M. (Jesus and Me), aka Sunday School, sessions to our children
- Assist with the various Youth Group programs
- Assist with the development and presentation of the summer Vacation Bible School
- Join one of the special activities, e.g. ADVENTure Day, Friday Night Flicks, Games night

3. Ministry of Music

Westminster is blessed to have a vibrant and diverse music programme. The following opportunities to share your musical gifts are available:

- Senior Choir

An ensemble with a rich 60+ year history, the Senior Choir is an integral part of weekly worship by supporting congregational hymn singing and singing an anthem. Choir rehearsals are held from September - June on Thursday evenings (7:00pm-8:30pm) in the Founder's Room. A love of singing is the only requirement and new members are warmly welcomed.

It is a choir, but also a supportive community of faith. Our friendships deepen through social events - a kick-off corn roast, bi-monthly after choir socials, a "Christmas" dinner at the Mandarin in January, and an ice cream social in June.

- SALT - "You are the salt of the earth." (Matthew 5:13)

This praise band accompanied by guitars, piano, and drums leads the music in our worship services approximately once a month. Please speak to Margaret Motum if you have interest in this ensemble.

- Junior Choir

Children are invited to meet with Heather Von Zuben for a brief rehearsal after church to prepare songs for performances in worship. All children are warmly invited.

- Christmas Eve Play/Musical

There are great opportunities for youth (Grades 6-12) to participate musically in the Christmas play. Rehearsals start the Sunday following Thanksgiving and performances run three times on Christmas Eve. Watch for further information.

3. United Church Women

Westminster's United Church Women (UCW) is a group of women who meet the first Monday of the month (except for July and August) for a time of worship, entertainment/educational programs, business and fellowship. This is an interest and service group to which all women of the congregation can belong. Our purpose is:

"To unite the women of the congregation for the total mission of the church and to provide a medium through which we may express our loyalty and devotion to Jesus Christ in Christian witness, study, fellowship and service"

Specific volunteer opportunities include:

- Catering – join the catering team that prepares, and delivers lunches and dinners to various groups. Volunteering can be a single activity, e.g. making sandwiches, or a more permanent presence
- Join the UCW committee

4. Wellness Committee

The Wellness Committee recognizes that our church is a place of health and healing when it promotes growing in loving relationships with God, creation, each other and self. We seek to support and educate members of the congregation and broader community about health as wholeness and ways to integrate holistic health practices into our daily lives.

Committee activities include

- Interest in general health and wellbeing of others
- Offering spiritual, social and emotional support to congregants facing health challenges
- Providing health education and awareness to foster well-being of the whole person body, mind, spirit and relationships
- Promoting wholeness (health) through contemplative readings, meditation, prayer practices and service to others
- Monitoring Westminster's safety, accessibility and emergency process

Programs include:

- Friendly Visitors – which reaches out to people through cards and personal visitation
- A bi-monthly Blood Pressure Clinic after church in the Founders' Room
- Contemplative Prayer walks on the labyrinth with meditations on seasonal themes like Advent, Lent, Pentecost
- Support Groups like Stroke Recovery, Living Alone,
- Organizing a floral arrangement for Easter Sunday and distributing it to members in need of emotional support
- Providing online and onsite health and well-being awareness messaging and presentations

Specific volunteer opportunities include:

- Serving on the wellness committee to plan presentations, special events and monitor safety, accessibility and emergency procedures.

- Creating and curating health and well-being content for the Westminster Community assisting support groups for members dealing with mental, physical, spiritual

5. Outreach Committee

Westminster's Outreach team stretches out beyond the church to meet the needs of the wider community. A variety of programs include key initiatives such as our Food Bank, St. Vincent's Kitchen, Prayer Shawls, Christmas Hampers and Bridge to A New Home (BTANH) and reflect our Outreach ministry work through Westminster.

Specific volunteer opportunities include:

- Joining the Outreach Committee and participating in monthly planning sessions
- Participating in ongoing outreach ministry activities (i.e. Food Bank, St. Vincent's Kitchen, Prayer Shawls, BTANH, Christmas Hampers)
- Participation in outside activities, meetings (visiting other United Churches, educational seminars, community programs)
- Supporting ministries under our Outreach Committee "umbrella" such as Parish Mosaic, Blood Donor Clinics, Living Alone lunches

Food Bank

The Westminster Food Bank assists those within our community in need of non-perishable food and basic hygiene products. We assist, in a non-judgmental manner, and clients are permitted at our Food Bank one visit per month. For tracking purposes, all we ask is their name. On average per year we assist over 80 individuals or families and average over 27 visits per month. Our numbers are slowly increasing as more in our community are seeking assistance. Specific volunteer opportunities include:

- Assist with organizing the products
- Assist with managing the weekly Foodbank and providing support and assistance to the Foodbank customers
- Assist with marketing to the congregation the products required for the Foodbank.

St. Vincent Pallotti's Kitchen

St. Vincent Pallotti's Kitchen serves a low-cost, hot, nutritious meal in a dignified manner to an average of 150 people in need daily, seven days a week. Westminster's team of over 20 volunteers help serve the meals and clean up the eating, cooking and preparation areas after the patrons leave. Our team is on duty the first Wednesday of every month from 3:00 -7:00 pm.

Volunteers are always welcome to assist with:

- Delivery of the hot meals
- Clean up after the meals have been served

Christmas Hamper Program

Every year our Christmas Hamper Program grows out of the needs of our community. In 2019, 85 families (302 individuals) received Loblaws gift cards and Christmas gifts, lovingly and joyfully donated, packed and delivered by our congregation. How blessed we are to be able to offer this program and to help and serve others. Specific activities include:

- Become part of this project team when it is established for the upcoming Christmas season
- Assist with identifying families and their requests for Christmas gifts
- Organize each family's Christmas hamper and gifts
- As required, assist with the delivery of the hampers and gifts to the families

The Parish Mosaic Subcommittee

This subcommittee was created almost immediately after Westminster United voted to become an Affirming Congregation. Our activities flow directly from Westminster's Statement of Inclusion. We work to foster overall inclusion within the congregation, concentrating on providing information, education and selected activities around issues such as Radical Welcome, 2SLGBTQ+, Multi-Culturalism, Racism, Aboriginal Rights, etc. We are also very active in communicating our message of Affirming to the community at large.

Our Level 1 (Participate) volunteer opportunities include active participation in the annual Multi-Faith Pride service, Pride parade, Youth Pride event, International AIDS Candlelight Memorial Vigil, etc.

Volunteer opportunities (Level 2 – Help) exist in attendance in any of our events either inside or outside of our church walls.

Level 3 (Lead) volunteer opportunities exist in active assistance in our Committee's activities in preparing articles for the Westminster Newsletter, Parish Mosaic Bulletin Board, helping to run the Multi-Cultural Potluck, providing refreshments at the International AIDS Memorial Vigil, helping to work our informational table at various community events, etc. We would love to have additional help in our work.

Westminster United Church voted to be an Affirming congregation in March 2016 and now we are moving forward with “*becoming Affirming*” initiatives. The recently constituted group, *The Parish Mosaic*, will focus on various upcoming events and promotions here at Westminster and within the wider community

Specific volunteer opportunities include:

- Producing newsletter articles, bulletin board postings, information tables and bulletin inserts to inform and motivate our congregation on Affirming and Inclusion issues.
- In conjunction with The Friendly Visitor committee, organizing and running the “Multicultural Pot-Luck luncheon”.
- As part of the Multi-Faith Pride committee, organizing and participating in the Durham Multi-Faith Pride Service and Parade
- Hosting an information table to engage and inform participants about Westminster’s affirming initiative.
- Hosting an information table to engage and inform, e.g. at the Annual Youth Pride show

6. Stewardship Committee

The Stewardship committee meets monthly and has the responsibility of the planning and management of Westminster United Church’s resources of time, talent and treasures. The Stewardship committee also oversees the financial activities of Westminster through a financial sub-committee. New members and/or your ideas or suggestions are most welcome.

Stewardship/Special Events:

- To share, learn and nurture a holistic year-round stewardship approach at WUC;
- Past or current experience with, or be willing to: help plan, co-ordinate and/or organize special fun events for Community building and for fund raising;
- Willing to bring new ideas to the Committee to grow and encourage good stewardship.

Specific volunteer opportunities include:

- Participate in Events (such as the annual Bazaar, fundraising events);
- Promote and encourage the sale of tickets for Planned Committee events;
- Help with presenting and/or preparing events reports.
- Become a member of the Stewardship committee

7. Property Committee

The Property Committee is charged with ensuring that Church property is maintained, and is safe and secure. Key responsibilities include:

- Maintaining the insurance policy on the property
- Maintaining the Fire Safety Plan
- Managing contracted work
- Overseeing the work of the church's custodian
- Organizing volunteers to help maintain the church – cleaning, painting, gardening, repairs

The Property Committee meets about six times a year to organize the time and talents donated by members of the congregation to keep our house in good order, in coordination with the church custodian. The jobs are similar to maintaining your own house, except scaled up a bit.

Specific volunteer opportunities include:

- Light maintenance: painting, repairing cupboards, installing storage shelves, custom woodwork
- Lawn and garden maintenance: maintain the flower gardens, exterior clean-up in the spring and fall
- Weed Whackers: Since 2014, Westminster volunteers (the Weed Whackers) took on the responsibility of cutting the lawns.
- The committee also organizes a group of Volunteer Custodians who clean the church after Sunday service.

Two subcommittees address the need for setting up tables/chairs and managing the support of AV for church services.

- The Chairman Group handles the set-up of tables and chairs for both church and rental purposes.
- Tech group consisting of 4 or 5 teams of two, work 'behind the scenes' to run the microphones and the video screen during Sunday worship services. With an interest in computer technology and sound engineering, they have been fully trained to operate the system in the tech booth.

8. Communications Committee

The goal of our committee is to facilitate, promote and improve communication at Westminster United Church. We are responsible for the monthly newsletter – *The Westminster World*, for the Program Directory – *Welcome to Westminster United Church* and also for subscriptions to the United Church magazine Observer. We also publish a fridge flyer, *UPCOMING EVENTS*, which is published twice a year and lists all the activities going on at the church.

In addition to these important aspects of communication, we also maintain the bulletin boards in the hallway and oversee postings to the electronic sign. At our monthly meetings, we discuss ways to enhance communication in our expanding congregation.

We are now collaborating with the Worship Committee on a new initiative. Each month, one of the committees on Council is responsible for greeting and candle-lighting. It is our job to highlight that committee and explain their mandate in the newsletter and in the Sunday bulletin. Westminster's social media communication (website and Facebook) is maintained by the office.

Volunteer opportunities include:

- Assist with maintaining the bulletin boards, as required
- Undertake replenishing the pew pockets with envelopes, pencils and prayer insertions
- Assist with various communications projects as they arise

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS

1. Prayer Team

The Prayer Chain is a group of dedicated people who take prayerful action for the needs of the congregation, our community and global needs. Our members are committed to praying for the needs of others. When a prayer request is received, it is immediately sent out to the prayer chain members. This network of people will intercede on behalf of others by lifting up in prayer any specific requests, concerns or emergency situations. Prayer requests are welcomed and encouraged and all requests are treated as confidential.

Volunteer opportunities include:

- Join the Prayer team and become involved in providing prayers to church members, their family and friends

2. Prayer Shawl Ministry

The prayer shawl ministry began in 2004 and within the first year we made 98 shawls. Since that time, over 800 shawls have been made. The shawls are given out to anyone in need of comfort and our prayers. They are also presented to all those receiving the Sacrament of Baptism. Specific volunteer opportunities include:

- Joining the Westminster knitting team (currently, 19 members contribute their gifts to this ministry)
- Assisting the coordinator with the inventory and distribution of shawls

3. FoodMan Group

The Foodman group consists of men from our congregation that meet (generally) every Monday evening to test recipes, sample their cooking and have a social evening with each other. The Foodman group also supports various activities that occur at the church, e.g. “Stew for Stewardship” lunch, Welcome Back Sunday.

Volunteer opportunities include:

- Join the Foodman group and enjoy the time with other men from WUC

4. Climate Change Mitigation

Westminster recognizes that the preponderance of climate scientists now regard the climate disruption issue as a global emergency. Westminster seeks to align itself with the commitment which the Church of Canada made to the 2016 Paris Agreement. Within the United Church of Canada we believe that “Caring for God’s Gift of Creation” is a spiritual commitment. Furthermore, our faith calls us to live with respect “in Creation”. We are concerned that climate disruption negatively affects the rights of living beings to clean air, water and food.

Specific volunteer opportunities with the Climate Disruption Mitigation committee include:

- Be an active and committed Committee member.
- Through encouragement and information to engage the congregation, both individually and collectively, in the mitigation of climate disruption.
- To act as a resource to the Council in the development and implementation of Westminster’s Climate Disruption Mitigation Plan.
- To facilitate climate disruption mitigation by other faith communities.