



Bethel Christian Reformed Church
Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) Policy

- **Our Theological Position**

- Bethel Christian Reformed Church (**Bethel**) 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.
- Bethel 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.
- Bethel endeavours to integrate people with disabilities into all ministries and activities of Bethel in keeping with the beliefs and practices taught in Scripture. This includes worship, education, small groups, outreach, activities, etc.
- Bethel 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 at Bethel.
- Bethel seeks to remove all barriers to participation with ample discussion by all parties concerned in order to accomplish this goal in an open and reasonable way.

- **Our Commitment.** In fulfilling our purposes and theological position, Bethel strives to provide its programs, ministries, goods and services in a way that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities. Bethel is also committed to giving people with disabilities the same opportunity to access its programs, ministries, goods and services and allowing them to benefit from the same services, in the same place and in a similar way as people without disabilities.

- **Application of Policy.** This policy shall apply to every person who deals with members of the public or other third parties on behalf of Bethel, whether the person does so as an employee, volunteer, agent or otherwise (collectively referred to as “**staff**”).

- **Providing programs, ministries, goods and services to people with disabilities.** Bethel is committed to serving all members well, including people with disabilities, and we will carry out our functions and responsibilities in the following areas:

- **Communication.** We will communicate with people with disabilities in ways that take into account their disability. We will train staff on how to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities.
- **Telephone Services.** We will train staff to communicate over the telephone in clear and plain language and to speak clearly and slowly. We will offer to communicate by email or social media if telephone communication is not suitable to someone’s communication needs or is not available.

- **Assisted Devices.** We are committed to serving people with disabilities who use assistive devices to obtain, use or benefit from our programs, ministries, goods and services. We will ensure that our staff is trained and familiar with various assistive devices that may be used by people with disabilities while accessing our facilities. We will also ensure that our staff knows how to use the following assistive devices available on our premises: elevator, wheelchair, earphones for hearing assistance, and all devices we may obtain in the future.

- **Use of service animals and support persons.** We are committed to welcoming people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal on our premises. We will also ensure that all staff is 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 Bethel's premises with their support person. At no time will a person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person be prevented from having access to their support person while on our premises.

- **Notice of temporary disruption.** Bethel will provide notice in the event of a planned or unexpected disruption in the facilities usually used by people with disabilities. This notice will include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration and a description of alternative facilities, if available. The notice will be placed at all public entrances on our premises.

- **Training of staff.** Bethel will provide training to all staff, and all those who are involved in the development and approval of policies, practices and procedures. Individuals in the following positions will be trained: Ushers, Greeters, Welcome Centre Host, Employees and Elders. This training will be provided in a timely manner after staff is hired or volunteers in those positions are appointed and on an annual basis as a refresher. Training will include the following:
 - The purposes of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), 2005.
 - 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 a support person.
 - How to use the elevator, wheelchair, earphones for hearing assistance, or any other available assistive device.

What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty in accessing the facilities and/or Bethel's policies, practices and procedures.

Applicable staff will be trained on policies, practices and procedures that affect the way programs, ministries, goods 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.

- **Feedback process.** The ultimate goal of Bethel is to responsibly meet needs while serving people with disabilities. Comments regarding how well those needs are being met are welcome and appreciated. Feedback regarding the way Bethel relates to people with disabilities can be made by emailing the office (office@actoncrc.com) or phoning the office (519-853-2121). All feedback will be directed to the Elder for Disability Concerns and the Community Life Coordinator and can expect a response within five (5) business days.
- **Modification to this policy.** Bethel 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 Bethel that does not respect and promote the dignity and independence of people with disabilities will be modified or removed.
- **Questions about this policy.** This policy exists to achieve responsible service to people with disabilities. If anyone has a question about the policy, or if the purpose of a policy is not understood, an explanation should be provided by, or referred to the Elder for Disability Concerns and/or the Chair of Ministry Board.