

Trinity United Church of Christ, Wooster

Pet and Service Animal Policy

Purpose

Trinity United Church of Christ (Trinity UCC) seeks to provide a safe, welcoming, and accessible environment for all individuals who attend worship services, programs, meetings, community outreach activities, and events. This policy establishes expectations regarding animals at church-sponsored activities and on church property in order to protect the safety and comfort of all participants while complying with applicable laws regarding service animals.

Scope

This policy applies to:

- All worship services, meetings, programs, ministries, and events sponsored by Trinity UCC.
- All church-owned, leased, or controlled buildings, grounds, and parking areas.
- Any off-site event, activity, or gathering sponsored by Trinity UCC.
- All outside organizations, community groups, vendors, and individuals using church facilities, including but not limited to the Breakfast Program and similar community outreach ministries.

General Policy

Pets and other non-service animals are not permitted in church buildings, at church-sponsored activities, or at events held on church property unless specifically approved in advance by church leadership for a designated purpose or event.

Examples of approved exceptions may include:

- Blessing of the Animals services.
- Educational programs involving animals.
- Approved ministry or outreach events.
- Animals specifically authorized by church leadership.

Service Animals

Trinity UCC welcomes individuals with disabilities who are accompanied by service animals as defined by applicable law.

A service animal is generally defined as a dog that has been individually trained to perform specific tasks for a person with a disability.

When it is not obvious that an animal is a service animal, church representatives may ask only:

1. Is the animal required because of a disability?
2. What work or task has the animal been trained to perform?

Church representatives will not request documentation, require the animal to demonstrate its task, or inquire about the nature of a person's disability.

Responsibilities of Service Animal Handlers

Individuals accompanied by service animals are responsible for:

- Maintaining control of the animal at all times.
- Keeping the animal leashed, harnessed, or tethered unless such devices interfere with the animal's work.
- Ensuring the animal is housebroken.
- Cleaning up after the animal.
- Preventing the animal from disrupting church activities.

Removal of Animals

Any animal, including a service animal, may be required to leave the premises if:

- The animal is out of control and the handler does not take effective action to control it.
- The animal poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others.
- The animal causes significant disruption to church activities.
- The animal is not housebroken.

Whenever possible, reasonable accommodations will be explored before requesting removal.

Facility Users and Community Programs

Organizations, groups, and individuals using church facilities are responsible for complying with this policy and communicating it to their participants, volunteers, guests, and visitors.

Leaders of outside groups and community programs, including the Breakfast Program, shall take reasonable steps to ensure that pets are not brought into church facilities or church-sponsored activities unless specifically authorized by church leadership.

As a condition of facility use, the sponsoring group agrees to comply with Trinity UCC's Pet and Service Animal Policy and assumes responsibility for any animal brought onto church property by its participants, volunteers, guests, invitees, or representatives.

Liability

The owner or handler of any animal brought onto church property is solely responsible for the care, supervision, behavior, and control of the animal and may be held responsible for any injury, damage, or loss caused by the animal.

Trinity UCC, its officers, employees, volunteers, and representatives shall not be responsible for injury, loss, damage, illness, or claims arising from the presence or actions of any animal on church property or at church-sponsored activities, except as otherwise required by law.

Trinity UCC reserves the right to deny access to any animal that does not meet the requirements of this policy or creates a safety concern.

Questions

Questions regarding this policy should be directed to the Church Office or designated church leadership prior to bringing an animal to any church event or activity.

Approval

This policy shall become effective upon approval by the Consistory and shall remain in effect until amended or rescinded.