



## Volunteers in the Body of Christ

Rev N. Elliot PhD

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Further information from Rev.Neil@Telus.Net

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# Volunteers in the Body of Christ

## Introduction

The church depends more on volunteers than on paid clergy, but pays much less attention to how it cares for those volunteers.. This review is intended to help you to recognise what you are already doing well in managing your volunteers and to find those areas where you might improve. The review is based on two types of source. It is based on documents produced by a variety of volunteer organisations. Some of these are produced by the church and by church leaders. Others are produced by various non-profit and volunteer organisations. These are important because they are often more up to date than Church resources. Secondly it is based on anecdotes and my experiences in 25 years of parish ministry, both as clergy and as a lay volunteer.

This review is written primarily for leaders in small and medium sized churches where the incumbent is responsible for managing the volunteers. That is the situation which I know about. But it is also intended for all volunteers so that you might know what you should expect from being managed. I know both what it is to be managed well and badly.

That takes me to another concern of this review. In some of the writing in the media about church members and the work they do, there is a reluctance to label them as volunteers. Church members are identified as some special theological category. I have some sympathy for that argument, and I have spent a section of this review considering those theological categories. However, we operate in a social context of other volunteer organisations, and as many of our members also volunteer in those organisations. So I believe we should care for our volunteers *at least* as well as the other organisations do.

The review introduces my CARE outline as a way of looking at volunteer management

C = Clear frameworks

A = Appreciation

R = Responsive relationships

E = Enable

Finally, in each section there will be a list of questions which are intended to help you develop your volunteer management awareness and skills.

NB In this review I refer to “your church” and “your volunteers”. I mean this is the sense that you have a particular responsibility for them and to them, not in the sense that you own them!

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## 1 Who is volunteering?

*A seeker went looking for a particular Guru. She crossed oceans and went into strange lands and cultures, she journeyed by plane and boat and train and bus and finally she came to the sacred mountain and started to climb. Up and up she went climbing through rain and snow. At last she came to the place where the Guru was. "Guru" she said, "I have left everything behind and committed all I have to come and learn from you." The Guru was silent for a few minutes. Then he spoke "Could you teach Sunday School?"*

### 1.1 "From those who give.... More is expected"

"How much should volunteers be paid for their travel?" At first glance this might seem a straightforward, uncontroversial question. But it was this question which was the impetus for this study. Since 2005 I have been responsible for a team of volunteer ministers in a rural parish in BC. They have had no incumbent and so the team has divided up the work of a paid minister. As you might guess, the main reason that the team existed was that the parish could no longer afford to pay for a priest, so a "mutual ministry team" came into existence. When I joined the team I discovered that the same financial constraints were preventing the team members receiving the same travel rate as I was entitled to. In some places, Diocesan policies have reinforced this dual standard. Clergy are entitled to one travel rate, volunteers to a lesser rate, or no recompense at all (for travel "within the parish"). I have encountered constraints on travel to important meetings and clergy conferences. It was in this context I coined the phrase "From those who give, more is expected". It seemed to me that the team members were having greater and greater expectations placed on them and that there was little effective support. The issue of travel costs was not just an issue of justice – for my vehicle does not cost any more to run than my neighbour's – but a symptom of wider issues the church is facing.

In another context I realised that even as a paid clergy person, I was functioning as a volunteer. I was a member of a committee and as a result was expected to give up my time to attend. This time could be considerable, involving some long travel. The committee work was often challenging and draining for me. I and my parish were expected to work around my absence and the demands of the committee. I believe that my presence in the committee brought some benefit both the wider church and to my parish. The experience was highly rewarding in many ways and highly unsatisfactory in others. But I often thought I would have been better just keeping to my own little patch.

There are many organisations who rely on volunteers and who might have things to teach the church in management of volunteers. A UK survey of volunteers in 1997 identified that 71% of those interviewed were dissatisfied with the organisation of their work. Surveys report that the number of volunteers is stable or growing, but the hours that volunteers are prepared to do is shrinking. Alongside this a smaller proportion of the volunteer base is picking up an increasing amount of the work.

Our churches run on volunteer labour. I recently initiated a study of the 50 or so regular members of our church. All but a couple were involved in some way in the life of the church as volunteers. For some it was altar guild, for others choir, for other coffee hosting. And for a

considerable number it was more than one of these. I have a churchwarden who is also a Licensed Lay Minister. The church can run without a paid secretary, without a paid organist, without a paid janitor, without a paid minister, even without a building; *but it needs volunteers*. I have become aware that the most significant volunteer ministry is just to attend worship, because our simple presence encourages others.

For an organisation which relies so heavily on volunteers the church has thought very infrequently about volunteering ( and in some circles seem to think very little *of* our volunteers). Richard Steel's 2011 booklet in the UK Grove Books series is the one of a very few recent church orientated publications I could find. Yet the secular world recognises how significant church volunteers are to the Church and to other organisations. Statistics Canada identifies that church people are much more likely to volunteer (in church and out of church) and when they do they contribute more hours than non-church people (see below for more stats).

This review is not focused on recruiting volunteers or starting a volunteer program. There are particular issues involved in screening volunteers and setting up volunteer programs in larger churches. There are some very good resources available on those already, notably Marylin MacKenzie and Suzanne Lawson's webinars and resources on the Anglican Church of Canada website. I have noted some other resources in the bibliography at the end of this document.

This paper is an attempt to provide some resources for those who wish to care better for their existing volunteers. It is intended for leaders in small and medium sized churches who cannot afford a volunteer manager. I believe the primary challenge we face is to look after our volunteers, or as I will suggest to C.A.R.E for our volunteers. This review is not intended to make you feel bad about what you are not doing, but to help you recognise the good things you are already doing, and to do some significant things better.

## 1.2 Four church volunteers you may know

*An incumbent was trying to recruit a treasurer. He asked someone with some financial experience to "Just take this on for a few months, to help us out". But that wasn't his intention. His intention was to get the treasurer involved and then keep him for life – by hook or by crook!*

*Treasurers* are one of the few roles in church life which are believed to have 'real skills' associated with them. Certainly a good treasurer is reputed to be harder to find than a warden, or even an incumbent! In my own church our treasurer is the only member of church committee who does not have a term associated with the role. It is an onerous job with heavy responsibilities and legal liabilities, like that of the churchwarden. For the right person it can be a 'job for life', and the treasurer can accrue significant power in a church as a result. However it is also a job which has the power to alienate the treasurer from the congregation. The treasurer often has significant financial knowledge about members of the congregation which might be uncomfortable for both parties. And the treasurer's job is sometimes to say "No" to the latest irresponsible idea from the incumbent or church council.

*Churchwardens* are also legally responsible for the running of the church, alongside the incumbent. In my experience, wardens have varied enormously in what they actually do. But the process of a minister recruiting a warden may include an element of non-disclosure of the potential duties and responsibilities of a warden. The attitude seems to be “If I tell you what’s involved you might not take the job”. Becoming a warden means taking on huge potential responsibilities, including being solely responsible for the church. I have had a number of wardens in my various parishes and many of them have become friends. The relationship between minister and warden can be a close one, as a good warden will be intimate with every aspect of the function of the church ‘spiritual’ and ‘non-spiritual’. Furthermore, at the end of their term, for some wardens the return to the role of not being a warden can be difficult.

Another onerous role in the church can be that of *Licensed Lay Minister (or Lay Reader)*. In my current church, LLMs are involved in the main service every Sunday, leading the prayers of the people and other parts of the service. They also preach and preside whenever I am absent. This is a significant and very public ministry. Perhaps because this is the ministry closest to the public parts of ordained ministry, these LLMs get particular attention from me. In my region we also have Locally Trained Priests. These are local volunteer clergy with significant training and other commitments, who can be licensed to do anything that a seminary trained priest can do. This review will draw extensively on the issues I have experienced in dealing with both LLMs and LTPs in their ministries, the issues and injustices which I have observed, and sometimes contributed to.

One other group of volunteers with an often unseen ministry are the *Altar guild*. These ladies (and a few men) are often the backbone of the church, preparing for each service, ensuring everything is in order for the worship. They give in many ways as a part of this ministry. In my church, as in many others, this is an aging group of people who have had to adjust their expectations of themselves as their numbers have declined.

*St Needy’s church had developed a pattern of obtaining volunteers for the various posts which they were required to fill. On the rare occasions when a new person came to worship, the minister was swift to visit them, and they were warmly welcomed. After about a month they were told that they would make a great addition to the church committee. Soon after they accepted, a crisis would emerge and one of the wardens would resign, and the new member would be told that they were the best, the only, person for the job. So they were stuck with it until another new person arrived and the cycle could start again. Meanwhile the old warden joined a chorus of ex-leaders who specialised in complaining about the current church committee!*

### 1.3 Why people volunteer

My father had to take early retirement on health grounds from his job as an HR director in a large civil engineer consultancy. His job had been his life and he was lost without it. He tried to do some research for his professional association, but it didn’t really work out. For a while he was lost, drifting. Then he connected with the local history museum, and re-connected with his passion for history. Suddenly his life had purpose again. He learnt new skills, including computer skills. He was engaged with the local community in a way he had never been when he

commuted and worked long hours. He was re-energised and I believe his life was extended. His time with the museum became in effect another career for him.

My father's experience is typical for retired men. It is a category which statistics Canada identify in their surveys as a major source of volunteer with a single main reasons for volunteering. However these are not the only, or even the majority of volunteers. The statistics Canada survey reveals a wide range of reasons for volunteering. These reasons may not be the reason you might hope and expect that people would be volunteering in your church. But they will be a factor in the volunteer decision which your congregation make.

According to a Statistics Canada survey of those who volunteered in 2010

93% said that making a contribution to the community was a key motivating factor in their decision.

78% said they wanted to make good use of their skills and experiences

59% said that they had been personally affected by the cause the organization represented or supported.

48% had become volunteers because they had friends who were involved

48% said they wanted to learn what their strengths were

46% said they wanted to network with others or meet new people

22% said they wanted to improve the job opportunities available to them

So your volunteers are highly likely to see what they are doing as making a contribution to the community, and to feel personally affected by the organization. No surprise there. They are also likely to want to use their existing skills and experience. So how about teachers and moms as Sunday school teachers? Most of my teachers and current moms want to get away from looking after kids!

According to the survey, volunteers are likely to do so because they either already have friends involved, or they want to make new friends or contacts. The social aspect of volunteering is significant. I am involved in a secular choir as well as two church choirs. In the church choirs I feel we all know each other. We chat and laugh happily together. We socialise after church and at various meetings. I have visited most of the members in their houses as part of my work. But in the secular choir there are many members whom I hardly know - after two years of membership. There is a significant gender divide, re-enforced by the necessities of singing in parts. We arrive and straight away we warm up, sing, then go home. It is a real sadness and disappointment to me that there is little social interaction. However I still feel an obligation to support the choir, even when it is inconvenient to do so. I want to be part of the team.

I am occasionally asked to be a job referee for a member of the congregation, and I am always pleased and honoured to do so. Furthermore I rarely have little to say. The congregants who ask me, young or older, have always been involved in the work of the church. I always have positive comments to make about their contributions and skills in ways that would be advantageous to the job market. Statistics Canada have identified some specific skills gained through volunteering

“Many stated that their volunteer activities had given them a chance to develop new skills; for example, about two-thirds (64%) said their interpersonal skills had improved. Volunteers also thought their volunteer experience had given them better skills in communications (44%), organizing (39%), fundraising (33%) and technical or office work (27%).”

Knowing why people are willing to become volunteers is important and forms one part of the unspoken social contract which is made. Another part is the expectations people have of the experience of being a volunteer. Churches are places where people have high expectations and high emotional investments. It should not be surprising when people disagree within a church setting. But for many this comes as a surprise, and conflict is often handled just as badly in church as it is elsewhere in society. So it is worthwhile considering what people’s expectations of the context of their volunteering might be. For instance, how are people going to respond when there is a strong disagreement on church committee about what colour carpet to put in the sanctuary.

Non-volunteers in a US survey say a good experience would be

- A cause I care about (81%)
- Nearby/convenient (71%)
- Interesting and challenging (70%)
- Fits my schedule (69%)

The church can certainly fit most of those categories, although the schedule rarely suits everyone. But there are other expectations of a safe and congenial environment which are not covered in the survey. For example the clients of a church food bank may not always conduct themselves in a respectful way. Food bank volunteers might find themselves having to deal with clients trying to take extra food and thus become engaged in conflict. The church is caught between caring for clients and caring for volunteers.

One somewhat unexpected result of a Statistics Canada survey was that religious volunteers contribute more both in and out of church

“Religion plays an important role in formal volunteering: 65% of Canadians who attended weekly religious services did volunteering, compared with 44% of those who did not attend weekly or at all. Volunteers who were frequent religious attendees dedicated about 40% more hours on average than other volunteers.”

So church people are 21% more likely to volunteer than those who do not, and when they volunteer, they do so for more hours than non-church people. I was phoned recently by the local chair of the Kiwanis service club. They were polling for someone to give their ‘volunteer of the year’ award to. He said he was phoning me because they knew that religious people often give more. This is a great sign of service for Christ in the community. I could point to those in my church who have either received such an award, or who deserve one.

What is even more interesting is that we do not see this as an explicit part of our faith. Statistics Canada report that only 21% of volunteers undertook volunteer work to meet religious

obligations or beliefs. So whilst religious people volunteer more, they do not get teaching which tells them that they 'ought' to be volunteering. Actually, this does not surprise me. The inward looking nature of most churches would encourage most of them to focus on getting volunteers for church needs, and to ignore the needs in the community. It seems to me that there is a great opportunity for affirming the good and very Christian work which is being done outside the church in secular volunteer organisations.

#### 1.4 What's changed in thirty years?

The most recent significant book on Church volunteering – and still a worthwhile read – is Marlene Wilson's "How to Mobilize Church Volunteers", published in 1983. An important question for me in writing this review has been "what has changed?" Here are five things which I believe have changed in 30 years

- i) *The Church has lost huge numbers of congregants, but the engagement of those remaining in church has increased.* We no longer have many "nominal Christians", C. and E. (Christmas and Easter) Anglicans. In my church almost every member has some kind of role apart from (and it is a significant role) attending worship on a Sunday. Our members give more money and they give more time. They are often more knowledgeable about and committed to their faith. Ideas of one-day-a-week Christians and Christian hypocrisy are outdated. They will hopefully be replaced by a recognition that Christians are often more active in caring than the majority of the population.
- ii) *The Church has lost its hierarchical authority.* No longer is Church a central pillar of the establishment. No longer is it assumed that "Father knows best". No longer are we believed to hold "the keys to the kingdom". We are one option among many. Our people know they have a choice. When they do anything in church, from attending to financial giving to making coffee, it is because they volunteer to do it.
- iii) *Volunteering no longer works on "One size fits all".* Back in the day there were fixed roles for men and women, for old and young, for blue collar and white collar, even for different ethnic groups. There was a fixed path within each role. We now recognise that everyone brings different gifts, experiences, and skills as well as different needs and our volunteers expect to be treated as individuals.
- iv) *Our society has higher standards and expectations of the church.* The scandals around residential schools and the sexual abuse of children in church has made us more cautious and careful about how we treat those in our care. In years past the church was beyond reproach and public failures were seen as aberrations on the part of individuals. Now the church is subject to the same standards as other volunteer and non-profit organisations. But society still expects more of the church than of organisations with merely secular objectives. When we fail then we bring God and the whole endeavour of faith into disrepute.
- v) *As our numbers have shrunk we have refocused on mission not maintenance.* We are in the process of moving our attention beyond what happens inside our buildings on a Sunday morning,

to the wider community. This shifts us from being what Charles Handy would call a primarily “mutual support” organisation to one which also incorporates “service delivery” and maybe “campaigning”. Handy believes each of these types of organisation has different assumptions of how to operate. We need to recognise where we are as a particular organisation, and to operate appropriately.

Each of these is a significant shift. Put together they demand a major re-think of what it means to be a volunteer organisation in the 21st Century.

I also believe that we need to re-think our theological model of what it means to be church. Marlene Wilson’s book uses the model of gifting, and of the priesthood of all believers. As I will suggest in the next section, I prefer the use St Paul’s model of the body of Christ.

### Volunteers in your church

Imagine your church without volunteers.....what would it look like? What ministries would not happen. How would services look? Would there even be a church?

- i) Try to do a survey of how many people in your congregation are involved in some way in volunteering in the church?
- ii) How many people are required to run the normal main Sunday service? How many person hours are required to run each service? Do not forget those whose work happens outside of Sunday morning.
- iii) How many church members volunteer outside the church? What organisations are they involved with. How many people do they connect with both as co-workers and as clients/
- iv) How much time do your volunteers give? How much opportunity for rest and refreshment do your high-hours volunteers get?

2) How do we think about volunteers in the church?

### 2.1 Volunteers or members of the body - I Corinthians 12

Paul's letters rarely show the same sense of humour which the gospels show of Jesus. There is one image though which I have always enjoyed. The famous analogy of the body is one that draws me back again and again. The best illustration of the image is a character in the Disney movie "Monsters, Inc", I hope you know the one I mean!

The body image is one of a number of models of the church which are found in scripture. Others will be considered in section 2.2. But I believe the model of the church as a body creates a powerful dialogue with the concept of members of the church being volunteers. The body model is relatively simple: we all have a body which functions to a reasonable degree. We are aware of its assets and limitations. The parts of our body are not volunteers. They may be functional or dysfunctional, but they are still part of the body. They may co-operate or not co-operate, but they are still part of the body.

The members of the church are parts of the body, each with their own place. I would like to draw a number of items from the illustrations in I Corinthians 12.

V18 *God arranged the members of the body.* The obvious sense in which this might be taken is to consider the body as a whole – a whole body, with one head, two eyes, two ears, one mouth etc. At this level the illustration is to say that God has provided the requisite number of each part. It could be understood to say that each congregation has what it needs in terms of members, and I will come back to this issue in section 2.3. I would rather understand this as a recognition that *each member is a gift from God and each member brings particular blessings to the body as a whole.*

V21 *"The eye cannot say to the hand "I don't need you" This is a commitment to inclusion.* According to Gordon Fee, in his commentary on 1 Corinthians, Paul's main point in this section is to remind the Corinthians that a variety of gifts are valuable, not just the more obvious charismatic gifts, and particularly not just speaking in tongues. In our church contexts it is valuable to remember that there are many gifts present in our church and there are those which we may not recognise, let alone value. *All the gifts in the body are valuable.*

V22 *"The members that seem to be weaker are indispensable"* Again, Fee suggests that this refers to the organs of the body. In our context, this reminds us that *there are many roles which are unseen and they are indispensable.* Roles such as janitor and altar guild are not the public and showy roles, but they are needed nevertheless. Many of us have pastoral visiting teams or Lay Ministers who go out to shut-ins and bring Communion and spend considerable time just being with the lonely. *These unseen ministries are vital to the health of the body.*

V25 *"The members may have the same care, one for another"*. Paul's point is to ensure that one part of the body does not receive more honour than another, but that each function is equally valued. Each function is equally cared for. *One ministry is not more valuable than another.* This is a profoundly counter-cultural statement in a society where certain occupations and individual

receive both higher wages and higher social status than others. Unfortunately that social standing has often been reflected in status in the church community.

V26 “*If one member is honoured, all will rejoice*” Again Paul is arguing against segmentation in the body. When one member is recognised, then other members should not be jealous and resent the honour which has been received, rather the whole body should recognise that the honour is given to the whole body.

Let me give an example of how this model works out in practice. In order to put on a service in my church, there are a large number of people with different roles who each need to do things. The janitor need to clean, the altar guild need to prepare, the choir and organist need to practice, the preacher needs to write a sermon, the lay minister needs to write prayers, the Sunday school teachers need to create their program. All this happens *before* the Sunday. On the day itself, there are greeters and coffee hosts and wardens and healing prayer team and probably more whom I have forgotten. Without any one of these people or groups doing their job, the service will be less. We will manage but we will not be functioning as well as we could. And the most important role is that the community gathers, that people come to worship. Then the body can function as it should, with each person making their contribution, even if it is ‘just’ to be present and to worship. Almost all of these people are volunteers, and for every role there are a number of people who are willing to be on a schedule to share the load. But the role needs to be filled. The body needs its various parts to function.

The body image highlights the commitment which is a part of volunteering. Once you have volunteered to take a role, people are depending on you: *you are a part of the body*. At the simplest level, that of attending church, absent members are missed. I have made a policy of not trying to ‘guilt’ people into being present. I have focussed instead on making Sunday service fun and significant, so that people will want to attend. But I still believe that our members need to know that when they are not present, they are missed.

## 2.2 Other models of church

The image of the body is not the only model for the church. Other models include a family, a community (ecclesia), a temple, a vine, disciples, a people/nation, sheep, the Kingdom of God. One aspect of each of these is the extent to which the individual is a voluntary unit (and hence can be a ‘volunteer’) within the whole. The images above all have issues in contemporary culture. Of these images a family and a community are most familiar to us. We are of course aware of being part of a nation, and the issues of citizenship, but these are different issues to those in Jesus’s and Paul’s time. For then nationhood was a fraught political issue combined with racial overtones. Temples and vines, sheep and kingdoms are not familiar images for most urban Canadians, and thus do not form an easy basis for consideration of our roles.

We might think of a family as a well structured model for the church. But even in Jesus’ time there were a variety of cultural constructs of family in the Galilee area. Roman families, Greek families and Hebrew families operated differently. The roles of women and children, servants and slaves in each cultural context were different. In our society too families are in flux. The 1950’s nuclear/hierarchical family has faded – if it ever existed. Authority in many families is

ephemeral and the family has become a voluntary construct in our society. No longer do we expect that father will be firmly in charge and everyone will do what he says. Today it might be the kids who decide a significant part of the disposable income of the house. And all of us can point to families we know which have disintegrated, where parents and children communicate occasionally if at all.

Community is a common and high aspiration in Canadian society, but the nature of that community, and particularly the extent of commitment within the community are open to huge variation. Who gathers in community and on what basis? What is the nature of the community? How does the local community relate to the wider community? One of the significant issues which the Anglican Church in my area of Canada faces is an increase in congregationalism where the focus of the community is itself and not the wider community of the diocese.

A member of the body is needed to take their role. Without them the body is not just missing a positive component, the body is not just disabled, it is also carrying an element which is not functional and thus is a burden when it should be contributing. To become part of the church is to take on a role, to become part of the body. What that role is depends on the individual and the whole – people's gifts matching the body's needs.

### 2.3 Volunteers in a changing society

We live in an era of what one sociologist, Zygmunt Bauman, has called “cloakroom communities”. Commitment seems to be a negative aspect for people and all organisations with regular expectations of their members are finding difficulty in recruiting. We might have an expectation of the time commitment of members, but we might not have told them that, in the same way that we might be hesitant to communicate the financial expectation we have of our members. We sell the benefits of membership and maybe overlook the costs of membership. We may have theological models which stress the requirements of members, but our members may feel more like volunteers.

Back in the days when we had large numbers in church we could turn significant roles into honours which you needed to be invited to partake in. We still have some remnants of that perspective. Within my own ministry the altar guild has had to re-adjust its expectations from a group which can invite those in the congregation who are deemed ‘worthy’ to join, to a group which needs to recruit from a small pool of prospective volunteers, and cannot afford to lose members, irrespective of their competence.

Alongside this decline in church membership, we have undergone a change in theology which has valued the work and involvement of the laity more. We have at least nominal adherence to the “priesthood of all believers”. We encourage our people to develop their own gifts and skills. We recognise that being a priest is not the only valid form of ministry. No longer is a church committee a rubber stamp for whatever the vicar had decided. No longer could a Bishop say, as one Canadian Bishop notoriously did, that it did not matter if he was the only attender at a synod, for “I am the church.” We both believe we need more involvement, and we experience an expectation in the congregation to be involved. The congregation does not want to have a 'one

man band' at the front, or to be governed by the priest. Our model of church governance has changed. Our model of how God speaks to us and directs us has changed. As our society has embraced a more democratic model, so has the church.

At the same time as we have lost members, we have found an increased percentage of church members being involved. It takes more people to run a church service, just at the same time as we have fewer members in church. This is both a challenge and a blessing. We are recognising the priesthood of all believers, we are valuing people's gifts. We are wanting our services to be representative of the whole people of God. Yet with a smaller number of potential volunteers it becomes more difficult and demanding to find the people we now say we need.

The purpose of this section has been to identify the tension in our churches between our theological and historical models which place various obligations on church members, and the expectation of the wider community that one is a volunteer.

### 2.3 A theology of plenty

There has been one piece of theology which in my experience has done some damage in volunteer context by setting unreal expectations and which I want to address here. It might be derived from the 1 Corinthians 12 passage. It is the belief that because *we* believe we need a particular role to be fulfilled, we can assume that God has provided or will provide someone to fulfill this role. This might be termed a theology of plenty, and it is often contrasted with a theology of scarcity. Many times we simply do not have the resources we feel we need, whether they are financial material or personal resources. Sometimes the people we need in our churches leave or do not join. We cannot get a competent organist or an appropriate bookkeeper. In these circumstances I believe we should be honest with ourselves. We should not, as I have seen done, try and force someone into an inappropriate role. We should accept that it is our expectations which need to change.

There is a saying "If humanity was meant to fly, God would have given us wings". The answer to human flight was not to grow wings or take the wings from birds. The answer was to use the gifts we do have. We do not have wings, but we have brains and hands. We have mined aluminium and drilled for oil. We have trained engineers and mechanics and pilots. Humanity has flown with our minds first and then with our hands and then with the machines our minds and hands have created.

We do not have all the resources we would like. It is the essential economic problem and a fundamental aspect of human experience. We do have enough resources for our needs, but our needs are often not what we think they are. We also have a remarkable capacity to overcome our challenges. Sometimes it is in overcoming those challenges that we discover the real gift of a situation. The approach which leads us forward is often a recognition that we need to re-think the problem, not try to solve the problem as we currently see it.

## 2.4 Volunteers, members, disciples, or what?

As may be obvious, this paper is going to proceed on the basis of considering those who take on roles within our churches as volunteers. There are three reasons for that decision.

Firstly I believe that the members of the body, disciples or however you wish to construct them should be treated *at least* as well as volunteers. “Volunteer” provides a base level for the current expectations of that people should be cared for. “Volunteer” highlights that those in our church observe other organisations in the community and how they relate to their volunteers. When they look at their roles as volunteers in the church they expect to be treated at least as well as they would be treated in non-church organisations.

Secondly the term “volunteer” reminds us that people have a choice. Other theological terms do not do this – and frame our relationship in other ways. If we consider people as members of the body we might forget that they have a choice. If we frame people as sheep, we might believe we have a duty to ‘shepherd’ them in ways that they might not appreciate. If we consider people as disciples we might be tempted to impose discipline on them. Volunteers are doing voluntary work, however much there is a commitment involved in it. The church forgets that at its peril.

Thirdly using the framework of “volunteer” opens up a number of resources to us. If we consider our members as volunteers, then we can compare what we are doing with what other organisations are doing. And those other organisations are looking at how we use our members and are using the framework of volunteers to do it. Attempting to consider these workers primarily in some theological category precludes the possibility of making these comparisons.

‘Volunteer’ may not be an adequate single description of what it means to be a member of a church, but those who take on work in a church are at least volunteers. So how should we treat them?

## 2.5 Clergy volunteers

As I indicated at the start of this review I believe that clergy are also volunteers on occasion. This was something of an epiphany for me, and I was delighted to see it identified in R.Steel’s booklet. Stipendiary clergy are not exempt from volunteering in the church. We volunteer in slightly different ways but we volunteer. For some of us it means being engaged on diocesan, provincial or national church committees or working groups. For some it means helping out in the church kitchen or as Santa Claus. Some of us make financial decisions like volunteering our income or our gas mileage to our church. As clergy we are not just the “paid help”: we are a part of the community. This does not mean that our churches or dioceses have a right to expect these volunteer efforts from us. There need to be boundaries in place and those boundaries need to be respected

## 2.6 The church as a source of volunteer.

One significant insight from the statistics from both Canada and the US was the extent to which church people volunteer outside the church. We are supplying significant numbers of volunteers

to the wider community. The volunteers we have trained are using those skills in the wider community. Conversely, there is the opportunity for them to bring others into the church. Church members volunteering in the community is not just a ministry in which we give, it is an opportunity for us to bring people in, to evangelise. Thus this is a ministry which needs to be recognised within the church, valued and encouraged. This is not a way in which the church is losing volunteer hours to community organisations, but a way in which God's work of caring for those in need may be extended beyond the walls of the church building.

### Volunteers in your church

What is/are your preferred images of the members of the church? Why do you prefer them?

Which images do you dislike, and why?

How has the context for ministry changed in your experience? How has this affected volunteers?

Do you have experience of volunteer clergy? How do they compare with traditional clergy?

What is your experience of traditional clergy volunteering time, talents or money?

Are you aware of church members volunteering outside the church?

### 3) Volunteers in the secular community – Best practice guidelines

“I’ve been saying for years that ‘Employees are our greatest asset’ . . . . It turns out that I was wrong. Money is our most valuable asset. Employees are ninth. Carbon paper was eighth.” The pointy haired manager in the Dilbert cartoons (1993).

So what are appropriate best practice guidelines for small and medium sized churches. It is easy to find lists, but these lists may not fit for our contexts. In order to find some best practice guideline for volunteers in the church I have looked at two types of resources. In 3.1 and 3.2 are two general, overall studies of best practice guidelines these come from a study on management capacity in US charities and congregations and from Volunteer Canada’s excellent study on best practice in Volunteer Management.

The second sets of guidelines (3.3, 3.4, 3.5) are from particular organisations. I have chosen to look at Scouts Canada, the Canadian Cancer Society, and Rotary International, as well known national or international organisations. Each organisation has a particular and different reason for their volunteer base. Each organisation depends heavily on volunteers. It is worth noting that each of these organisations has information about the way they work with volunteers freely available on their web site. The information was clearly identified and easy to find. This in itself suggests that the information was intended to be shared and that the organisation expects itself to be held accountable to the standards it is setting in the document. These various lists of best practice demonstrate how guidelines are shaped by and reflect the particular organisation which is using them. The lists are clear and self-explanatory as you might expect from such large and competent organisations and I have kept commentary on these to a minimum.

I have shortened and adapted these lists to come up with the four items (CARE) which I believe will be helpful for those who do not have the resources of a large organisation. I have included this section for two reasons. Firstly I want you to be able to see where my list of best practices – the CARE formula – comes from, and to understand more about what I mean with each of the categories in the Care formula. Secondly, you may find particular items in the lists below which are significant for your church and your volunteers.

#### 3.1 Volunteer Management Capacity in America’s Charities and Congregations (Urban Institute, 2004)

The Urban Institute carried out a study in which they looked at how well volunteers were being managed. In this survey they asked congregations and volunteer organisations whether they have adopted the following best practices the Institute had identified from their literature search.

- 1) Regular supervision and communication with volunteers
- 2) Liability coverage or insurance protection for volunteers
- 3) Regular collection of information on volunteer numbers and hours
- 4) Screening procedures to identify suitable volunteers
- 5) Written policies and job descriptions for volunteer involvement
- 6) Recognition activities, such as award ceremonies, for volunteers
- 7) Annual measurement of the impacts of volunteers
- 8) Training and professional development opportunities for volunteers
- 9) Training for paid staff in working with volunteers

This list is included in the study as a means of assessing how much management of volunteers the various charities and congregations churches in the survey actually do. The list itself is given no provenance other than “the literature”. There is no bibliography in the document from which to draw further information. Given the context of the list, it may be assumed that the items on the list were chosen to be clear tasks within an organisation. There are some choices which are obvious and uncontroversial. Others are more surprising, and some which make good sense, even if they do not appear in the subsequent lists.

Regular supervision of volunteers and collection of information are obvious. Recognition activities appears in every list in this document, as does training for volunteers. However it is unusual for the training to be described as “professional development”. Liability coverage, screening and written policies and job descriptions are also widely accepted standards. “Annual measurements of the impact of volunteers” is a somewhat open ended task. Is this the impact of each volunteer or of the whole group of volunteers? What is this measurement used for? It is possible that this is intended to give the volunteers positive feedback on the value of their work. It is also possible that this is to assess the value of particular volunteers to the organisation.

The stand out item on this list is “Training for paid staff in working with volunteers”, which appears in a slightly different form in the Volunteer Canada list. Those in the church context are very familiar with the failures of the seminary system to prepare clergy for the actual roles they will take on. But it is very notable that alongside the need for training in managing an organisation, *that training should recognise that the members of the organisation will be volunteers, and that volunteers need to be managed, and worked alongside, in different ways from paid employees.*

### 3.2 “Best practices in volunteer management” ( 2005, available from Volunteer.ca)

The Volunteer Canada list is intentionally laid out in the order in which the practices might be encountered in an organisation which was starting from scratch.

#### **I) Laying the Foundation**

1. Valuing the role of volunteers
2. Defining rules and expectations
3. Developing volunteer management skills

#### **II) Developing the jobs and getting the right people**

4. Reducing client and group risk
5. Creating clear assignments
6. Reaching beyond the circle

#### **III) Creating an environment** where volunteers feel they belong and want to stay

7. Orienting and training volunteers
8. Providing supervision
9. Making volunteers feel they belong
10. Recognizing volunteer contributions

First, laying the foundation, then developing the roles and finding the people, and finally creating the environment. The document from which this list is taken is an excellent guide to applying these best practices. It is intended for use by small and rural groups, and thus potentially by the church. Section I is about the context for volunteering in your organisation and section II is concerned with volunteer recruitment, both of which are outside the scope of this study. These are each valuable sections and I highly recommend reading and reflecting on them. One significant point is made that clear assignments are of benefit to the organisation and to volunteers. This is a point we will be returning to. Section III is the main section of interest to this study, and the four items in this section should be taken very seriously, especially as they are in accord with the other studies considered here. The one item worthy of particular note is “Making volunteers feel they belong”. In a church context it would be easy to assume that this can be taken for granted. But the activities suggested in the Volunteer Canada document would often not be part of the routine for the volunteers. It is worth asking *how we do make volunteers feel they belong*.

### 3.3 Scouts Canada

“Volunteer performance and engagement are underpinned by five key pillars: orientation, program tools, formal training, in person support, and feedback & recognition.”

These five pillars are expanded in depth in documents on the Scouting Canada web site, (<http://www.scouts.ca/vstk/>) the Scouts Canada Volunteer Support Strategy and the Volunteer Support Toolkit. They are briefly explained in the document and provide a clear support path. In the strategy document two themes emerged. Firstly Scouts Canada are very aware of their “brand” and of keeping the “brand promise” thus there is a priority given to public relations within these public documents. Secondly there are clear expectations about what the volunteer are expected to believe and understand. There are benchmarks set for the pass rates of courses and the feedback from training sessions. These documents appear to reflect a directive approach to the management of volunteers which seems in contrast to the grassroots popular image of the movement.

### 3.4 Canadian Cancer Society

The Canadian Cancer Society relies on a variety of volunteers to enable the fundraising which it uses to provide information and services to cancer patients and research into cancer. It provides its volunteers with a clearly written and highly motivating handbook. Within the handbook are the following responsibilities which the society accepts. This in itself is worth noting. These are framed as *responsibilities* for the organisation, not as a more neutral set of practices. Thus the volunteers are invited by implication to hold the Society to account against these practices. This is a challenge which the church would do well to recognise. It is one thing to say that, for example, recognising contributions is a practice of the organisation. It is another to promise to do this for each volunteer and to invite them to expect such recognition.

#### Responsibilities of the Canadian Cancer Society

The Canadian Cancer Society has responsibilities to you, our volunteer. They include:

- ✓ interviewing you to understand your expectations and skills
- ✓ placing you in an appropriate assignment which will be mutually beneficial
- ✓ providing you with a clear description of your assignment
- ✓ giving a clear orientation to the organization and providing any training needed for your assignment
- ✓ providing opportunities for you to give your opinion and receive feedback
- ✓ maintaining a comfortable and safe work environment for all our volunteers
- ✓ showing appreciation and recognition for the contribution you make to the organization

The practices themselves are generally unremarkable, and the unexpanded statement of these guidelines is in contrast to the much more detailed requirements the society makes of its volunteers. The one notable feature here is the item on providing “a safe and comfortable work environment”. This is a significant item which I will return to later. Its presence here might suggest that there has been unfortunate experience by the Cancer Society in the past, but I believe it has a particular relevance for the church.

### 3.5 Rotary International

Rotary International provides resources to help the individual clubs around the world. In one document (The club presidents manual, 2012 from [www.rotary.org](http://www.rotary.org)), Rotary tells its leaders

Work hard to deliver an experience that will keep members engaged and excited about Rotary. Successful strategies include:

- Regularly recognizing members for their achievements
- Keeping members involved in club projects and activities
- Encouraging members to take on club leadership roles
- Sending out monthly email newsletters

These are significant particularly because in contrast to the documents from the Scouts and the Cancer Society, this is a document which is explicitly aiming to retain volunteers. Of the three organisations considered here, Rotary is the organisation which is the most similar to the church. Scouting is about the young people. The Canadian Cancer Society exists for cancer sufferers. Rotary is about the Rotarians and the work they do. Each Rotary Club is an independent unit and Rotary clubs are facing the same membership challenges that the churches are dealing with. So we have a lot to learn from how they are addressing their challenges. The list of successful strategies above is thus one which bears learning from. I wonder how many church leaders consider their role to “keep members engaged and excited about church and God”. Maybe this is taken for granted.....

### 3.6 Final list of best practice in managing volunteers

In this section I have attempted to draw together what I believe are the main themes of the various sets of guidelines in the five sections above. These guidelines are a summary and sometimes combine points which were described in other ways in the various individual

guidelines. This list is intended to be a general list, and forms the basis the set of guidelines which I am commending.

- a) Provide volunteers with clear description of what is expected of them
- b) Provide volunteers with clear documentation on policies
- c) Provide appropriate training, and whatever tools are needed
- d) Make volunteers feel part of the organisation through meetings, emails and other means
- e) Ensure that appropriate supervision happens
- f) Provide opportunities for volunteers to give feedback to the organisation, and for the volunteers to receive feedback on their performance
- g) Recognise (in public) the volunteers for their contribution
- h) Provide a safe and comfortable environment

In order to obtain a list which I hope will be usable in church contexts I am reducing this to four items, combining the lists as follows.

- Clear Frameworks** – Combines items a) and b)
- Appreciate what they do** – includes d) and g)
- Respond** - includes e) and f)
- Enable** – includes c) and h)

Hence CARE for your volunteers

This combination is not just to give a easy acronym. In shortening the list to four items I hope this will be memorable, and that combining items will encourage a more open-ended view of what that item might include. For example, appreciation can take a number of forms, not just an annual award (although why not have an annual award!)

One of the problems with “How to...” books is that they set goals which prove to be unattainable, no matter how ‘simple’ they seem to be. I believe that by reducing the guidelines to four items, Clergy and other leaders will be able to identify those things which they are already doing well, those things which they might do better, and a few things which they need to do now.

This framework also starts to address a significant item – Training paid staff to manage volunteers. My hope is that this document will provide a resource to help clergy and others think about how they relate to volunteers. Again, this is intended for small and medium sized church where you will likely not have a person dedicated to managing your volunteers, and where job descriptions and roles are of necessity flexible. But you can still CARE.

Volunteers in your church

- What good and bad experiences of secular organisations can you (and your church) draw from?
- Which of the items in the lists above are you already doing well?
- Which of the items were a surprise to you?
- Does the reduction to four CARE items work for you?
- What do you think is missing from the CARE list?

## 4) CARE for your Volunteers

### 4.1 The CARE formula

*When I was 25, newly married and in my first job as an electronic engineer, I was a member of a small satellite congregation of a city church. My wife and I had joined the church at the suggestion of the Diocesan Director of Ordinands because he felt we might gain useful experience towards my intended goal of ordination. After we had been there a year or two, the incumbent moved on and I was left running the satellite church during a long interregnum. I was planning the service, presiding with reserved sacrament, playing guitar, preaching, and all of this without any supervision or relief. Ironically, during that time I went to a clergy selection conference, drained from all that was going on, and was turned down because they were concerned about my stamina.*

I'm sure you have your sad stories and personal disappointments with how the church has looked after volunteers. I'm sure that if you are a clergy person that you have been the cause of, or at least involved in some of those stories. I'm sure I have. The intention of this document is not to set us up with unachievable goals as we CARE for volunteers, but to suggest some standards which you can apply in your context.

#### CARE for your volunteers

**Clear framework – What is the role? What are the boundaries? Stick to them!**

**Appreciate what they do – Recognition in public and private**

**Responsive relationships - Two way feedback -watching + listening**

**Enable – Supporting with the tools they need and making sure the context is safe and appropriate**

### 4.2 Clear framework

This is something that I believe we do well for certain of our volunteers and less well for other volunteers. The volunteers I think we do this well for are treasurers, wardens and volunteer clergy. In Kootenay diocese we have provided directed handbooks for treasurers and for wardens. The wardens' and treasurers' workbooks have even had a update every few years (including 2013). There is a more general diocesan Policy and Organisation Workbook which is orientated to clergy. Volunteer clergy (Locally Trained Priests and Deacons) are required to enter into a covenant with their parishes which define the boundaries and expectations of their roles. There are also a variety of policies and programs which apply specifically to volunteer clergy. Furthermore there are two diocesan committees (The LTP Committee and Deacons Committee) which have an ongoing role with the volunteer clergy as well as being responsible for supporting candidates for those ministries. These committees provide a structural framework as well as generating documents such as policies and programs.

Those roles which are more local and less diocesan may be less well defined. The role of altar guild members in my own church is a matter for renegotiation year by year and the requirements change and as the membership of the guild changes. We do have a guide book which is meant to define the work which needs doing each week. This too is very much a work in progress.

Similarly there is an outline of the work of greeters in our church, which each greeter can refer to, and which is used in training.

One highly significant area of the expectations around any role are the time expectations. Even though a large proportion of our volunteers are likely to be retired, we should not assume they have nothing else to do but wait for our call and do church volunteering. I have already identified the significance of other volunteer ministries, and for many seniors, their family continues to be a delight and a responsibility, both their parents and their children. Leisure activities may be significant. And older members may simply not have the energy to be as involved as they used to. Thus we need to be clear about the time expectations of a job. This includes how much time is expected per week and how long a volunteer might be expected to do this job.

*When the paid church organist retired, the alternate was asked to take on the role "for a few months" This was a good deal for the church as the alternate was a volunteer as well as a competent organist. After a couple of months, the alternate asked how the job search was going. "Oh, we haven't started yet" was the response. After six months the reply was "Oh we thought you were happy doing the job" The alternate resigned and left the church. She has still not found a new place to worship and feels hurt and lost.*

The above takes me to a frequent area of dysfunction within the church. If you have set a boundary, then stick to it. If you say to a prospective Church Committee member "all it will mean is a two hour meeting on a weekday evening once a month", then don't expect them to be delighted if the meeting regularly runs to three hours, or if you then expect them to chair the fundraising committee as well. If you say to someone, "take this job for three months" then make sure you have a plan for some else to be doing the job after those three months. On the other hand if you stick to your commitments they may be open to being asked to take additional roles.

Boundaries are also there to protect the volunteer from inappropriate expectations. When visiting a sick person in hospital, or even in home, we need to recognise what our appropriate boundaries are. For example it is rarely appropriate to be helping someone out of bed in hospital. Unfortunately for many people those boundaries are not identified in advance. Creating some documentation of the issues in any job, and considering what might go wrong, may be of help here.

A corollary of this is also noteworthy. In a small and medium sized church there is often not someone for each job. Often roles will include "other jobs as necessary". If those jobs always fall to the minister, then the congregation is disabled. Valuable knowledge becomes locked into one person's experience. In my church I pick up a variety of maintenance jobs. But I am always delighted when someone else sees something needs doing, and feels able to take it on themselves. It may not get done the way I would do it, but it gets done.

#### 4.3 Appreciation

A little appreciation goes a long way. Our volunteers do not do the work they are doing because they want to be thanked for it, or because they want to appear in the weekly bulletin in the

Volunteer Appreciation section (does your bulletin have such a section??). But when they do see their name there it encourages them. Conversely if everyone else is being appreciated and they are not, then they may become offended.

*A clergy person put together a long list of volunteers to thank. He included over 50 members of the congregation and was satisfied with his efforts. The list eventually made it into the AGM report under the heading "Thanks to all our volunteers". The one person who was left out was the office volunteer who in addition to her many responsibilities through the year, put together, printed and folded the AGM reports. At the AGM she was again present and working to record the minutes, but again she was not recognised. One week after the AGM she resigned with immediate effect. She was not seen in church again and the church never recovered from her loss.*

Appreciation does not just come in the form of explicit thanks. It may also come in the form of asking for people's opinion, and simply of spending time with people. I hope I have always been intentional about asking those in the inner circle of church leadership for their opinions and sharing with them. I believe that this is a benefit of being in leadership and that it can be difficult for some to move on after their term is over. When done with some discernment and sensitivity, this can be a way of saying that somebody is a particularly valued member of the congregation. However, Richard Steel (in "Loving Volunteers") highlights the dangers of inviting people to a social evening and then turning it into a committee meeting "because I valued their opinions".

#### 4.4 Responding

Two way conversations are the heart of making a volunteer relationship into a positive experience. Make sure that you know what they do, that you notice their work. Tell them what you have noticed. If you can talk about the positive, then you will be able to make suggestions as well. Encourage them to give you feedback as well – it will make you more effective and will make the work of the church better.

There is a balance between delegating a responsibility to someone, and just leaving them to get on with it. It is a balance which needs to be addressed differently with each volunteer. You cannot assume that because a person has certain experience that they will be able to take on a role without help. On the other hand if you trust a person with a job, you need to let them do it their way. It will often not be your way.

*The new young minister was holding his first church committee. He spent considerable time explaining his vision of his church and how he expected various jobs to be done. After the meeting one of the older ladies took him aside and said "Son, so far we like you, but we've seen ministers come and go. We don't have high expectations of you, but this is our church, and if you do well, and stay for more than a few years, it'll be your church too.*

In a small church the first assumption might be that the person who is involved in the response is the minister. But even in a small church this might not be the case. Make sure that people know who their volunteer relationships are with. A member of the choir should be relating to the choir

director in the first instance in all matters to do with the choir. Clear lines of communication and responsibility make for a better volunteering context.

Consideration of the lines of communication and responsibility will also help your church run more smoothly. In the volunteer agreements in appendix 2 there is a section for relationships so that these can be worked out in detail. Note the example of the agreement for the choir director to see how these relationships can become need clarity.

#### 4.5 Enabling

What do your volunteers need to do the job? Don't cheap out on them. Just consider how much it would cost to employ someone to do the job. If you have a volunteer janitor, you better make sure they have their choice of cleaning tools and materials, and you pay for a set of overalls for them every year, if they want it. If your Sunday School teachers would prefer to use a more expensive program, welcome it. Give them the tools they need and they will be happier and more effective. Compare it with a preacher being told she had to use a battered, King James Bible with page missing to preach from because it "is the one we have".

Make sure that there is effective training for the job you are asking volunteers to do, and make undertaking that training part of the clear framework for the role. And if you promise training as part of a role, then make sure you deliver on that promise. This is a real "Say it isn't so, Joe" moment, but I expect you like me can think of examples in our ministry when we have made commitments and not delivered. Currently I have been promising my readers a workshop on public speaking... for over a year. The reasons for not delivering on these promises may be good, but it is often the result which matters!

Furthermore, when there is training to be done, it should be done by someone who is a capable trainer, not just somebody who knows the role. I have heard of altar guild presidents who know every detail of the role of an altar guild member, and who manage to put off most of the prospective altar guild members by their frosty and rule bound demeanor. The culture of CARE for volunteers needs to be planted at every level of a church.

*A church needed to cut down on their administrator's hours because of lack of funds. They asked for volunteers to help out. One highly competent lady was willing to do one morning a week. She was experienced at word processing, but had no desk-top publishing knowledge. She was also concerned about being in the office on her own because of security. The church was able to arrange for the administrator to give her some desk-top publisher training, and gave the volunteer a commitment that she would not be in the office alone. As the volunteer has grown in confidence, she is more comfortable with being in the office alone, but on those occasions she has the discretion to lock the outside door or have a friend present.*

As identified in the Canadian Cancer Society's list of responsibilities to volunteers, providing a safe environment is a part of enabling ministry. This may not seem like an obvious priority for the church, but we deal with members of the public, and even of the congregation, who have "issues". We need to make sure our volunteers feel safe. We can be caught between sets of values of caring. These may be difficult issues to resolve. How do you deal with a situation

where one member of a church feels threatened by another ? I think that this needs to be addressed in both in an explicit general commitment to a safe environment, and in specific individual discussion with volunteers about what that might mean in their case.

#### 4.6 Some final points about CAREing

Why are your volunteers there?

*A relatively new member of the church, Fred, volunteered to mow the grass on the new lawn we had just sown. The minister was happy to see someone in the garden on a regular basis as up to that point the gardening was being done “as and when”. But it soon became clear that “Fred” had a significant ownership of the garden, and had expectations of himself and others. A chance conversation revealed that Fred’s parents had been members of the Church when the first garden had been planted in the Church. Fred’s father had looked after the garden, and looking after the garden was an opportunity for Fred to connect with his deceased father.*

*Don’t assume you know why each volunteer is volunteering, and that you know what they are getting out of the experience. Statistics suggest that people want to support their community and that they want to use their skills. But there are a variety of specific reasons why people are involved. These form a kind of unwritten social contract which you are assumed to have accepted when you took on the volunteer. Ask them, do a survey or ask the person responsible for each group to find out why each member is there. If you know *why* people are doing what they are doing then you can try to ensure that they are ‘rewarded’ by having those needs met. It is up to us to discover what is the unwritten social contract which each volunteer considers to have been made. You had better not break that contract or you will lose the volunteer, and maybe without knowing why. By asking people you might find new opportunities for your volunteers. This might form part of a thanksgiving Sunday program, or part of a Church committee agenda.*

*“No” is always an acceptable answer. Having suffered from too many church leaders who lead through guilt, I am a passionate advocate for dumping guilt as a management strategy. I try never to say ‘ought’ or ‘should’. I believe that most church people have an overdose of guilt anyway. So please, ensure your volunteers know that “no” is an acceptable answer – *always*. This may lose you a short term answer to a problem – but it will win you long term support and your community will be happier and more productive as a result. In some circumstances it may be better for the minister *not* to be the one to ask, simply because it is hard to say no to the minister. Another volunteer, for example a church warden, might be better to make the request.*

Finally, when we say we are building the Kingdom of God, where are we building it? As we end these guidelines, let me suggest that it is in the work of volunteering and growing as a volunteer that most of our congregation will experience building the Kingdom of God. It is in the work of the church that *we* are changed. What we think of as the work of the church is simply a vehicle for changing ourselves and making us more Christ-like. Volunteering in the church creates the opportunity for church members to grow as Christians and it is this which is truly building the kingdom of God.

## Appendix 1 Resources and bibliography

Richard Steel, "Loving Volunteers", Grovebooks.co.uk, 2011  
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Norah McClintock, "Understanding Canadian Volunteers" [www.givingandvolunteering.ca](http://www.givingandvolunteering.ca)  
Charles Handy, "Understanding Voluntary Organisations", Penguin, 1998  
Urban Institute, "Volunteer Management Capacity in America's Charities and Congregations: A Briefing Report", [www.urban.org](http://www.urban.org), 2004.

## Appendix 2

Elements of a volunteer agreement job description (My own version adapted from various sources)

- 1) Job title
- 2) Role – What does the job involve? What does the job *not* involve?
- 3) Time – How much time per week/ month is expected. When are those times? How long is the job expected to last?
- 4) Relationship – Who is the volunteer responsible to? Does the volunteer have oversight of any other volunteers?
- 5) Training – What training will be provided?
- 6) Resources - What resources are used/needed?
- 7) Expenses – what expenses are expected, will they be covered, and how will payment be arranged?

### Examples

#### Volunteer Choir Director

Role – To select music for the services, to communicate about the music to the minister and organist, to rehearse the choir, to lead the choir on Sundays, attend worship committee.

Time – One hour per week for rehearsal, presence on Sundays, monthly committee meeting, plus time for choosing songs (2 hrs per month). No time limit on duration of service

Relationship- The Choir director is directly responsible to the minister. The worship and education committee operates in an advisory capacity in matters related to services. The choir director is responsible for the members of the choir in their role as choristers. The choir director is not responsible for the organist, that role belongs to the minister.

Training – The church will provide any necessary training and pay for courses approved through worship and education committee.

Resources – The choir director will have a budget for occasional music. Other expenses can be discussed through worship committee. The choir director is expected to use email for communication with the minister and organist.

#### Coffee Host

Role – To prepare coffee for after service on Sunday, to clean up afterwards. Volunteers are not expected to provide fresh baking.

Time – ½ hr before service and 1 hr after service, once every 4-6 weeks. No time limit on duration of service

Relationship – The schedule is organised by the church secretary, the ministry falls under our mission and service committee,

Training – provided by mission and service committee

Resources – Everything necessary is in the church kitchen

Expenses – Pre-agreed purchases can be made on the church account at the local store, or claimed from petty cash through the secretary.