ST. MARK'S VOLUNTEER LEADER GUIDELINES

(Final 5-16-2024)

WORKING TOGETHER IN OUR ST. MARK'S COMMUNITY

St. Mark's has put this guide together where love is a distinguishing value in our hopes for how we work together. We hope that how we express the love we profess as a St. Mark's community is exemplified in how we communicate and work together. As a volunteer and volunteer leader your voice is a model for the ways we work together. Having guidance and a thoughtful plan about how to provide respect, kindness, and efficient work methods will contribute to our well-being as a community and will be helpful to us all. These guidelines serve as a living document to measure our growing commitment to working together in peace in our unique context as a community with the largest workforce being a volunteer one. We're not working in a business setting but instead in our church community where we live out our commitment to each other and our faith. This difference creates a remarkable opportunity.

A church community has many tasks to complete each week, with tasks ranging from one volunteer to many and some needing to volunteer for specific times. So many roles, such as our library, sign-ups to welcome folks to Sunday services, bringing bread and wine, ushers, coffee, education, and various committees working closely with the vestry, clergy and staff.

Let us be gentle, open, and caring towards each other as we work with staff and fellow volunteers to accomplish the many aspects of our operations, vision, and mission. Let's work together at St. Mark's to uplift us all and strengthen our value as a community of faith and love.

Thank you for serving. Your presence and voice are critical and valued as we strive to get St. Mark's work accomplished. We're glad you're here.

CORE VALUES OF INTEGRITY AND KINDNESS

Living with integrity and kindness is essential to our church's community. That balance may seem at odds at some times.

Keeping our agreements about tasks to do for the church is important and letting someone know why we cannot meet a deadline is critical for meeting our joint accomplishments. We may need to remind others of their agreements.

Many of us have made a commitment to "make known to the appropriate persons in this community your praises and complaints." As leaders, we live into that in three ways:

- We provide our feedback to other leaders.
- We receive feedback from our community.
- We serve as role models.

We may find living into these values challenging. Some of us may want to practice conflict avoidance and refrain from delivering complaints. Many of us are proud of our work and find it hard to hear criticism with an open mind and heart.

Ephesians 4:15 calls us to "speak the truth in love." We believe that is the best way to live with integrity and kindness. We also believe that we can listen to hear truths even when the speaker is less than loving; sometimes our passion gets the better of us. We believe that we need to deliver compliments and constructive criticism with the mindset of helping our community, our neighbors, and the spiritual practices we embrace.

COMMUNICATING WITH RESPECT AND MINDFUL LISTENING

Our ways of communicating with each other can make a difference in how we're heard and in what we can get accomplished. One main focus is to practice "*listening to hear what someone is saying rather than getting prepared to respond*."

Here are some key suggestions to improve our communications skills:

- Try it on: Be willing to “try on” new ideas or ways of doing things that might not be what you prefer or are familiar with.
- Practice Self Focus: Attend to and speak about your own experiences and responses. Do not speak for a whole group or express assumptions about the experience of others.
- Understand the Difference Between Intent and Impact: Try to understand and acknowledge impact. Denying the impact of something said by focusing on intent is often more destructive than the initial interaction.
- Practice “Both/And:” When speaking, substitute “and” for “but.” This practice acknowledges and honors multiple realities. Avoid Blaming or Shaming Self and Others: Practice giving skillful feedback.
- Group Engagement: It’s always a good idea to speak up and encourage others to do so. This leads to fuller and richer participation which leads to solving problems.
- Practice Mindful Listening: Try to avoid planning what you’ll say as you listen to others. Be willing to be surprised, to learn something new. Listen with your whole self.
- Confidentiality: Take home learnings but don’t identify anyone other than yourself, now or later. If you want to follow up with anyone regarding something they said, ask first and respect their wishes.
- Right to Pass: You can say “I pass” if you don’t wish to speak.

LEADERSHIP

As a volunteer you are a leader of the church. Your task as a servant leader is to shepherd getting certain things done. Some best practices include:

- Learning about your new role is important. St. Mark’s is establishing continuity planning so outgoing chairs and committee members meet with incoming chairs and committee members. These discussions can help you learn about the

committee history and your role and should be free-wheeling and open about what has been accomplished, what remains to be done, why these items were chosen at this time to be worked on, and to provide responses to questions or concerns from the new members. Planning sessions can help leaders learn not only their roles and responsibilities but also their authority and reporting obligations.

- When assigning tasks, clarity about timelines, content, and who to reach out to is critical. As volunteers, it is always best to negotiate with your team about these items so they become part of the process of moving forward.
- Send out reminders for meetings that include agendas, call-in information (if needed), and any notes (if necessary) from the last meeting. If you need a Zoom link, please check with the Parish Administrator.
- We are a busy place. Several meetings or events can be held at the church on any given evening. If you don't plan ahead when holding a committee or other meeting at the church, you may arrive to find the only room you can get into is too small, contains no chairs, and is next door to our wonderful bell ringers group. Or you may find that everything is locked up and you can't get in. Even worse, if your meeting runs long, you have to find out how to lock up the church.
- As much as possible, church business should always be conducted in the meetings designed for that particular business. It is not helpful to conduct business through private conversations that need to be held with the entire committee. These kinds of conversations can lead to problems if others should be part of the decision-making process. Open communication is always preferable.
- As a committee member, keep your chair informed. Let them know what you're working on and how it helps advance the committee's work. Contact staff in the Church Office at the direction of your committee chair. Take concerns about the goals of your committee or your role to the appropriate person–the chair of your committee. Show up on time, be prepared, read ahead (if needed), and take a deep breath.

RESPECTFUL EMAIL COMMUNICATION

- Try to respond within 24-48 hours to an email that comes to you. Even if you can't get something substantive back to someone by then, letting them know you have received their request and are working on it or considering how to move forward, is professional and helps keep an open line of communication.
- It's always helpful to let others know when you will be away for an extended period of time. Creating an "out-of-office" auto-response allows others to know you won't get back to them for a period of time.
- Forwarding emails can be tricky. To ensure everyone is on the same page, get consent from the sender before you send to others.
- Unnecessary emails burden the receivers and make it less likely they will recognize the emails that they really need to read. Take a minute to be conscious of who you are emailing and to discern who really needs to get it. You don't want to accidentally send information to those who don't need the email.

RESPECTING OTHERS' TIME

Our time is the greatest gift we have for each other. We honor others' contributions by being conscious of our impact on their time, especially our staff's. In particular, we strive to show that consciousness by following these best practices.

- St. Mark's has a strong, clergy-supervised staff, but there are only a few of them and lots of us. If you need staff help or you need to share information with them, schedule a meeting with them.
- Seek answers from prior volunteer leaders or search on our website 1st, then go to staff for answers. (Again … few staff, many parishioners).
- Do not "drop by" just to talk, to get information, or request help.
- If you need to miss a meeting, let at least the chair know and make arrangements to get any information about the meeting you need to do your job.
- Be on time for meetings.
- Set an ending time for committee meetings and stick to it.