

Southwood United Church (SWUC) Rental Groups Guidelines

February 2020

This document is intended to assist the Staff and Council leadership in determining who can or cannot be provided with rental space on the property of SWUC. The intent is to outline several guidelines that will help in discerning whether potential renters are a good fit with the mission, vision, and values of the congregation as a member of The United Church of Canada.

The Church Administrator shall have discretion over determining whether or not a short-term renter is a “good fit” within the guidelines laid out below. If there are questions or concerns about a particular group and/or individual, it is expected that this discretion would be waived and that the Lead Pastor and/or Church Council be consulted. In all cases, the Council shall make the final decision about whether or not to approve any long-term renters.

Guidelines:

1. Rental Eligibility - any individual, community group, or agency is, in principle, eligible to apply for use of SWUC facilities. The policies and fee schedule listed in the “Rental Fees” document, which is reviewed annually, will apply (a different fee schedule for support groups, as defined by the Government of Canada, may apply—see the “Support Groups” policy document). No group should be offered rental space that: (A) intends to actively work against SWUC’s mission and Church Practices; (B) might hinder SWUC’s ability to carry out its own mission and ministry due to their presence on the premises; or (C) could bring SWUC or its members into disrepute within the wider community.
2. Community Groups, Individuals, & Agencies (Private Meetings) - groups and/or individuals who wish to rent space from SWUC for private meetings/gatherings/events should be able to articulate either their agreement with OR neutrality regarding the mission and Church Practices of the congregation. Special conditions apply in the case of religious or political groups (see below).
3. Community Groups, Individuals, & Agencies (Public Services) - groups and/or individuals who intend to offer services and/or programming to the public out of SWUC facilities should be able to articulate either their agreement with OR neutrality regarding the mission of SWUC. Their activities should also fall within the scope of at least one of SWUC’s Church Practices, broadly interpreted. Special conditions apply in the case of religious or political groups (see below).

4. Counselling & Therapists - under no circumstances shall SWUC facilities be rented to external persons for private or group counselling and/or therapy sessions.

5. Religious Affiliation or Activities - groups or individuals that are associated with any religious or spiritual organization are to be held to a stricter standard when it comes to alignment with SWUC's mission and Church Practices. Any group that has a religious affiliation and is being considered as a renter must be brought before the Church Council for consideration, regardless of whether the request is for short-term or long-term rental. Groups or individuals that: (A) espouse hate-based theology/ideology; (B) discriminate against protected persons; (C) teach/preach obviously prejudicial doctrine; or (D) are clearly associated with the "prosperity gospel" ("health & wealth") movement are automatically disqualified from consideration. Specific conditions apply for:
 - a. Other United Church Groups - the leadership of any other United Church congregation or affiliated ministry that wishes to rent space from SWUC must be able to articulate their agreement with and willingness to support the mission and Church Practices of SWUC, without reservation. They must also be willing to submit any promotional materials (whether digital or physical) to the Office of SWUC for review and/or revision prior to distribution. Any use of the Sanctuary by other United Church groups must be approved in advance by the Lead Pastor and Church Council, and adhere to the policies laid out in the "Sanctuary Use Guidelines" document.

***Meetings or events of local United Church-affiliated clusters or ministries with which SWUC ministry personnel are involved, the Regional Council and its committees, the national church and its committees, or the Office of Vocation and its committees are special cases and shall be hosted at the discretion of the Lead Pastor, in consultation with the staff team and Church Council.*
 - b. Other Christian Groups - the leadership of any other Christian congregation or church-affiliated ministry that wishes to rent space from SWUC must be able to articulate their agreement with and willingness to support the mission and Church Practices of SWUC. The Apostles' Creed shall serve as the (minimum) standard of the faith they hold in common with SWUC and the universal church. The leadership must be willing to sit down and have an in-person conversation about their community's theology in an open and honest manner prior to any rental agreement being approved. Proselytization directed towards other user-groups or individuals on the premises is prohibited. Any use of the Sanctuary by other Christian groups must be approved in advance by the Lead Pastor and Church Council and adhere to the policies laid out in the "Sanctuary Use Guidelines" document.
 - c. Non-Christian Religious Groups - groups or individuals who are affiliated with other, non-Christian religions, spiritual organizations/societies, cults, or anti-religious philosophical

organizations are ineligible to rent space from SWUC for activities that promote and/or offer services associated with their religious beliefs. Exceptions may be made, at the discretion of the Council and in consultation with the Lead Pastor, for individuals seeking space for private devotions or prayer. Under no circumstances shall a non-Christian group be permitted to use the Sanctuary for religious or spiritual activities.

***Inter-faith meetings or events with which SWUC ministry personnel are involved are special cases and shall be hosted at the discretion of the Lead Pastor, in consultation with the staff team and the Church Council.*

6. Political Affiliation or Activities - groups or individuals that are associated with any political party, lobbying organization, or candidate, are ineligible to rent space from SWUC for activities that promote and/or offer services associated with their political campaign(s) and/or beliefs. The following politically-adjacent groups *are* eligible (as “Community Groups, Individuals, & Agencies”, see above), but must be brought before the Council for consideration, regardless of whether the request is for a short-term or long-term rental: non-partisan organizations, groups hosting multi-candidate debates/forums, voter registration groups, Elections Alberta, and Elections Canada.
7. Entertainment Acts - groups and/or individuals who wish to rent space from SWUC for public concerts, performances, recitals, workshops, etc., should be able to articulate either their agreement with OR neutrality regarding the mission and Church Practices of the congregation. Performances must not include profanity or any content that would be considered vulgar, sexually explicit, or politically partisan. If funds are being raised for any cause, the details of the campaign must be approved by the Church Council in advance of any offer of rental space. Any use of the Sanctuary for Entertainment Acts must also be approved in advance by the Lead Pastor and Church Council, and adhere to the policies laid out in the “Sanctuary Use Guidelines” document.

***Recitals held by private music teachers/studios are special cases and are exempt from the requirement of Lead Pastor/Church Council approval. They shall be hosted at the discretion of the Church Administrator, in consultation with the Lead Pastor and/or staff team.*

8. Right to Refusal - in cases where a rental application may come into question, SWUC reserves the right to refuse access when the renter’s aims and goals do not match the ethos of SWUC and/or The United Church of Canada. The Church Administrator will consult with other staff members when questions arise related to the scheduling or suitability of a rental application.