

Welcome.  
Where  
have all the  
Volunteers  
Gone?  
Long time  
passing?



# Where have all the volunteers gone?

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Diocese of Toronto  
Anglican Church of Canada

# What's your best experience of volunteering in Church?

Find a partner. Take turns to give your **3-minute elevator** speech about your **BEST VOLUNTEERING EXPERIENCE** in a church role. I will give you 8 minutes and then we will take up a few responses. I will call on the person who listened to tell your story – so listen well.

What  
common  
themes  
made that  
experience  
a good  
one?



RESEARCH

# Church Leaders Are Still Waiting for Volunteers to Come Back

Gallup survey found involvement in religious service dropped again in 2021.

KATE SHELLNUTT | JANUARY 14, 2022 06:00 AM



# Volunteers are not returning

**67%** shortage of new volunteers

**51%** challenges with retention

**35%** reduction of programs or services

Statistics Canada, November 2022

# A Crisis in Human Resources?

Stats Can 2023 08 Report



**2023 Volunteer Canada Policy Report (State of the Sector) noted this continued trend:**



Demand for services is sharply increasing and is at an all-time high.



Nonprofit financial situations are on a downward spiral.



The crisis level shortage of human resources continues.

# The Power of Us: 2023 Toronto Foundation Vital Signs Report

(released Nov. 14, 2023)

**In  
Toronto  
from  
2018 to  
2022:**

- The volunteer participation rate fell from 37% of residents to 25%
- The donation rate slipped from 75% to 63%
- Toronto lost about 300,000 donors and 300,0000 volunteers



**Why have  
volunteering  
levels dropped in  
the UK? What did  
survey  
respondents say:**

Covid was a great chance to retire

They liked having less church  
volunteer commitment

They got out of the church  
attendance habit

Their volunteer priorities changed,  
and church was less important

## 'The End of Retirement

Want to keep your house?  
Support your kids? Stay alive?  
Never stop working'

BY CATHRIN BRADBURY in  
2023 12 [The Walrus Magazine](#)

## SOME PEOPLE CANNOT AFFORD TO RETIRE:

- Not enough pension savings
- Longer projected lifespans
- The escalating cost of living - inflation
- Working longer keeps you healthier



How can you reverse the decline in volunteering?

**What can we do  
about the decline  
in volunteering?**

**1. Understand  
generational cultural  
shifts:**

Generations are culturally  
different, people are  
different, and each will have  
different motivations to  
volunteer



# What's your generational cohort?



- 
- The Silent Generation (1925-1945)
  - The Baby Boomers Generation (1946-1964)
  - Generation X (1965-1980)
  - Millennials (1981-1996)
  - Generation Z (1997-2012)
  - Generation Alpha (2013-2025)
- 
- By Alisha Dotel 2023 09 24 on <https://thefamilynation.com/>;

## 2. Build authentic relationships with parishioners

- **Don't start with recruitment**
- Folks need to belong to your parish & feel part of the community
- Get to know people outside your usual church circle – be curious, ask good questions, listen & share your life when its time
- Romans 12:15 Laugh with happy folks when they're happy; share tears when they're down.
- When you spot gifts then invite people to consider ministry



# What is the impact of my contribution?

What's the #1 question all age groups ask about their volunteer work?

### 3. Treat Volunteers with respect to retain them & not stop new folks from volunteering – visitors & parishioners are watching our behaviours

- Be kind and stop with the judgement
- Folks will do things differently – this is a strength
- Owning a role is an idolatry – help others who feel they ‘own’ a ministry to carry this role lightly
- Have a good volunteer structure in place:
  - ✓ Role descriptions
  - ✓ Clear reporting structures
  - ✓ Screening in Faith
  - ✓ Mentoring and support
  - ✓ Evaluation
  - ✓ Appreciation



## 4. There are known, obvious and more hidden barriers to volunteering

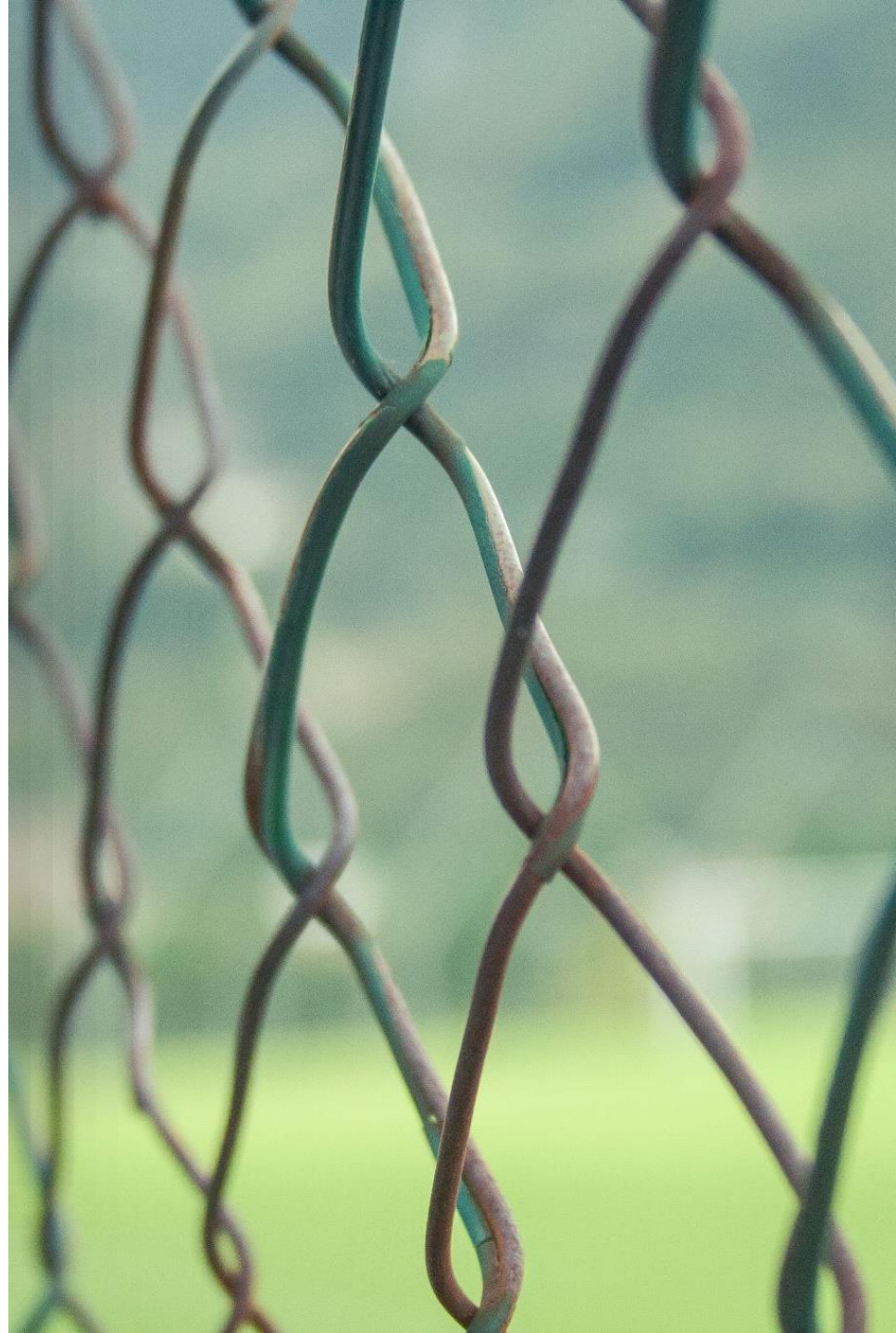


Being civically engaged within community is too often a luxury for those just trying to make ends meet. **It is vital that we integrate new ways and different places for all voices to sound out. These are the bridges and pathways to be strengthened.**

*Leslie Woo, CEO, CivicAction*



**What barriers to volunteering do you see in your church?**



# 5. Cultivate the field



**Preach, write and talk about volunteering – tell your parish stories**

**“I love this ministry!”**

Have volunteers give a 5-minute testimony about their ministry – what it means and why its important.

**Spend time thanking your volunteers.**

## 6. Gift discernment

- Successful volunteer engagement depends on matching the job description with the skills, attitudes, knowledge & time available
- Recruiting before you know the individual's gifts: "is like trying to dance before the music begins"\* .There are many gift discernment programs available but simple is better
- Acknowledging a person's gifts is a "gift" to them



# What in the church should I be doing?

**Glad gifts: Skills to Give**

**Quests: Personal Growth Area**

**Don't Ask: Areas to Avoid**

<b>Glad gifts: Skills to Give</b>	<b>Quests: Personal Growth Area</b>	<b>Don't Ask: Areas to Avoid</b>

# **7. Recast your ministry roles to align with Wider Volunteer trends**

- **Volunteers want shorter term jobs – no forever churchwardens**
- **Folks are wiser time managers...they pick and choose volunteer opportunities**
- **Fear of over commitment – make jobs smaller, shorter duration**
- **Multiethnic and ethno-centric churches have higher internal volunteering rates**
- **Team or Family Volunteering**

SEP/OCT  
29-1

# RECHARGE YOUTH RETREAT

## **Will Youth Volunteer? Yes for:**

1. Gender Issues
2. Climate Change & Environmental Action
3. Anti-Bias & Anti-Racism & Indigenous Reconciliation
4. Social Justice

# 8. Recruitment failure

- Minimizing the ministry
- Inviting volunteer guilt
- Claiming the volunteer “owes” you
- Issuing a desperate plea – urgently needed
- Misrepresenting the supports in place

All this creates lack of trust, resentment and ultimately, unsatisfactory performance or resignation from volunteer ministry



**9. Let folks  
say NO – this  
is a Volunteer  
Manager  
Superpower!**



- You show respect for persons, their situation and boundaries
- When folks do say yes, their yes is a firmer commitment
- You build trust and more frequent yeses

# 10. Refocus your ask

01

Shift the focus from your need to core values – away from desperation and toward the value of the ministry

02

Don't make cattle calls – target the most suited persons

03

Recognise the giftedness of the people you have

**11. What if you cannot get volunteers for beloved or essential ministries?**

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# Doing what needs doing...

- Free folks up to do what they really want to do
- Start with a trial team
- Look for non-traditional volunteers – men can do Altar Guild work, families can each take a Sunday
- Get the kids doing tech support – children of the parish & High School kids who need volunteer hours or College-age folks who need experience in media or AV or other work can and do help

# Regionalisation? What is it?

**1. IT'S NOT AMALGAMATION – it is geographically close parishes sharing their resources & developing a common life together**



Map of Diocesan Tech Reach Grant Recipients

# Regionalisation is :



Usually anchored in larger churches & **each individual parish can maintain its own identity**



**Shared resources** can be administrative, clerical, or physical space



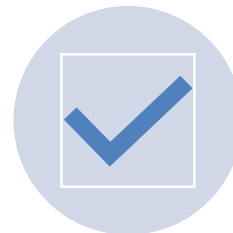
**Strong clergy teams:** clergy support each other & share gifts while & maintaining pastoral relationships in their own parishes



**Shared social life:** regional parishes invite each other to their services and events



**Shared information** i.e., newsletters and connected websites



**A work in progress** that has different forms in different places

# Neighbours helping neighbours

1. Informal sharing of resources in neighbouring parishes
2. Canon 24 Administration
3. Canon 25 Boards



St. Matthew  
Islington & St.  
Andrew,  
Presbyterian  
Humber  
Heights  
**Community  
Lunch**



Interdenominational & Interfaith  
Cooperation





ENDING

Some things become impossible or unsustainable

Systems and structures feel binding or cease to work

Can be long-time coming, sudden, or accelerated



Questions?

# Homework Question:

What one barrier to volunteering will you commit to working on when you get back to your parish?



# Thank you!

If you need more info or want us to hold a Zoom or in person workshop or parish meeting, speak to us, or email me, Elizabeth McCaffrey, Volunteer Resources Consultant [emccaffrey@toronto.anglican.ca](mailto:emccaffrey@toronto.anglican.ca);



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## The Wisdom from the Room

### Slides 2 & 3 Question 1 – What made this experience your best experience of volunteering in Church?

- I had fun
- I saw immediate results of my volunteering
- It gave me purpose
- Being with people
- I felt that I belonged to the community
- Making connections with others
- Doing something I love
- Having an impact
- Opportunity to bring someone to faith
- Being appreciated
- I got good advice that I could use
- It helped my own faith grow
- Seeing the positive progression – before and after
- It built up our community
- I was called to do it so I did it



**Homework for you:** *does our parish allow folks to feel this good about volunteering? How can we use this information to improve our lay ministry and volunteering experience in our parish?*

### Slide 4 Question 2 – What has changed in your parish since Covid-19 lockdowns were lifted?

- Shrinkage – attendance/volunteers/donors
- Fear
- Aging out
- Burned out and tired leadership
- We missed 3 years of recruiting new leaders
- New things are harder to do
- Folks are out of the habit of volunteering
- We are all overly busy and we don't have enough time for volunteering
- They realised that before Covid we had too many people 'over-volunteering' so people cut back on the roles they took on
- People want things done for them now
- We don't teach the theology of volunteering (aka lay ministry)
- Discipleship levels do not support the number of jobs needing to be done



**Homework for you:** *does our parish treat volunteers, or those in volunteer (unpaid) ministry, as disciples? How could you make this a priority in your parish?*

**Slide 12 Question 3 What Generational Cohort are you? What about your lay ministry volunteers?** (Data Source for generational cohorts: [https://thefamilynation.com/generation-names-in-order?](https://thefamilynation.com/generation-names-in-order?;);) )

1. Some of the **Silent Generation** (1925-1945) characteristics are given below:
  - Interpersonal respect
  - Work ethic
  - Self-sacrifice
  - Determination and Dedication
  - Traditional values and culture
  - Flexibility
  - Builder Traits
  
2. The **Baby Boomers** (1946-1964) characteristics are:
  - Goal-oriented
  - Focus on personal fulfilment
  - Technological innovation
  - Eagerness for change and development
  - Have gained experienced
  - Shaped Society and the social context
  - Rise of feminism
  - The desire for Equality.
  
3. The characteristics of **Generation X** (1965-1980) are mentioned below:
  - Independent
  - Balance in work-life
  - Talented in Technology
  - Resourceful
  - Ambitious and Eager to learn new skills
  - Create and enjoy creative input and resourceful
  - Value diversity, responsibilities, and challenges
  - Master of self-depreciation.
  
4. **Millennials** (1981-1996) are:
  - Entrepreneurial
  - The craze to keep on learning new things
  - Expect collaboration and understanding from others
  - Engage in social activism
  - Better educated

5. **Generation Z (1997-2012) are:**
  - Money-driven and ambitious
  - Politically and socially aware
  - Racially and Ethnically diverse
  - Engage mostly in social activism
  - Digital natives.
  
6. **Generation Alpha (2013-2025)**
  - Focused on both career and the family
  - Spending more time online
  - AI is their reality
  - Learning is personalized
  - They live in the moment
  - Individuality and diversity.



**Homework for you:** do you have expectations or communications issues between generations in your parish volunteer groups? Repeat the stand up exercise from this slide (#12) What does that say about who does what? How will you help bridge that generational expectations/communications gap?

#### Slide 17 Question 4: What barriers to volunteering do you see in your church?

- Our older volunteers are just not capable anymore
- Folks won't step up because they fear being overburdened
- If you do a job well you have it for life
- Aggressive recruiting turns people off
- Long-time ownership of a roles leads to critical behaviour toward others
- Bullying and judgementalism
- Perception that the church is dying
- Concern about required processes - all that the Diocese and law requires is more complex now
- Volunteers only have a limited amount of time to donate
- There is a lot of competition for volunteers
- People don't want to volunteer full-time
- People say they weren't asked to do roles – they have to be asked
- Be welcoming and don't allow the parish 'in-crowd' to drive new people away



**Homework for you:** what barriers will you work on to improve the lay volunteer ministry experience in your parish?

**Resources List** – we invite you to email our [Volunteer Resources Consultant](#) for more information.

## A. Cited links:

- [‘2022 State of the Sector in Uncertain Times’](#), Ontario Non-Profit Network Survey.
- [Canada’s 2023 Voluntary National Review – A Continued Journey for Implementing the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals](#), Statistics Canada
- [‘Changing Church – Responding to the Corona Virus Crisis’](#), UK Evangelical Alliance, 2021
- [Generation Names And Years In Order](#), Alisha Dotel, on The Family Nation, 2023 11
- [‘The Power of Us’](#), Toronto Foundation’s Special Report, Vital Signs 2023.
- [Volunteering and the Surprising Benefits](#), By Jeanne Segal, Ph.D., and Lawrence Robinson, HelpGuide.org; 2023 02

## B. Volunteer Management in Parishes

- Visit the Diocesan Parish Volunteer website for videos and advice:  
<https://www.toronto.anglican.ca/parish-resources/parish-volunteers/?lang=en>;
- The Anglican Diocese of Toronto: Screening in Faith: Parish Administration/Screening  
<http://www.toronto.anglican.ca/parish-administration/screening/>;
- The National Anglican Church of Canada has developed three Volunteer Management webinars with resources and sample forms presented by Suzanne Lawson, ODT and Marilyn MacKenzie, two faithful Anglicans who are world leaders in faith-based volunteering. You can start with their first webinar: <https://www.anglican.ca/gifts/gtp/resources/ministry-webinars/session-1/>; Their presentations are excellent and realistic, in terms of specific Anglican church culture (also relevant to other Canadian churches), norms, permissions, planning and expectations around volunteering.

## C. Secular Volunteering Resources:

- Volunteer Toronto: <http://www.volunteertoronto.ca/>; This website has some basic free resources that help with recruitment and engagement of volunteers. Their focus is connecting volunteers with organisations – something we churches don’t usually need or want unless you are doing an event that encourages/allows non-parishioners to join in – like a Community Block party or Fun Fair..
- Volunteer Canada <https://volunteer.ca/>; focuses on strengthening community and our country’s social cohesion. They also provide advice to businesses on how to build a good corporate citizenship profile to ultimately help their bottom line. Some articles are interesting and some of the community engagement items around social justice might be tangentially relevant but



religious organisations don't get a look in. Contact the Social Justice and Advocacy Consultant, Elin Goulden ([egoulden@toronto.anglican.ca](mailto:egoulden@toronto.anglican.ca)), for more advice on Social Justice and advocacy volunteering.

#### **D. Books (a short list):**

Graff, Linda, Best of All: The Quick Reference Guide to Effective Volunteer Involvement, 2005, Linda Graff and Associates, Dundas, Ontario, 2005 – Still the gold standard in Volunteer Management.

Maynard, Dennis R., When Sheep Attack (Sheep Attack Series which also includes follow-up books: Preventing A Sheep Attack, Healing For Pastors & People After A Sheep Attack), 2013 (Book on bullying in parishes – available in paperback on Amazon and other websites.)

Pries, Dr. Betty, The Space Between Us: Conversations about Transforming Conflict, Herald Press, Harrisburg Virginia, 2021 (Author is a Canadian Mennonite Professor based in Waterloo, Ontario and headlined our 2023 Diocesan Volunteer Corps Conference).

Tutu, Archbishop Desmond, and Tutu, Mpho, Book of Forgiving, Harperone, 2015.