



ST PETER-IN-THE-FOREST

CHURCH & COMMUNITY CENTRES

Volunteer Handbook



**HERITAGE
FUND**



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Thank you for choosing to volunteer at St Peter-in-the-Forest Church & Community Centres. This handbook is here to explain the things you need to know about volunteering with us. It will complement your induction and any training that you receive.

Our volunteer scheme and activity plan is sponsored in trusteeship of the Parochial Church Council (PCC). The PCC Of The Ecclesiastical Parish Of St Peter-in-the-Forest Walthamstow is a registered charity, number 1128173, and takes full legal responsibility for all our operations across the parish.

The National Lottery Heritage Fund have made a large grant to support our project. Thank you to all lottery players across the country who are the basis of this generosity.



Dear friend

Welcome to this handbook!

I am so delighted you are already considering volunteering at St Peter-in-the-Forest and cannot wait to welcome you to our growing community here in this beautiful part of Epping Forest in the heart of Walthamstow.

We are now – with thanks to the Heritage Lottery Fund and the vision and inspiration of many in our church and community – on the other side of what has been an amazing building project and renovation of our beautiful church and surrounding grounds. A vision is being realised: to be a transforming presence and inspirational hub for community activity, catering for the needs of local people, and enriching community life.

But don't just take my word for it! Come and see for yourselves and become part of a growing and welcoming family full of exciting possibilities and hope as we seek to grow community together in this fantastically diverse part of East London.

With every blessing,

Fr Alex Summers

St Peter-in-the-Forest

was consecrated in 1840 as a 'chapel of ease' to the ancient parish of Walthamstow, St Mary's. It became a separate parish in 1844, providing much-needed graveyard space and accommodating the growing population of the area. The building was extended in 1887.

Due to the arrival of the Great Eastern Railway into the recently-opened Wood Street Station, Upper Walthamstow was swiftly changing from countryside to city suburb. With new houses and jobs came new people, some of whom would join the congregation at St Peter's.

Over time, St Peter-in-the-Forest has been modified so that it best serves the needs of our community, most notably in 1951 with the rebuilding of the North wall and construction of the West end vestries and entrance lobby. The church still retains its Victorian Romanesque feel, giving the building its Grade-II listed status.



Surviving a V2 rocket explosion in 1945, and significant fires in 1975 and 1993, St Peter-in-the-Forest found itself on Historic England's register of immediate and serious risk. The post-war extension was sinking in the London clay, causing catastrophic damage to the entire church building.

We received a grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund with which to renovate our church building. This work has made the building safe to use, and will also inspire and facilitate new ways for our ever-changing community to find a place here in our corner of Epping Forest. We hope you enjoy joining us on this new stage of our journey!



Art activities at Open House London festival, September 2021



We have a bold vision for the future of St Peter-in-the-Forest and our parish, one that centres on you and our volunteer teams. We will become an inspirational hub for community activity, and your input will be vital in bringing our church community to life and bringing life to our church community. By generously giving your time to us, and providing your unique skills and knowledge for free, we can create a brilliant enrichment to those in our parish, our borough, and beyond. You will help shape how we can include everyone in our programme of outreach and events. This will bring our whole community together around our shared history, heritage and culture, now and long into the future.

Our Mission

We welcome volunteers of all faiths and none.

You do not have to be a Christian to volunteer with us, but you will share our values; values that we draw from Christ's teachings. Your volunteering with us may bring you alongside our partner organisations – some of which are religious and some of which are not, though they all serve our community.

Our Christian ethos emphasises fellowship with those around us, without discrimination, and a commitment to the welfare of the natural world. Our Christian witness currently also involves outreach at Whipps Cross Hospital and, with our local Mission and Ministry Unit (MMU), at Snaresbrook Crown Court. Our extended partnership also runs a bereavement 'café' and a Syrian refugee project.

A historical walking tour of our parish, August 2021





Cooking bread over the firepit, July 2021

Volunteering

As a volunteer at St Peter-in-the-Forest, you will be making a massive contribution to life in our church and community centres, carrying out and supporting activities we would otherwise not be able to do. It is important to us that you enjoy and benefit from volunteering. We will help you:

- learn new, or build on old, skills
- keep active, fit, and healthy
- help maintain a nationally-recognised heritage site
- meet and build friendships with new people
- take part in accredited training and build your CV

You will be one of the first volunteers on our new activity plan. It is incredibly exciting to have you on board helping us build up our community and reach out to new people. We have a brilliant list of things we'd like to achieve, and, with a brilliant team, we can make these a reality.

Our commitment to our volunteers, we will:

- Always treat you with respect, courtesy, and fairness.
- Agree with you your role and tasks and provide relevant support, training and supervision.
- Offer you honest and timely feedback on your work and listen to your suggestions of how we can improve our volunteering programmes.
- Support volunteers in saying “no” when necessary and encourage volunteers to take on more challenging roles when they are willing and able.
- Ensure that no volunteer is ‘out of pocket’ by reimbursing reasonable and agreed expenses incurred through volunteering at St Peter’s.
- Provide a safe working environment and inform volunteers of health and safety requirements and guidance.
- Create a sociable and fun working environment through planning non-work activities through our volunteer social secretaries.

Please try and do the following:

- Always treat St Peter's staff, volunteers, and visitors with respect, courtesy, and fairness.
- Support St Peter's vision and mission.
- Act in a professional manner whenever representing St Peter's, and ensure that nobody is discriminated against or put in harm's way through your work.
- Attend relevant training and support sessions if requested.
- Take on board any feedback received regarding your work and provide suggestions based on your experience with us that we can use to improve our service.
- Let us know as soon as you can if you wish to change the nature of your voluntary role, if you no longer want to be involved in a project, or if you cannot attend a particular session for any reason.
- Work within your team to welcome and include new people.

This agreement is not intended to be a legally binding contract and the volunteering arrangement may be ended at any time at the discretion of either party. Neither of us intends any employment relationship to be created between us.

What roles are available?

Welcome hosts

A friendly face and a warm welcome is so important in making people feel like they have found a home with us. Chat to our visitors, find out what makes them tick, and see them come back time and time again.

Visitor guides

Whether you're inside, in the churchyard, or outside our walls in the forest, we need you if you've got a knack for spinning a tale! Tour guiding is great fun and certainly keeps you on your toes. For sizeable school groups or single Sunday strollers, share our story.

Events staff

It doesn't matter how many fantastic events you've got planned (we do!) if there's no one to make them a success. Want to give our visitors a warm welcome to St Peter's while benefitting from free plays, concerts, talks, and much more? Sounds like a no-brainer!

Café helpers

Communities come together over food. Whether it's a simple brew up and a homemade cake, or a veritable feast, come and learn skills that will stick with you your whole life. Professionals, keen amateurs and absolute novices alike are all more than welcome.

Forest school assistants

Those mud pies won't cook themselves you know! For all those big kids with a passion for den-making, come and keep our little ones safe as they explore the great outdoors. Celebrate a job well done with a mug of cocoa round our fire pit.

Gardeners & conservationists

Our woodland location is one of the things that makes our church so special. We need to provide stewardship to our corner of Epping Forest so that it continues to thrive and grow alongside our community.
Help us plant, water, weed, prune...

Social media specialists

Can you express yourself in 280 characters or less?

Know your @ from your #?

Social media is important to reach out to an entirely new crowd, spreading our message far and wide.

Get involved if you've got big plans for our web presence.

Evaluation monitors

We need people with a good eye for figures and a strategy for growth. Help us monitor the bottom line and ensure we hit our target of including all kinds of people in what we do. You will be so important in letting funders know what good we're doing, and how we deserve more support!

Equal Opportunities

We welcome all volunteers, regardless of age, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, race, religion, nationality, disability, culture, politics, social background, skills or time available.

Young People

Although we welcome volunteers of all ages we may need to manage younger volunteers in a slightly different way. For example, we usually apply a minimum age limit of 16. Volunteers under the age of 16 should contact us so we can discuss alternative ways of involvement, typically with the support of their schools, parents or guardians.



Time

The amount of time you spend volunteering is entirely up to you. You may want to dedicate a couple of hours a month or anything up to five days a week. For safety or logistical reasons some tasks may lend themselves to being done in a block of time, but we aim to be as flexible as possible.

Training

Please read your Task Description, included alongside this Handbook, for more information about your role. If you have any further queries, please contact your task manager before you begin the task. Don't worry if you feel that your skills aren't adequate for your chosen activity; we offer support and training for those that require it. We encourage all our staff to go on certain training courses.







Enjoying a sunset music performance during the E17 Art Trail



Volunteers getting stuck in taming the wilds of St Peter's!

We will ensure that you feel happy and confident to carry out your role. All volunteers will receive training to be 'Welcome Hosts' as part of their induction at St Peter-in-the-Forest. Role-specific training will be delivered informally or as part of an accredited scheme depending on the nature and difficulty of the work. Team leaders will also be given training in risk management and health & safety to ensure the wellbeing of everyone who comes to St Peter's. Please speak to your team leader if you do not feel confident in your role or in using any of the equipment that we provide for you to use in your work.

It is important that you are reliable and you stick to any arrangements you have made with us. If your circumstances change, please let your team leader know as soon as possible. Likewise, if you're planning to go on holiday, please let us know that you'll be unavailable for certain dates and when you plan to return.

You will receive ongoing support from your team leader and the Community Engagement Officer. As part of your development, please make a note of every training session you have attended so we can keep an up-to-date audit of skills in our team. Most volunteers will have a review meeting and the frequency of these will vary depending on the nature of your role and your time commitment. The review meeting, in person or by phone, will focus on how the role is going, what support you need and update you on what is happening at St Peter's. It should be an opportunity for volunteers and staff to raise issues and for you to talk constructively about your involvement with us. As well as these more formal occasions, we are always happy to discuss your role with you, and we will facilitate informal social occasions for you to build supportive networks with other volunteers.



A paper-making workshop on our church terrace



Policies

Expenses

Volunteering your time, skills and enthusiasm gives enormous benefit to everyone at St Peter-in-the-Forest. We don't want to create any barriers that might stop you from being as involved as you would like in the life and community of our church. A key barrier you might face is the financial cost of volunteering here.

We will reimburse volunteers for any reasonable and pre-agreed out-of-pocket expenses. We do, however, ask that you bear the cost of the travel, food, and drink necessary to your volunteering—if possible—so that we can support those who are genuinely unable to. If you do need to claim back expenses, these must be agreed in advance with your supervisor and evidenced with receipts. We will only reimburse the amount that you have spent as a result of your volunteering, up to agreed maximum levels.

Health & Safety

We are committed to looking after the health, safety and wellbeing of everyone who works for us, on our premises or uses our services. Any activities carried out on a voluntary basis are covered by the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) in the same way as those carried out by employees of St Peter's are. It is important, therefore, that you understand and accept your personal responsibility towards promoting and maintaining health and safety standards in order to provide a safe working environment for all. Volunteers with specific responsibilities for health and safety will receive training and guidance to help them to fulfil these responsibilities. Suitable risk assessments will be prepared for all activities being carried out.

It is important that you comply with all instructions and procedures relating to safety, and that you follow guidance given by our staff or team leaders. You must also tell us about any personal health and safety requirements that you have. Please discuss any doubts regarding your role and responsibility with your team leader. All accidents must be reported to your team leader as soon as possible so these can be logged. Contact the emergency services immediately if you feel that it is a real emergency.





Safeguarding

The renovation and rebuilding of our church will safeguard the structure for the next century, and we need to ensure that it once again becomes a central part of local lives within this span. Engagement with children is important to St Peter-in-the-Forest because the long-term future of the church and our community centres depends on the inclusion of future generations. As a volunteer, you may choose to work with children, for example helping deliver forest school sessions or arts and crafts workshops. It is also important to our ethos of inclusion that adults at risk of harm can find community at St Peter's. Our Peterhouse community centre already welcomes adults at risk through our provision of rooms to therapists and counsellors. Our church building needs to also help and be open to all in our community.

You will be required to disclose details of any criminal record you may have. Only relevant convictions and other information will be considered, so a criminal record need not exclude you from obtaining a volunteering position. You have a duty of care to safeguard the welfare of any vulnerable person in your care or company. Before your work begins, you will be given an induction on our Working with Children and Young People Policy, which you must follow.

The PCC of St Peter-in-the-Forest has adopted the Diocese of Chelmsford safeguarding guidelines. For more information visit:
<https://www.chelmsford.anglican.org/safeguarding>

If things go wrong

If you are unhappy with your role for any reason whatsoever you should speak with your team leader or the Community Engagement Officer, or any other trusted member of staff. One of your team leader's main responsibilities is to ensure that you are not overloaded and that you are happy with your task. They will support you in your role and balancing your commitments.

Although dealing with complaints can be difficult, it can give us a positive opportunity to improve the way we do things and provide a better service for people at St Peter's.

We define a complaint very broadly, as 'a statement of dissatisfaction'. This covers any kind of comment – spoken or written – which relates to dissatisfaction, whether or not it is labelled as a complaint, and whether or not it needs a formal response.

If you are found to have engaged in minor inappropriate behaviour or are having a problem with any employee, volunteer, contractor or visitor of St Peter's, you will be presented with details of the complaint made against you at a meeting with a senior member of staff. This will be the basis for ongoing judgement and evaluation so we can find a solution by which all parties are treated fairly and with respect. If the complaint is well founded and there is no improvement, and no prospect of future improvement, you may be asked to leave.

If a complaint of serious inappropriate behaviour is made against you, you may be asked not to attend St Peter's for any reason until the matter has been investigated in an appropriate manner. If, after investigation, the senior staff member has reasonable grounds for believing that you have been involved in serious inappropriate behaviour, you may be asked to leave immediately following one meeting. Serious inappropriate behaviour can cover a broad range of offences, such as: theft, discrimination or harassment, abuse or violence towards person(s) or property, or serious breaches of health and safety regulations. This list is not comprehensive but is provided to indicate the level of seriousness of misconduct which may lead to you being asked to leave immediately.

Volunteer Development Record

The next couple of pages are yours to record your volunteer development in any way you would like!

Please do write the name and date of formal training sessions you take part on, so that we (and you!) can track your progress.

Apart from that, feel free to write, draw, sketch and scribble any ideas or recommendations you have along the way.



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