



# Local, National and Global Outreach Committee

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**JANUARY 2026**

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**Southminster United Church**

## INTRODUCTION

When I think of volunteering, the first organization that pops to mind is the good old Sally Ann. The fact that my BFF is a Salvationist might have something to do with that. As I begin the first newsletter of the New Year, she is busy sorting toys for Christmas, and helping to prepare some of the 1200 food hampers for pick-up, endeavours the Salvation Army has been carrying out for over 140 years.

The second thought I have about volunteerism comes to me as a memory. One of my youthful responsibilities was serving tea and sandwiches to international cricket players at the Governor-General's residence – for which I “was volunteered” every season. And although I try, I can never forget the many afternoon teas at which I prepared, served and later cleaned up. One did not always have a choice regarding “volunteerism” when growing up with a political Grandmother.

My AI assistant tells me that volunteerism began long before the word “volunteer” even existed. Most ancient societies taught mutual aid, where helping elders, neighbours, and vulnerable members was a moral responsibility. For example:

**Christianity** taught acts of charity, almsgiving, and service to the poor. From its earliest days, caring for the sick, welcoming the stranger, and sharing resources, were understood as faithful responses to Jesus' teachings. Volunteer service became a lived expression of loving one's neighbour and putting faith into action.

**Judaism** instructed Tzedakah, the obligation to do what is right and just. The root of the word comes from the Hebrew for “justice” and “doing what is right” — meaning that helping others is considered a moral obligation, not just a generous choice. Acts of Tzedakah aim to reduce suffering and promote fairness in society.

Followers of **Islam** learn Zakat, one of the Pillars of Islam, a form of “obligatory charitable giving”, where Muslims, who are financially able, are encouraged to give a portion of their wealth — traditionally 2.5% — to help those in need. Muslims are also taught Sadaqah, which is “voluntary charity” — any act of giving, kindness, or generosity done purely for the sake of helping others.

In both **Hinduism** and **Buddhism**, Seva is encouraged. Seva means “selfless service” — helping others without expecting anything in return.

In **Sikhism**, there is Langar, a community kitchen in every Gurdwara (place of worship), where free vegetarian meals are prepared and distributed. Community service is considered a sacred duty.

And then we have our **Indigenous** cultures, teaching reciprocal responsibility and community care. Volunteerism is deeply rooted in Indigenous worldviews, where caring for one another, the land, and future generations is understood to be a shared responsibility, rather than an individual choice. Acts of helping are woven into daily life, guided by values of kinship, respect, and balance that closely echo Christian teachings on loving one's neighbour.

All of these traditions helped shape volunteer behaviour long before formal volunteer organizations existed.

## **LOCAL**

To see volunteerism hard at work, all we have to do is open the doors to Southminster United Church.

My gosh, we have a Council and a Board of Trustees. We have Committees for the Christmas Fair, Outreach, Ministry + Personnel, Finance + Property, LNGO and Worship. There is a Steering Committee for Centre 7. We have Task Groups for DOMS, Outdoor, and Climate Change. You name it and it is run by indefatigable volunteers.

We have Lay Readers, Greeters, Ushers, Counters, and Coffee Hour volunteers.

We have had volunteers assisting with Refugees, Mission + Service, Indigenous Reconciliation, Community Forum, and EOORC.

We just held another successful Christmas Fair and online Auction, both manned by our intrepid volunteers.

We have Pancake Suppers and Strawberry Socials. We host “Out-of-The-Cold” dinners during the winter months.

We have “DOMS” (Doors Open for Music at Southminster), and we host “Friday Night Live” to showcase the musical talents of our young people. We also have a terrific Choir of our own, with guest singers and various musical talents popping in.

We are part of the “Southeast Ottawa Cluster”, a group of five local churches sharing ideas and resources.

We are also proud of our membership in CCSAC (Centretown Churches Social Action Committee), a group of 22 churches that runs the “Centretown Community Food Centre” and has many other irons in the fire. Every October, there is a fundraising Walk, led by volunteers, to aid the Food Centre.

And in the spring, we again walk, this time in the “Tulipathon”, to raise funds for the “Multi-Faith Housing Initiative”, where proceeds go toward MHI’s rent subsidies program in support of its tenants.

We have a well-attended Book Club and, for a little while, we ran a social hour online called “Zoomers”.

At Southminster United Church, volunteerism is not an occasional activity, but the lifeblood of our community, quietly sustaining worship, service, fellowship, music, outreach, and justice work in countless visible and unseen ways. Guided by faith and generosity, our volunteers transform time and talent into hospitality, compassion, and hope — both within our church walls and far beyond them. Inspired by Christ’s call to love and serve, our volunteers give generously of themselves, becoming Christ’s hands and feet in our church, our neighbourhood, and beyond.

## **NATIONAL**

Indigenous communities had long-standing traditions of shared responsibility, such as settlement houses, churches, and women’s groups. These played a major role in the 1800s through to the early 1900s.

Canada’s hefty volunteer efforts during both World Wars strengthened the national culture of service, and today, over 24 million Canadians volunteer, making ours one of the most volunteer-active countries in the world.

## **GLOBAL**

History has taught us that during “The Enlightenment” in the 1700s, ideas about civic duty and community improvement grew. Voluntary societies began forming to support education, public health, and poverty relief.

But it was the 1900s when volunteerism, as we know it, really took shape. Charitable societies in Europe and North America multiplied. Settlement houses in the United Kingdom, and later many in Canada, organized volunteers to help immigrants, children, and the poor. Women’s groups, church groups, and abolitionist organizations relied heavily on unpaid volunteers.

This era also introduced the idea of organized, long-term volunteering outside religious institutions.

Major global events transformed volunteerism. “The International Committee of the Red Cross” (ICRC) was established in Geneva, Switzerland, in 1863, inspired by Henry Dunant’s experience caring for wounded soldiers after the Battle of Solferino in 1859. The organization normalized volunteering in health and disaster relief.

World War I and World War II saw massive volunteer mobilization: knitting circles, victory gardens, blood drives, hospitals, and community support.

Post the 1950s, we saw volunteer work expand into hospitals and long-term care; youth and sports programs; literacy and education; environmental organizations; social justice, and civil rights groups. Volunteerism became recognized as a pillar of civic life.

Nowadays, volunteerism continues to evolve: via online and remote service; youth leadership programs; corporate and employer-supported initiatives; community emergency preparedness; and intercultural and global volunteer exchanges.

While the forms and methods of service may change, the heart of volunteerism remains the same: people offering their time, skills, and compassion to meet real needs.

Rooted in faith, volunteerism remains a living expression of love for our neighbour, reminding us that when we give of ourselves, we become instruments of hope, healing, and God’s work in the world. Inspired by Christ’s call to love and serve, our volunteers give generously of themselves, becoming Christ’s hands and feet in our church, our neighbourhood, and beyond.

## **MISSION & SERVICE**

*“Rooted in hope as a new year begins...”*

In January, the Southminster congregation starts donating towards our 2026 Mission & Service goal. This new goal has yet to be determined, but should be available in the next LNGO newsletter. This annual goal is usually based on the previous year’s actual givings. The 2025 goal was \$15,000.

In the meantime, here are some facts about another of the United Church’s global partners.

In 2024 [latest reporting year available], M&S partnered with “People’s Action Forum” in Zambia. The United Church of Canada has supported this organization since 2000.

*“People's Action Forum” (PAF) is an Indigenous organization that has supported rural communities and schools in Zambia since 1994, through community learning centres we call CABLACs, the “Capacity Building Learning Activity Centres”.*

*Our work in Zambia aims at achieving people-centred, community-led development, where people are aware of their rights and can uphold them for fair, equal, and sustainable development through both formal and non-formal education.*

The work of PAF is divided into the following **Program Pillars**:

**Education:** Basic education for girls and boys, girls retention programs, adult education;

**Health:** Clean water provision, HIV/AIDS awareness, youth health programs;

**Economic Empowerment:** Skills training, income generation, food security; and,

**Advocacy:** Adult literacy, equal education access, women and girls empowerment.

## **CENTRE TOWN CHURCHES SOCIAL ACTION COMMITTEE (CCSAC)**

Southminster United Church is a member of CCSAC; a collective of 22 churches in downtown Ottawa.

Started in 1967 by nine churches to respond to social needs in the Centretown area, the principal program is the Centretown Community Food Centre (CCFC).

Located at 370 Catherine Street, the Food Centre provides 1,400 visitors every month with fresh produce and basic foods.

In response to a recent client survey, more fresh produce is now available.

The annual “Walk For the Centre”, organised by CCSAC, raised a record \$55,000 in October.

Community Outreach projects to provide winter warmth and summer health and hygiene are another focus.

In November, a donation of 32 pairs of winter boots and warm socks were delivered to Centre 507, while jackets and hoodies were donated to Ottawa Innercity Ministries.

**A number of the member churches also provide meals, shelter and fellowship on a regular or seasonal basis.**

If you have criticisms of, or suggestions for, items that might be included in this ongoing monthly newsletter, please send your ideas to: [LNGO@southminsterunitedchurch.com](mailto:LNGO@southminsterunitedchurch.com)