

Gaetz Memorial United Church Policy on Soliciting Signatures for Petitions

1. Purpose and Philosophical Grounding

Gaetz Memorial United Church believes that **Christianity and democracy are deeply related**. Thus, we encourage our members to participate in libertarian and egalitarian processes that foster community and promote the **common good**, by ways of peace and justice. This policy outlines the standards for soliciting signatures for petitions on Church property to ensure these activities align with our **charitable purposes** and comply with the **Income Tax Act**.

2. Alignment with Charitable Purpose

As a registered charity, we may engage in unlimited **Public Policy Dialogue and Development Activities (PPDDAs)**, such as mobilizing others to sign petitions, provided they meet the following criteria: • **Relates to Mission**: The petition must relate to the Church's stated purposes and values regarding humanitarian justice (such as **relieving poverty, ensuring safety, or advancing education**.)

- **Public Benefit**: The activity must provide a clear **charitable benefit** to the public.
- **Issue-Focused**: The petition should focus on seeking to **influence laws and leaders to provide safety for individuals or the environment, policies, or decisions** of a government rather than targeting specific political figures.

3. Requirement for Non-Partisanship

The most critical requirement for any petition activity is that it remains **strictly non-partisan**. • **No Candidate/Party Support**: A petition must **never directly or indirectly support or oppose a political party or candidate** for public office.

- **Focus on the Issue**: Communications regarding the petition should **focus on the policy issue** under discussion and must **not refer to any candidate or political party**.
- **Neutrality**: While a petition may oppose a law that a specific political party also opposes, the Church's activity is not considered partisan as long as we **do not refer to or identify the political party or candidate** in our advocacy.

4. Accuracy and Integrity

To maintain the integrity of our witness and comply with CRA guidelines:

- **Truthful Information**: All information provided in or alongside the petition must be **truthful, accurate, and not misleading**.
- **Evidence-Based**: Any opinions disseminated through the petition process should **draw on research or evidence**.

5. Use of Church Resources

• **No Partisan Resource Transfer**: Church resources—including **office supplies, staff time, or physical space**—must never be used to facilitate a petition that supports or opposes a political candidate or party. • **Fair Market Value**: If an outside group wishes to solicit signatures for a PPDDA-related petition on Church grounds, they must do so within a rental agreement that reflects **fair market value** to avoid an indirect resource transfer.

6. Roles of Representatives and Individuals

- **Personal vs. Organizational Capacity**: Church leaders or representatives may sign or solicit for petitions in their **personal, private capacity**.
- **Clear Distinction**: When doing so, they must clarify that their comments and actions are **personal rather than the views of the Church**, especially if using social media.
- **Prohibited Platforms**: Representatives must **not use Church events, publications, or platforms** to voice personal political views or solicit signatures for partisan causes.

7. Approval Process

All petitions intended for distribution or signature collection on Church property **must** be submitted to the Church leadership for review. This review ensures the petition **supports the social well-being of all**, and does not risk the Church's registered status through prohibited **partisan activity**.

8. Care for the Community of Faith

Gaetz Memorial United Church recognizes that while democracy and Christianity are interrelated and honor the dignity of each person, our primary calling is to care for one another as a community of faith. We acknowledge that members of our congregation have varying levels of comfort regarding political discussions and advocacy. To prioritize the well-being of the community and ensure a welcoming environment for all, the following protocols must be observed:

- **Priority of Community Care:** Caring for one another is our highest priority. All advocacy must be conducted with a spirit of grace and respect for those who may hold differing views or who prefer to keep their worship experience separate from political dialogue.
- **Discrete Positioning:** Those soliciting signatures for a petition must not "pass the petition around" during social times, such as coffee hour, or during church functions. Instead, the individual should position themselves in a discrete, designated location (such as a specific table in the hall).
- **Invitation-Based Interaction:** Rather than approaching others, the solicitor must remain in their designated area, as an invitation for people to come to them if they are interested in learning more or signing. This ensures that no one feels pressured or "confronted" by politics in a space meant for kinship, community, and spiritual refreshment.
- **Respecting Personal Boundaries:** Representatives must respect our mission to maintain the safety and dignity of ALL, and remember that there are some who are uncomfortable with open political inquiries or confrontation. If an individual chooses not to engage, that choice must be honored without judgment, maintaining the peace and public order of the community.

By following these guidelines, we can fulfill our encouragement for members to participate in the democratic process for the common good while maintaining the relational integrity of our congregation. Failure to adhere to these guidelines can result in **CRA investigations, penalties, or the loss of charitable status**, which would end the Church's ability to issue tax receipts.

Approved by Gaetz Memorial United Church Board on April 27, 2026