

First Missionary Church

Therapy and Service Animal Policy

Churches and their public functions are exempt from the ADA Title III, which means that even public church events do not have ADA protections. That being said, First Missionary Church will allow a service animal under the following circumstances:

- (1) An individual has a disability (such as blindness), as defined in the Fair Housing Act or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973,
- (2) the animal is needed to assist with the disability, and
- (3) the individual who requests the reasonable accommodation demonstrates that there is a relationship between the disability and the assistance that the animal provides.

Because churches are exempt from ADA law, as a courtesy, service animal users should generally ask before entering a church.

A therapy animal is generally prescribed to an individual with a disability by a healthcare or mental health professional as an integral part of a person's treatment process to assist in alleviating the symptoms of an individual's disability. A therapy animal is not the same as a service animal and typically does not accompany an individual at all times.

A therapy animal is generally used only in private spaces; therefore, a therapy animal is not permitted in the church building without prior approval from the church board. The owner of a therapy animal should be willing to present documentation that the animal has been trained and certified as a therapy animal and to share the reason why a therapy animal is necessary to be present on church grounds.

Even with proper documentation, the board must also take under consideration that others in the congregation may be allergic to a particular kind of animal or may be afraid of such an animal, or that it may be a distraction to those attending services. If the therapy animal is approved by the church board, it must be in an animal carrier or on a leash or harness, controlled at all times, and silent while the animal is in the church building and on church grounds for the protection and safety of others. The owners of the animal will also be asked to sign a document waiver of liability, so that the church will not be held responsible if the animal should cause harm or distress to someone else.

First Missionary Church
Service or Therapy Animal Liability Waiver

By signing this document I, (print name) _____, acknowledge and understand that I am authorized to utilize a service or therapy animal on the property of First Missionary Church in Newton, Kansas. I also acknowledge that I have been provided with a copy of the Service Animal Policy, and hereby agree to abide by all tenets of that policy, which includes, but is not limited to, my responsibility to:

- Provide documentation that the service or therapy animal is certified, trained, and properly vaccinated by a licensed veterinarian.
- Properly clean up after the animal, including but not limited to, removing and properly disposing of any fecal matter left by my service or therapy animal.
- Maintain control of the animal at all times.

Additionally, I agree to assume the cost of repairing any damage the animal is responsible for, or any liability resulting from injury to another individual on the church property or at a church event caused by the animal.

By signing this document, I also acknowledge that First Missionary Church has the right to require the owner to remove the animal from its property, if the presence of the animal disrupts the church, its services, or functions in any manner (including but not limited to: barking, whining, growling, wandering, sniffing other people, their belongings or food) or due to the animal's initiation of contact with other individuals without their permission.

Signed: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / ____