

BENEVOLENCE POLICY

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BENEVOLENCE POLICY

I. INTRODUCTION

I.A. DEFINITIONS

Benevolence Fund

The benevolence fund is established according to the church bylaws and constitution. It has no budget for either income or expense. Its receipts consist entirely of designated giving, and its expenses consist of funds disbursed for its stated intended purposes at the direction of the Benevolence Committee.

Benevolence Committee

The Benevolence Committee is a subcommittee of the Church Board. Its members serve at the appointment of the chairman of the Board for a term of one year. There is no restriction on the number of consecutive years a board member may serve on the Committee. The Committee may be comprised of at least three members. The maximum number is dependent on the expected case load.

I.B. OBJECTIVES

The objective of this benevolent ministry is to render appropriate aide to qualified recipients. This aide may be to resolve a short term crisis in the life of a family or individual, or to provide long term care for qualified widows.

The objective of this document is to set forth the responsibilities of the Benevolence Committee and the guidelines for discharging those responsibilities. It is not intended to cover all circumstances under which monies may be disbursed from the fund, only those which involve the Benevolence Committee. The benevolence ministry has ultimate responsibility and accountability over the benevolence fund, and will necessarily make many decisions to disburse monies from the fund—according to its charter, and subject to these guidelines.

The purpose of the fund is to meet people's basic needs. The fund achieves this purpose primarily in two ways: through specific disbursement at the direction of the Committee or the benevolence ministry Pastor, and through funding to assist the Family Ministry at the direction of the senior Pastor and/or the benevolence ministry Pastor.

II. OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The Benevolence Committee is accountable to the Church Board. The Committee will interface with the Pastoral/Elder Board when necessary through the Associate Pastor, or the Chairman of the Church Board.

The benevolence ministry Pastor will serve as liaison with the senior staff and Church Board. He will meet with the Benevolence Committee when the committee meets to consider disbursing funds.

II.A. COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

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Deacons. Deacons for the committee shall be chosen on an annual basis by the Deacons committee on a consensus basis. One Deacon will be assigned as chairman for the year.

Lay Members. The churches nomination committee shall present suitable candidates for consideration. An interview process shall be conducted to determine suitability, willingness, and spiritual maturity. Training will also be provided to ensure all members are aware of the committee's purposes, policies, and procedures.

II.B. CONFIDENTIALITY

All members will be apprised of the need for extreme confidentiality when dealing with personal issues of the needy. All matters should remain within the confines of the committee members. Only the Chair should divulge personal information to appropriate individuals outside of the committee such as to the Pastor and to specific financial or spiritual counselors.

II.C. FUNDING APPROACH

The only regular source of income for the fund is recipient of special or designated offerings to help individuals or groups of people involved in natural disasters or devastating circumstances. Any such offering will be recommended through the Chairman of the Deacon Board or the benevolence ministry Pastor, who will consult with the Church Board regarding the feasibility, propriety, and timing of the offering. Members of the congregation, however, will not be encouraged to give to the benevolence fund in lieu of giving to the general fund of the church.

II.D. GUIDELINES FOR DISBURSEMENT

The benevolence fund is intended as a source of last resort, to be used when the family or individual requesting assistance has explored all other possibilities of help from family, friends, savings, or investments. It is intended to be a temporary help during a time of crisis.

Assistance from the deacon fund is intended to be a one-time gift. In unusual circumstances, the Benevolence Fund Committee may decide to help more than one time. However, under no circumstance is a gift from the benevolence fund to be considered a loan. No gift may be repaid, either in part or in full, in money, or in labor.

If the recipient desires to give to the church at a later time, this individual should be encouraged to give directly to the general fund of the church. At the discretion of the benevolence ministry Pastor, the individual may be informed that the fund accepts designated giving, but only if the pastor discerns that the person understands this is not a payback of what originally was given.

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Those requesting assistance must also be willing to receive financial, family, or spiritual counseling. The Benevolence Committee will not provide help to anyone who, in its estimation, will have negative or irresponsible behavior reinforced by receiving financial assistance.

Those requesting help must be willing to give the Committee permission to follow up on any of the information provided to the committee.

II.E. QUALIFICATIONS FOR RECIPIENTS

In order of priority, recipients of funds disbursed from the benevolence fund at the direction of the Benevolence Committee are:

1. Church members
2. Regular attendees
3. Members of the community
4. Ministries and Christian agencies that serve people with the same needs as those which fit the criteria for assistance from the benevolence fund, but which provide services the church does not
5. Employees of the church. The Benevolence Fund will occasionally assist staff members in need subject to the guidelines of the employee assistance program.

II.F. DISBURSEMENT CRITERIA

The stated purpose of the benevolence fund is to meet peoples' basic needs. Normally, these needs are defined as:

- Lodging
- Food
- Clothing
- Medical Treatment
- Transportation To Or From A Place Of Employment
- Funeral Expenses
- Initial Evaluation And Professional Counseling Appointments

Needs that may not be met by the benevolence fund include:

- School expenses, business investments, or anything that brings financial profit to the individual or family
- Paying off credit cards. Exceptions can be made when an individual has had to use a credit card in a crisis or emergency (e.g., hospitalization, death, etc.)

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- Needs of individuals who are wanted by the law or for paying fines as a result of breaking the law
- Housing for unmarried couples
- Legal fees
- Penalties relating to late payments or irresponsible actions
- Private school fees or tuition
- Business ventures or investments

Financial assistance for counseling will be considered if it is perceived that counseling would directly enable the individual to address a current financial situation. In most cases, this would be limited to an initial counseling appointment. Under special circumstances, additional financial help could be given. In such cases, the committee will consult with the Pastor of Counseling Ministries to determine a specific amount.

Generally, assistance from the benevolence fund will not exceed \$1,500 per person or family (this is a cumulative cap in the unusual case of someone who receives more than one gift from the fund). In very unusual circumstances, families and individuals who are in need of substantial funds (over \$1,500) and who have the opportunity to make a life-changing decision can continue to be assisted up to whatever limit the benevolence committee deems appropriate. Such cases should be reviewed carefully and, when appropriate, additional accountability should be sought (such as the Chairman of the Church Board, the senior Pastor, etc.).

Special projects, sometimes funded by special offerings designated for the Benevolence Fund, might include supporting local outreach ministries to the poor, or helping to provide assistance during times of catastrophe or major crises.

II.G. VALIDATING REQUESTS

The committee shall select at least one member to appropriately investigate and verify each request. The information shall be brought back to the committee in a timely manner for assessment and validation.

III. BENEVOLENCE REQUEST PROCESS

III.A. SOURCE OF REQUEST

A Request for Assistance Application must be filled out by the person requesting help or by someone who is assisting the person in need. In either case, the person must be in the presence of a representative of the church. The church representative taking the request will record references and contacts to collaborate the need.

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III.B. PROCESSING THE REQUEST

1. The Request for Assistance Application is returned to the Church Office in preparation for presentation to the Benevolence Fund Committee. The process takes approximately one week.
2. In a meeting or by a telephone conference, the Committee reviews the request and comes to a decision.
3. The person making the request is informed of the decision.
4. Checks are written and disbursed. As much as possible, checks from the fund will be payable to vendors, homeowners associations, etc., rather than to the individual requesting assistance. This is excepted when less than \$100 is needed for living expenses.
5. See Figure 1 for a depiction of our Benevolence process

III.C. TYPES OF ASSISTANCE

III.C.i. SHORT TERM FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Short term financial assistance shall consist of payment of specific bills to the applicable vendor. For accountability sake, no checks or cash shall be given directly to the requestor without approval from the Chair and consensus from the Pastor.

III.C.i.a. Emergency Assistance

All requests for emergency assistance must be first investigated, verified, and validated by at least 3 committee members, including the Chair. Emergency assistance may take the form of automobile repair, bill payment, purchase of groceries, or other tangible means as allowed by the Chair with consensus from the Pastor.

III.C.i.b. Transient Assistance

All requests for transient assistance must be first investigated, verified, and validated by at least 3 committee members, including the Chair. Transient assistance may take the form of automobile repair, bill payment, purchase of groceries, or other tangible means as allowed by the Chair with consensus from the Pastor.

III.C.i.c. Non-Emergency Assistance

All requests for non-emergency assistance must be first investigated, verified, and validated by at least 3 committee members, including the Chair. Assistance may take the form of automobile repair, bill payment, purchase of groceries, or other tangible means as allowed by the Chair with consensus from the Pastor.

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III.C.ii. NON-FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Non-financial assistance may take the form of spiritual, financial, marital or parental counseling; moving assistance; job search, or other forms as deemed appropriate by the Chair with consensus from the Pastor.

III.C.iii. LONG TERM ASSISTANCE

Long term assistance shall take the form of nursing home care, hospice care, or other form of care as deemed appropriate by the Chair with consensus from the Pastor.

III.C.iv. ASSISTANCE CAP

Short Term Assistance. No requestor shall receive more than \$2500 in any fiscal year

Transient Assistance. No transient shall receive more than \$100 in any fiscal year

Long Term Assistance. Determined on a case-by-case basis.

III.C.v. POLICY EXCEPTIONS

The Chair shall inform the Pastor of any recommendation for a policy exception.

IV. COUNSELING

The Chair and at least one committee member shall assess the need for counseling and forward the recommendation to the Pastor.

V. REFERRALS TO COMMUNITY RESOURCE

The committee shall keep a log of locally available community services such as utility payment services, emergency shelters, food and clothing programs, etc.

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Figure 1. Benevolence Process

