

Benevolent Fund Policy

Old North Church

February 2011

Purpose

The benevolent fund is established according to the church bylaws and constitution with the purpose of meeting people's basic needs. It has no budget for either income or expense. Its receipts consist entirely of designated giving, and its expenses consist of funds disbursed at the direction of the church leadership.

Policy

Funding

- The only regular source of income for the fund is through special or designated offerings. Members of the congregation, however, will not be encouraged to give to the benevolent fund in lieu of giving to the general fund of the church.

Disbursement

- The benevolent fund is intended as a source of last resort, to be used when a 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 benevolent fund is intended to be a one-time gift. In unusual circumstances, the church leadership may decide to help more than once. But 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 church leadership, the individual may be informed that the fund accepts designated giving, but only if the person understands this is not a payback of what originally was given.
- Those requesting assistance must also be willing to receive financial, family, or spiritual counseling. The church leadership will not provide help to anyone who, in its estimation, will have negative or irresponsible behavior reinforced by receiving financial assistance.

Disbursement Criteria

- The stated purpose of the benevolent fund is to meet peoples' basic needs, such 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 person 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.)
 - 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
- 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 church leadership deems appropriate. Such cases should be reviewed carefully and, when appropriate, additional accountability should be sought.

Types of Assistance

- **Short-Term Financial:** Short-term financial assistance shall consist of payment of specific bills to the applicable vendor. For accountability's sake, no checks or cash shall be given directly to the requestor without approval from church leadership.
- **Emergency Assistance:** All requests for emergency assistance must be first investigated, verified, and validated by church leadership. Emergency assistance may take the form of automobile repair, bill payment, purchase of groceries, or other tangible means as allowed by the church leadership.

Management

- Management of the benevolent fund will be the shared responsibility of the Care Coordinator, Finance Administrator, and Church Administrator
- Guidelines of priority:
 - Members of the church
 - Regular attendees of the church
 - Family of church members
 - Community members at large
- Designated levels of accountability in granting requests
 - **\$0-\$250** - Care Coordinator
 - In absence: Finance Administrator or Church Administrator
 - **\$251-\$500** - Care Coordinator and Finance Administrator
 - **\$501 and up** - Care Coordinator, Finance Administrator, and Church Administrator

Reporting and Documentation

- Complete a Benevolent Request Form for each request
 - Must be signed by appropriate parties before check is cut
- Copy original documents of bills
- Complete Benevolent Fund Tracker
- Filing and archiving completed by Finance Administrator