

Benevolence Fund Disbursement Guidelines

A Proposal For Board Consideration

Preamble:

As our congregation grows and as the makeup of our congregation shifts there is an increasing need for an active and intelligent benevolent ministry. In general, we want to avoid an overly burdensome policy that would restrict access to funds that we have been given for the care of the flock. At the same time, we want to practice wise and sober stewardship over the resources we have been entrusted with. Our hope is that this recommendation finds that middle ground.

These recommended guidelines recognise two distinct levels of intention and permission: basic pre-approved and advanced review.

Basic Pre-Approved:

A. Members and Known Participants

Known participants in the extended church family who find themselves in need of short-term assistance to meet basic needs can access up to \$999.00 per ministry year on a 'pre-approved' basis. A known participant is defined as someone who is an active member of the church, or someone who has been involved in an approved church program for at least six weeks.

- i) Basic Needs would Include
 - Food
 - Rent/housing
 - Medical needs – eyeglasses, hearing aids etc.
- ii) Eligible Reason for Assistance:
 - Loss of employment
 - Loss of subsidy
 - Distressed situation
 - Death in the family
 - Illness
- iii) Financial Needs that are Ineligible for Benevolent Support
 - Luxury/discretionary expenses
 - Credit card debt
 - Fines or penalties
 - Gambling debts

To access this subsidy the person should meet with the Pastor of Congregational Life or designate and explain the need. If the PCL feels the need is legitimate, a cheque request will be prepared and endorsed.

B. Non-member participant

From time to time people completely unknown to our church family will visit requesting support for a financial need. Given our limited ability to research and do background checks, our response to these needs will be more limited and narrow. We will offer up to \$250 in food vouchers per ministry year upon reasonable request.

To access this subsidy the request should be made known to the Associate Pastor of Outreach and Mission or designate and if the AP feels the need is legitimate, vouchers will be given out and the amount and personal information will be recorded.

Advanced Review:

For people requiring a higher level of ongoing support than what is available in the Basic Pre-Approved category, a certain level of advanced review is required. Anything falling outside the aforementioned guidelines will be addressed on a case-by-case basis. The following is suggested as a procedural guideline:

1. The person should meet with the Pastor of Congregational Life or approved designate to detect the source of the 'financial leak' that is causing the imbalance in income to expense needs. In rare circumstances this step may be waived if the cause is obvious, i.e. known illness, plant shut down, death of spouse etc.
2. The person should submit a written request outlining the need and the requested schedule of assistance.
3. The person should have a plan for balancing their budget and normalising their finances.
4. These documents, the written request/schedule and forward budget plan, should be presented to the PCL as soon as possible for immediate decision.
5. Any amount over \$1,000.00 must be referred to the Board of Elected Elders.

The following items would be examples of the sorts of needs the Benevolent Fund is intended to address:

1. Food
2. Shelter (rent/housing subsidy)
3. Clothing (boots, coats etc.)
4. Health needs (glasses, hearing aids, speech therapy etc. Avoid direct subsidy of prescriptions). Travel to and from hospital.
5. Funeral Costs

In cases when needs are outside of the above listed categories, the Pastors involved will refer to community agencies, such as, but not limited to:

1. The Lighthouse
2. The Salvation Army
3. The Sharing Place Food Bank
4. Orillia Pregnancy Resource Centre
5. Empower Simcoe

Approved by the Board of Elected Elders: May 12, 2024
Approved by the Membership: