

SOP 15	BENEVOLENCE POLICY	
RESPONSIBILITY: BOM	ISSUE DATE (VERSION): 2020	NEXT REVIEW DATE:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble - 2 Corinthians 1:3-4

Carry each other's burdens and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. - Galatians 6:2

Purpose

Westland Free Methodist Church (WFMC) has established a Benevolence Process to assist persons in our church and local community with financial needs. The process includes the maintenance of a Benevolence Fund (Needy Fund) within the financial structure of the church. In addition, we will assist with or direct people to resources and classes that will help equip them for long term success in the area of finances.

The aim of the benevolence process is to support – not enable – those in financial crisis. The amount of financial aid provided will be determined by the urgency and criticality of the need. Aid will normally be limited to alleviating a short-term crisis rather than mollifying a medium or long-term shortage of funds. Aid may not be provided when the process for approval reveals that the benevolent recipient has non-essential assets that could provide them the needed funds if liquidated.

Benevolence Disbursements

The Benevolence Fund is primarily reserved for providing life essentials in time of financial need. These essentials include, but are not limited to:

- Food
- Utilities
- Heating oil or gas
- Gasoline for transportation
- Clothing
- Emergency medical expenses and health expenses not covered by existing insurance benefits

The Benevolence Fund may also be used to provide physical protection in the form of temporary shelter or housing, emergency repairs to a house, or payment of delinquent mortgage payments and/or property taxes to prevent foreclosure on a primary dwelling.

The Benevolence Fund may also provide assistance in obtaining or maintaining a job or job skills. This would include, but is not limited to:

- Emergency car repairs
- Bus or train fare reimbursement
- Repairs to donated vehicles to render them serviceable
- Reimbursement of education/vocation training expenses

The Benevolence Fund will not normally be used to cover the following expenses:

- Cable TV or internet access
- Elective or cosmetic medical expenses, unless deemed essential for maintaining employment or independent living
- Club fees or exercise expenses
- Yard care, trash pick-up or snow removal expenses
- Traffic fines or legal fees arising from personal irresponsibility
- Discretionary spending not associated with basic essentials

NOTE: Any item in underlined italics is taken from the Book of Discipline

Benevolence Process

1. Following Christ's compassionate direction, WFMC will take special offerings for the Benevolence Fund in order to maintain a stable fund balance.
2. The Benevolence Committee will be composed of the Pastor's Cabinet, Director of Finance, Director of Congregational Care, and the Lead Pastor. This group will be tasked with assessing the needs and distributing the funds.
3. Persons requesting financial assistance will be directed to the Lead Pastor who will work with the Benevolence Committee to determine the need and appropriate response.
4. The Lead Pastor has the ability to help with up to \$100 without consulting the committee, but will report to the committee in those instances.
5. In the absence of the Lead Pastor, the Associate Pastor or team member may lead the process.
6. On needs of over \$100, the committee will vote on the response and the amount of assistance if the request merits a financial response. In most cases, people requesting over \$100 will be limited to being helped only once in a 12 month period, with a typical limit of \$250 per 6 month timeframe.
7. Each individual or family seeking aid from WFMC must complete an application and provide an ID.
8. Each case will be assessed to see if an outside organization could better meet the needs or if financial training (i.e. one on one counseling, Crown or Financial Peace, etc) will be required to ensure they don't continually find themselves in a similar position. A lack of teach-ability and no desire to show self-discipline will result in no future assistance.
9. Aid may be rejected when the process for approval reveals that the benevolent recipient has non-essential assets that could provide them the needed funds if liquidated.
10. Assistance from the Benevolence Fund must always be paid directly to creditors. On occasion, Kroger/Food-Town food cards, or other specific gift cards may be given as assistance.

Benevolence Priorities

Eligibility for assistance from the Benevolence Fund will be given the following priorities with comparable needs:

- Members and regular attendees of WMFC
- Extended family members or neighbors of members and regular attendees of WFMC
- Requests from area churches or
- Referrals from community non-profit agencies
- Walk-ins and transients

Biblically, the church recognizes as a priority its duty to care for those given it to shepherd while seeking to be a good neighbor to all in need regardless of their affiliation with the church.

Size of Financial Need

The church seeks to maintain a wise assessment of the church's limits and resources to extend meaningful help in every situation. Generally, finances will not be extended outside of the context of a "plan" – that is, a practical action plan for the individual or family, which addresses the sources of future financial resources. The Lead Pastor and Benevolence Committee may approve gifts of up to \$500 per year per family not to exceed \$250 within a (6) month period. In situations of catastrophic need where additional funds are needed, The BOM must be approached and would be needed to co-approve additional assistance for funds in excess of the \$500 limit.

Benevolence Policies

The Benevolence Fund does not make loans that must be repaid. Through grace, it provides gifts. If recipients find themselves someday in the position to give back, they are encouraged to do so in the form of a contribution to the Benevolence Fund that will be used to assist others.

Every request for financial assistance or financial counseling is strictly confidential. However, anonymous discussion may occur among members of the BC or BOM to ensure that sufficient support of the recipient or counselee has occurred and the best distribution of funds has been made.