

Fort William Baptist Church

Benevolence Policy for Congregational Care

Purpose

The purpose of the Benevolence Policy is to provide guidelines for the disbursement of the Deacon Benevolence Fund and congregational resources.

The purpose of the Deacon Benevolence Policy is to provide guidelines in ministering to individuals or families during a time of hardship or crisis by temporarily assisting them with their basic needs.

This may include but is not limited to;

- A) *Food Hampers* provided through the Food Pantry and/or purchased by the deacons.
- B) *Temporary Meals* provided through the meal ministry team with administration by the deacons and support by the women of the church.
- C) *Transportation* for individuals requiring a means of travel (bus tickets) or a ride provided by a member of the congregation.
- D) *Shelter* (temporary).
- E) *Additional* items or situations that after review by the Deacons and Elders are deemed to qualify as an appropriate need.

Motivation (for this policy)

To provide wisdom in the disbursement of these resources, helping to ensure that the resources will be effective in aiding the recipient rather than a hindrance or creating a dependency.

To provide accountability to the congregation, who have entrusted the deacons with these resources and to ensure their use is consistent with congregational expectations.

To ensure that we are in compliance with the Canada Revenue Agency requirements for the operation of a charity.

Biblical Basis

The policies and guidelines set forth in this Benevolence Policy shall be guided and directed by the following Biblical principles:

“look for opportunity to serve all people, especially those who belong to the family of believers”
(Galatians 6:10).

“¹⁶ And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.”
(Hebrews 13:16).

Ministry Philosophy

When any assistance is provided consideration should also be given to meeting the spiritual, physical, mental, emotional, and other needs of the party receiving assistance. This will be done in consultation with, and support by, the Pastors and/or Elders. Those seeking assistance ought to be made aware that this is our philosophy of ministry. The most important need of any individual is to pursue and enjoy a personal, saving and vital relationship with God through His Son, Jesus Christ. Consideration will always be given to individuals seeking assistance, to provide for them the opportunity to hear and respond to the Gospel.

Oversight and Accountability

The Deacons, under the oversight of the Elders, shall have responsibility for overseeing the administration of the Deacon Benevolence Fund and congregational resources. The Deacons shall determine who will receive disbursements from the Deacon Benevolence Fund and congregational resources, in what amount, and for what duration.

The Deacons shall give a regular accounting to the congregation of the disbursements from the Deacon Benevolence Fund and congregational resources through periodic reports at business meetings and upon request by the elders or any member of the congregation (while keeping confidential those receiving said disbursements).

Modification

It is possible that “needs” may arise which are not covered by this document in its current form. Therefore, service can be given and a need met as deemed necessary by a majority of deacons and elders.

Funding

The Deacon Benevolence Fund receives income from the congregation through two resources:

- A) Giving, specifically directed to the Deacon Benevolence Fund through a “specified designation” in the tithing/giving envelopes. (see *special notes* below)
- B) Through disbursement of the annual budget.

Special Notes:

Giving intended for the Deacon Benevolence Fund can be designated as such, but may not be given for the specific benefit of any person or family. The deacons retain full control over the direction of all funds given to the Deacon Benevolence Fund.

The Deacons encourage members to minister directly to members of the congregation as they become aware of specific needs. However, under CRA regulations *gifts* made directly by a member to an individual or family in need are non tax-deductible.

Careful discernment should be used when giving a personal monetary gift.

Guidelines for Disbursement

The Deacon Benevolence Fund and congregational resources are intended as a source of last resort, to be used when the individual or family requesting assistance has explored all other possibilities of assistance from appropriate sources (i.e., family, savings, investments, etc). It is intended to be a means of assistance during a time of a crisis or other hardship.

Disbursements from the Deacon Benevolence Fund may not be made in the form of a loan.

Under no circumstance is assistance from the Deacon Benevolence Fund to be considered a loan. No gift may be repaid, either in part or in full, in money or in labour.

Those requesting assistance from the deacons must be willing to receive financial, family, or other appropriate Biblical guidance. The Deacons will not provide help to anyone who, in their estimation, will have negative or irresponsible behaviour reinforced by the financial assistance.

Those requesting help must be willing to grant the Deacons permission to follow up on any of the information provided to them. The Deacons will be sensitive to confidentiality issues.

To the extent possible, and at the discretion of the Deacons, all disbursements from the Deacon Benevolence Fund shall be made directly to the party or entity to which payment is due and not in the form of cash given directly to the individual or family requesting assistance.

Limited Purpose

The Deacon Benevolence Policy is a guideline in providing limited aid for those within the congregation who are in need.

Generally, assistance from the Deacon Benevolence Fund and congregation resources are intended to cover an individual or family's basic needs.

Needs that may not be met by the Benevolence Fund include:

1. Business investments, business debts or anything that brings financial profit to the individual or family
2. 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.)
3. Housing for unmarried couples
4. Legal fees arising from criminal behaviour
5. Penalties relating to late payments or irresponsible actions

Application Process

Individuals or families seeking assistance from the Deacons may be asked to follow one or more of the steps below:

1. Verbally request assistance from the deacons (may be asked to submit a written request see #2).
2. Obtain and submit an Application For Assistance From The Deacons.
3. Complete interview(s) and/or appropriate guidance as determined by the Deacons.
4. Provide all additional documents and information requested by the Deacons.

Review and approval of the Application, as well as communication of the amount and form of assistance, shall be done by the Deacons at the earliest practicable date.

Definitions

Applicants/Recipients: Individuals or families who approach the deacons requesting financial or other types of assistance.

Needs: A lack of something deemed necessary.

Deacons Benevolence Fund: The Deacon Benevolence Fund is an officially recognized and established fund of FWBC that is comprised of the budgeted fund plus those funds donated that are earmarked Deacons Benevolence Fund on the offering envelope.

Congregational Resources: A source of supply, support, or aid, especially one that can be readily drawn upon.

Gift: A voluntary transfer of property without valuable consideration to the donor (i.e. no strings attached).

Food Pantry: Food that has been donated (stored in the basement) by the congregation for disbursement to those in need.

Benevolence: Desire to do good to others; goodwill; charitableness: to be filled with benevolence toward one's fellow creatures. An act of kindness; a charitable gift

Policy Resources

The Bible

Ministries of Mercy by: Tim Keller

When Helping Hurts