

Special Needs Policy

Approved by Board of Elders April 19-2011

“Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.” – Gal. 6:10

Our obligation to assist extends to all people while the clear priority is to respond to the needs of those in the spiritual family.

Policy:

The Chapel will handle requests for special needs using a three tier approach:

[Category 1] Special needs of those who attend The Chapel.

[Category 2] Special needs of those who do not attend The Chapel yet have needs that can be verified by a Chapel member.

[Category 3] Special needs of those who do not attend The Chapel and whose needs cannot be readily verified by a Chapel member.

Category 3 Requests

These requests usually come via drop-ins or phone calls. Experience shows that it is very difficult to sort out the legitimate requests from those which are dishonest or irresponsible. Additionally, the attempt to verify these needs is very time consuming. It is possible to distribute large sums of special needs money to needs that may not ultimately be in the recipient's best interest and thereby limit resources available to meet verified body needs.

Policy:

1. To decline all such requests for monetary assistance and instead direct these people to local agencies that are trained to evaluate and respond to such requests. Pastors and staff should be instructed not to any give monetary assistance but instead to address the spiritual issues these people present and to direct them to agencies. A current list of local agencies should be made available to the staff in a form that can be shared with or given to the inquiring person.

Staff focus should be the addressing of spiritual needs while referring other needs to agencies in the city.

Maintaining a food pantry on the premises is very inefficient unless we allocate the resources to have a pastor or staff person available to stock it and handle walk-ins.

2. To include financial support in the Chapel's budgetary process to support selected agencies in the city who provided services we are unable to provide. Special Needs offerings, at the direction of the Elders or Finance Committee, could be used to fund these budgetary categories.

Staff should tell those being referred that the Chapel contributes to these agencies because we realize they are in a better position to provide assistance.

Comments: Experience shows that there is an informal network of people in this category who randomly call and visit churches seeking assistance. Churches that readily give financial assistance quickly become known to others. The result is a proliferation of requests from people who are either dishonest or irresponsible.

Some of these drop-in inquiries come from mentally unstable people and can result in very dangerous situations for people on the church premises. Some of these drop-ins can be very confrontational in their demeanor and approach.

Category 2 Requests

The needs of Category 2 differ from Category 1 in that the needs can be verified as valid and there is a direct contact with the Chapel enabling us to build a relationship.

Policy:

1. To provide limited, one-time assistance to such individuals as the need warrants and funds are available. A Chapel pastor or staff person should discuss the need with the Chapel attender who knows the individual and his or her need. If the need appears to be bona fide then a pastor, Elder or staff member will meet with the person to discuss the need.

The pastor or staff person assessing the need should discuss their recommendation with the Executive Pastor who will make the decision regarding assistance in consultation with the Business Manager (regarding the availability of funds). The Chapel Elders shall set the maximum dollar level for this category of assistance and any other parameters they deem appropriate.

Category 1 Requests

The needs of regular attenders of the Chapel are our primary responsibility in offering assistance. Often such needs go unmentioned due to embarrassment. It is our desire to respond to such needs in a manner that respects the individual's dignity.

Policy:

1. One time needs of Chapel attenders should be brought to the attention of a pastor, staff member or elder who will meet with the person in need to discuss their situation.

A recommendation for financial assistance should be made to the Executive Pastor who will make the decision regarding assistance in consultation with the Business Manager (regarding the availability of funds). The Chapel

Elders shall set the maximum dollar level for this category of assistance and any other parameters they deem appropriate.

Needs that exceed the maximum dollar level or that necessitate a special fund being created will be deferred by the Executive Pastor to the Elder Chairman who will bring the need before the Elders.

2. Ongoing (repeated) needs of Chapel attenders should be evaluated by one or more individuals recommended by the Finance Committee [???] who will meet with the attender to evaluate their financial situation, help them with financial planning, and make a recommendation to the Executive Pastor and Elders of how to address these repeating needs.

In responding to ongoing needs of a Chapel attender it is necessary to discover and respond to the root causes of these needs. This is necessitated by limited funds in the Special Needs Fund and our obligation to help believers mature in their financial decision making.

The Elders, in these cases, should designate a point person to co-ordinate the assistance effort. The Executive Pastor and Business Manager should be kept up to date on the progress of these cases. The Staff Leader will update the Elders on the status of these needs periodically.

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