

WOODCLIFF UNITED CHURCH BENEVOLENT FUND

*For I was hungry and you gave me food,
I was thirsty and you gave me drink,
I was a stranger and you welcomed me.*
Matthew 25:35

Woodcliff United Church (WUC) has a Benevolent Fund which is used to support members and adherents of the Congregation, as well as the broader community, in times of urgent need. The Council of WUC holds ultimate responsibility for the establishment and oversight of the Benevolent Fund. The maintenance and disbursement of benevolent funds are handled by The Finance Committee, The Pastoral Care Committee, the Minister, and the Church Administrative Coordinator (CAC).

Guidelines (*The United Church of Canada's Financial Handbook for Congregations, 2010, 5.7.2*)

- Funds must be made available to the broader community and not just church members.
- Contributions must be made to the Fund itself, not to a specific individual or family. Contributions are tax receiptable.
- All requests for assistance must be made to the Minister or the CAC in person at the church.
- No cash disbursements can be made directly to the individual requesting assistance. The church only offers assistance with food, transportation, and medical prescriptions.
- Grocery food cards may be issued on an individual basis. Food cards, in amounts no greater than \$25/card, will be kept in a locked safe on the church premises. No amount greater than \$200 in food cards shall be kept on the church premises at any one time.
- Calgary Transit tickets may be issued on an individual basis. Tickets will be kept in a locked safe on the church premises. No more than two (2) books of tickets (total of 20 tickets) shall be kept on the church premises at any one time.
- If money is required for a medical prescription, the Minister will directly pay the pharmaceutical supplier of the medication out of his/her personal funds and then be reimbursed from the Fund.
- A response to an expressed request for assistance must be timely and confidential.
- Assistance will be for short term help, not ongoing assistance.
- A gift from the Benevolent Fund is not a loan. There is no expectation of repayment; however, recipients of emergency assistance may make a donation to the Fund at a later date, as circumstances allow.
- Individuals and families may not access funds more than once per year.
- Financial assistance for each individual will not exceed \$100 per year. Financial assistance for a family will not exceed \$250 per year.
- Requests for funding are known only by the Minister, the CAC, or by Council in unusual circumstances as outlined below.

- The Minister or the CAC must keep accurate records, including names of recipients and amounts and type of assistance given. This information will be stored in a designated locked file at the church, accessible only to the Minister and the CAC. The Treasurer and the Council may only gain access to confidential records associated with unusual circumstances.
- Receipts and disbursements will be reported in the Annual Report of WUC and on all forms and reports as required by the UCC and CRA. Because of privacy legislation, such reports will not list the names of those who have received assistance.
- The Pastoral Care Committee informs the Congregation of the existence of the Benevolent Fund.
- A yearly review of the protocols and use of the Fund is carried out by the Pastoral Care Committee of WUC. Any recommended changes will be transmitted to Council for its approval.
- The Treasurer provides reports to the Pastoral Care Committee on the status of the Fund.
- The Minister reports to the Pastoral Care Committee on the number of beneficiaries of the Fund and disbursements made.

Procedure for Disbursement

- The Minister or the CAC receives a request for assistance. A Benevolent Fund Application Form is filled out by the individual or family representative asking for assistance.
- The Minister or CAC makes a needs assessment as to the authenticity of the request (for example, verifies the existence of an official doctor's prescription). The requester must provide supporting documentation as needed.
- The Minister or CAC will approve or deny the request and advise the applicant of the decision.
- When appropriate, the Minister or the CAC will inform the person requesting assistance about other agencies and organizations that can provide assistance.
- If the request is approved, the Minister or CAC disburses a food card and/or transit ticket in accordance with the results of the needs assessment.
- If the Minister is not immediately available to respond to a request for funds to pay for a medical prescription, the CAC will inform the Minister of the situation as soon as possible, thereby allowing the Minister to respond to the request in a timely fashion.
- If the Minister agrees to pay for a medical prescription, the Minister will arrange with the individual a mutually convenient time to meet at a specific pharmacy. If the individual doesn't arrive within 30 minutes of the prearranged time, the Minister will leave and the prescription will not be filled.
- In the event the person requesting assistance does not keep the original appointment at the pharmacy, a decision to meet a second time will be at the Minister's discretion.
- The Minister or the CAC records each disbursement of benevolent funds and files the records in the designated locked file at the church.
- The Minister applies for reimbursement of personal funds used to pay for any prescriptions.
- If a member or adherent of the WUC faith community has asked for emergency assistance, the Minister will conduct a follow up visit to offer pastoral care and spiritual support.

Dealing with Unusual Circumstances

Unusual circumstances might include a family that has lost their home and its contents because of a fire. In such a circumstance, it is appropriate for WUC to assist the family from donations made to the Benevolent Fund. In an unusual circumstance such as this, the following protocol shall be followed:

- The Council shall identify the situation and recognize that financial assistance is needed.
- An appeal can be placed in the Sunday bulletin requesting contributions to the Benevolent Fund in order to be able to respond to an emergent need in the community.
- A designated group will meet with the family to assess what is needed and determine what WUC can reasonably do.
- WUC will provide assistance according to the assessment and the amount authorized by the Council.

The Benevolent Fund document was originally approved by Council on May 9, 2017.