

## Special Connections Committee Meeting Minutes

A Special Connections Committee meeting was decided at the December 21<sup>st</sup> 2023 Ad Council meeting to be held on January 10<sup>th</sup> at 5:00 pm to review the Benevolence Fund Directives document presented at that Ad Council meeting by the Visioning Committee. Members of the Ad Council were invited to attend this special meeting. The agenda was limited to reviewing how the Visioning Committee developed the Benevolence Fund Directives followed by additional concerns and suggestions to refine the directives.

Members of the Connections Committee and Ad Council present: Pastor Craig, Rich Floyd, Jay Tomlinson, Patty Rusco, Anna Urbas, Kathy Nelson, Cathy Aldrich, Don Ingerson, Bryan Rusco, Sheri Rue, Pam Turnbull, Margie Olson.

Jay opened the meeting with a statement regarding his understanding how our church functions through the work of our committees, implicitly trusting our treasurers and the Ad Council to ensure that our church runs smoothly.

Pastor Craig led us in opening prayer for the committee's work followed with a special prayer of health concerns for people mentioned.

### **BUSINESS – Benevolence Fund Directives**

The first order of business was to review the process of how the Visioning Committee developed the Benevolence Fund Directives document. The original template plan covering seven questions and suggestions concerning how benevolence fund distributions could be handled was passed out. A review of how the Visioning Committee members answered those seven questions was explained which led to the Benevolence Fund Directive document presented at the December 21 2023 Ad Council Board meeting.

Following the review, various suggestions and concerns were made including some of the following: Defining what qualifies as a benevolence gift, what is not acceptable as a benevolence gift, concerns of providing benevolence gifts that do not hurt, concerns of making errors in judgement by those in charge of distributing benevolence gifts, including our church congregation in the working knowledge of our benevolence fund. Others provided additional insights to benevolence giving.

Sheri presented a book titled *Helping without Hurting – Church Benevolence* by Steve Corbert and B. Fikker as a guide to aid in finalizing our benevolence distribution policy. Don Ingerson addressed the error in judgement issue by pointing out that benevolence giving is sharing the love our church has for others in need and that is the point of the gift regardless of the outcome. Rich Floyd presented ideas in a document titled *Benevolence Fund Policy and Procedures* regarding benevolence giving. Jay Tomlinson passed out examples of *Tracking Forms* for benevolence Gift Card records and benevolence monetary gifts.

The outcome of our meeting was that more work needed to be done to refine our Benevolence Fund Directives document and policy of giving and that the work should not be the responsibility of the Connections Committee alone. Bryon Rusco suggested that an Ad Hoc Committee be formed for the specific purpose of refining our Benevolence Fund Directives and benevolence giving policy.

Rich Floyd moved that the meeting adjourn. Pastor Craig closed the meeting with a prayer of moving forward with purpose and understanding.

**Next Meeting Date & Time** – The next Connections Committee meeting is scheduled for Thursday, February 8, 2024, at 5:00 p.m.

Distributed documents follows:

(Visioning Committee Benevolence Plan)

## **Who Controls of the Benevolence Fund?**

### **Questions about the Benevolence Fund that need to be addressed.**

1. What qualifies as benevolence for which funds may distributed for the purpose of sharing the Love of God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit?
2. Who decides to give?
3. How much do we give?
4. When do we give and frequency?
5. How do we let folks know about the Benevolence Fund?
6. How do we receive notice of a benevolence need and how do we deal with ongoing needs?
7. Do we need to track benevolence gifts?

### **Existing identified Ely United Methodist Church Benevolence Fund Opportunities**

1. Occasional needs of/for the congregation
2. Gift Cards for food and/or fuel
3. Love Offering
4. Free Will Offerings
5. Refugee Migration Response
6. Food Shelf
7. Outreach Initiatives
8. Children International
9. Soup Kitchens
10. Young Life
11. Northwoods Partners
12. Children's International
13. Bible Camp Scholarships
14. UMCOR
  - a) Ukraine Response
  - b) US Hurricane Response
  - c) Latest International Disaster Response
  - d) Latest US Disaster Response

### **What qualifies as benevolence for which funds may distributed? Suggestions:**

1. Institutions, Businesses and Organizations
  - Northwoods Partners
  - Young Life
  - UMCOR
  - Food Shelf
  - Free Will Offerings. (for a specific Institution, Business or Organization)
2. Programs, Projects and Initiatives
  - Soup Kitchens
  - Outreach Initiatives
  - Refugee Migration Response

**Community needs**

Free Will Offerings (for a specific Program, Project or Initiative)

**Weekly Dinners**

3. Individuals or groups of individuals

Bible Camp Scholarships

Children's International

Free Will Offerings (for a specific Individual or group of individuals)

Occasional needs of/for the congregation

**People in immediate and temporary need**

Fuel Gift Cards

Food Gift Cards

**Outstanding extraordinary personal invoice (such as an electric or repair invoice)**

**Who makes the decisions to give? Suggestions;**

1. The church treasurer for budgeted benevolence items in accordance with the Annual Budget approved by the Administrative Council and the Annual Church Conference.
2. The Pastor. (Food and Fuel gift cards at his/her discretion)
3. A committee of two or more members from the Connections Committee.
4. A committee including two or more members from different Committees.
5. An individual.
6. A committee of two or more members from the Congregation who are not on any committee.

**How much to give? Should there be limits to the size of the monetary gifts and what should those limits be? Suggestions:**

1. Church benevolence budgeted amounts.
2. Fixed amounts for Fuel and Food Gift Cards.
3. Individual limits depending on the need up to \$250 per benevolence gift.
4. Extraordinary needs up to \$1,000. (define extraordinary: medical needs, equipment needs, repairs/replacement needs, disaster needs, etc.)
5. Leave the decision up to the committee.

**When is it appropriate to give and how frequently? Suggestions:**

1. Annually at the appropriate budgeted time from the church annual budget.
2. Spontaneously. (Fuel and Food Gift Cards)
3. After a review of the committee authorized to issue benevolence funds.
4. Frequency to the same individual, group, project, institution?
  - a. Annually to Institutions
  - b. Once to Projects
  - c. Up to twice annually to groups.
  - d. Up to twice annually to individuals.

**How do we let the Congregation know there is an available benevolence fund? Suggestions:**

1. Through the annual budget? (how?)
2. Through the weekly Parish News. (frequency?)
3. From the pulpit. (frequency?)
4. On the Website? (listed under what?)
5. On the Sunday morning church bulletins?

6. On the Prayer Wall? (where?)

**How do we receive notice of a benevolence need and how do we deal with ongoing needs?**

**Suggestions:**

1. Through the Pastor. (by private individual conversations/requests)
2. Requests directed to the Benevolence Committee. (by individuals or through the church)
3. Through the knowledge of the Benevolence Committee. (community or individual awareness)
4. Refer on going needs to other organizations that address those needs. (food shelf, police, shelters, etc.)

**Do we need to track Benevolence Gifts? Suggestions:**

1. Budgeted items are tracked through treasurer reports. Yes
2. Food and Gift Cards: Yes (to control frequency to the same individuals)
3. Other benevolence gifts: Yes. (to provide accountability by the committee or whomever is issuing the gift)

## **Benevolence Fund Policy and Procedures**

During our last Connections Committee meeting, we decided that Benevolence Fund distributions should be made by the Pastor and by a two-person Benevolence Team. They should be allowed to decide independently on specific gifts. However, I believe they ought to be given some overarching guidance on how much to give and who should be eligible to receive funds. Based substantially on the information presented by Jay and Don (some of it tweaked), I suggest the following guidance be established for doling out the funds:

### **Overview**

A basic tenet of the Church is to help those in need. Jesus said, "Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise." The Benevolence Fund is created to help fulfill that admonition. This document describes how the Benevolence Fund is to be administered.

### **Funding**

Monies for the Benevolence Fund will be allocated following usual budgeting procedures. Such funds can be augmented by donations from the Congregation designated specifically for that purpose. Donations from the Congregation for specific individuals or organizations shall not be accepted. Those should be made by the donor directly to the recipient rather than through the Church.

### **Authority**

Benevolence Fund distributions are to be determined by either of two parties: the Pastor or a two-person Benevolence Team appointed annually by the Administrative Council. (The inaugural Benevolence Team, however, shall be appointed by the Connections Committee.) All requests for distributions must go through one of those two parties. Each of the two parties has authority to distribute funds as they deem appropriate, while adhering to the guidance that follows. The Pastor or Benevolence Team should make a good effort to determine whether or not a request is legitimate and deserved.

### **Priorities for Gifts**

Geographic Reach (listed from highest to lowest priority)

Ely and surroundings

St Louis County

Minnesota

USA

World

Urgency of Need (listed from highest to lowest priority)

Immediate, e.g. house fire, natural disaster

Long term, e.g. rebuilding after a disaster

Routine or ongoing

### **Amount of Distributions**

Fuel and food gift cards—\$250

Cash for specific need—up to \$250

Extraordinary needs such as medical or other emergency—up to \$2000

No distribution may exceed the amount available in the Benevolence Fund

### **Frequency of Distributions**

An individual or family may receive up to two distributions in a calendar year.

An organization is limited to one distribution per year unless a critical need emerges, in which case two donations may be given.

Payment

As circumstances dictate, some payments by necessity must be made directly to the beneficiary. Whenever possible, however, payments should be made on behalf of the beneficiary to the entity that would eventually receive the funds, for example, to a hospital or to a contractor repairing a home or to an electric company. Checks will be made out by the Church Treasurer as requested by the Pastor or Benevolence Team.

Reporting

Distributions are to be reported to the Connections Committee [or directly to the Admin Council?] on a monthly basis. The report is to contain each distribution with its date, amount, purpose it is meant to fulfill, and the recipient if the recipient is an organization. Recipients who are individuals or families shall not be reported by name.

Submitted by Rich Floyd

## BENEVOLENCE FUND DIRECTIVES

**I. Ely United Methodist Church Benevolence Fund Opportunities for the purpose of sharing the love of God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. (Those in red indicate additions to the list of opportunities.)**

4.

**1. Institutions, Businesses and Organizations**

Northwoods Partners

Young Life

Food Shelf

Free Will Offerings. *(For a specific Institution, Business or Organization)*

Umcor

e) Ukraine Response

f) US Hurricane Response

g) Latest International Disaster Response

h) Latest US Disaster Response

**2. Programs, Projects and Initiatives**

Soup Kitchens

Outreach Initiatives

Refugee Migration Response

**Community needs**

Free Will Offerings *(For a specific Program, Project or Initiative)*

**Weekly Dinners**

**3. Individuals or groups of individuals**

Bible Camp Scholarships

Children's International

Free Will Offerings *(For a specific Individual or group of individuals)*

Occasional needs of/for the congregation

**People in immediate and temporary need**

Fuel Gift Cards

Food Gift Cards

**Outstanding extraordinary personal need (Such as an electric or repair invoice)**

**II. Who makes the decisions to give?**

7. The Pastor. *(Food and Fuel gift cards spontaneously at his/her discretion)*

8. A committee of two members from the Congregation selected by the Connections Committee.

**III. How much to give? Should there be limits to the size of the monetary gifts and what should those limits be?**

6. Fixed amounts for Fuel and Food Gift Cards.

7. Individual limits depending on the need up to \$250 per benevolence gift.

8. Extraordinary needs up to \$2,000. *(Extraordinary gifts defined: medical needs, equipment needs, repairs/replacement needs, disaster needs, etc.)*

9. Leave the decision up to the committee.

**IV. When is it appropriate to give and how frequently?**

5. Spontaneously. *(Fuel and Food Gift Cards)*

6. Spontaneously after a review of the committee authorized to issue benevolence gifts.

7. Frequency to the same individual, group, project, institution?

- a. Annually to Institutions
- b. Once to Projects
- c. Up to twice annually to groups.
- d. Up to twice annually to individuals.

**V. How do we let the Congregation know there is an available benevolence fund?**

7. Through the weekly Parish News. *(Included in the first Parish News of the month)*
8. From the pulpit. *(On each third Sunday of the month)*
9. On the Website. *(Verbiage to be determined)*

**VI. How do we receive notice of a benevolence need and how do we deal with ongoing needs?**

5. Through the Pastor. *(By private individual conversations/requests)*
6. Requests directed to the Benevolence Committee. *(By individuals or through the church congregation)*
7. Through the knowledge of the Benevolence Committee. *(Community or individual awareness)*
8. Refer multiple on going needs to other organizations that address those needs. *(food shelf, police, shelters, social services, etc.)*

**VII. Do we need to track Benevolence Gifts?**

4. Food and Gift Cards: Yes *(To control the frequency of gifts to the same individuals and to identify when more funds are needed.)*
5. Other benevolence gifts: Yes. *(To provide accountability by the committee or whomever is issuing the gift and identify when more funds are needed.)*



Benevolence MONETARY Gift Records				
Number	Date	Gift	Discription	Person
1				
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Benevolence Gift CARD Records			
Number	Date	Need Discription	Person
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