

First Baptist Church Wake Village, Texas
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BENEVOLENCE MINISTRY GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES

1. Biblical Foundation for Benevolence Ministry

Isaiah 58 1-10

Isaiah 1:10-13; 16, 17

Luke 4:17-21

Colossians 1:15-20

1 John 3:16-18

James 2:5

1 Corinthians 1:26-29

2 Corinthians 5:21

2. Purpose of the FBC Wake Village Benevolence Ministry

A Ministry of Reconciliation

To actively exercise the ministry of reconciliation: moving people closer to glorifying God by living in right relationship with God, with self, with others, and with the rest of creation, and allowing people to fulfill their calling to glorify God by working and supporting themselves and their families with the fruit of their work.

3. Philosophy of Ministry

Based on the Root Causes of Poverty

Our philosophy of ministry is based on the belief that an individual's impoverishment is generally caused by more than unforeseen circumstances or a lack of basic resources. We believe that poverty is a result of broken people attempting to function in broken systems. Author Bryant L. Meyers states it this way: "poverty is the result of relationships that do not work, that are not just, that are not for life, that are not harmonious or enjoyable. Poverty is the absence of Shalom in all of its meanings."¹

We Seek to Provide Developmental Relief to Individuals who Seek Long-Term Sustainable Change

After evaluating the resources in our community available to the needy and impoverished, we believe the course of action that is best suited considering our resources and

¹ Bryant L. Myers, *Walking with the Poor: Principles and Practices of Transformational Development* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1999) 86.

philosophy is to pursue developmental relationships with individuals who are seeking long-term, sustainable change. This will be achieved by members of our church partnering with individuals who desire to see real and substantial life transformation, by fostering ongoing supportive relationships, and by developing a goal-oriented plan of action that will require real commitment and accountability by all those involved in the process.

We Seek to Avoid the Duplication of Services Provided by Other Organizations

We are determined not to duplicate the efforts of other relief organizations which are located in our community, but rather we will seek to work alongside them. In an effort to be a good steward of what we have been given, we will help Applicants explore other community resources for aid, but will generally not provide material assistance when an alternative community resource is available.

We Will Avoid Paternalism

We believe that those working in the benevolence ministry should be mindful of their decisions and take all efforts to avoid paternalism. We will not do things for people that they can do for themselves. This causes harm to the individual receiving aid as well as to those who are helping administer the aid.

4. How Will the FBC Wake Village Philosophy of Benevolence Ministry Change the Way Our Church Handles the Typical Benevolence Case?

In the past when a church member or any other person located in our community has sought aid, they were generally either referred to the Friendship Center or interviewed immediately by a staff member. If money was on hand in the church benevolence fund, the applicant was generally given some sort of aid. All of the decisions concerning these gifts were made with little or no oversight or accountability. Most of the gifts made from the benevolence account were made to individuals who have no relationship whatsoever to our church body. Following the gift being made, the Applicant was usually never heard from again. Over time the act of providing funds and sending the needy person away with what he requested became more important than loving him or providing any real help. It became obvious that our benevolence practice was not generally servant-minded or kingdom oriented.

5. General Guidelines

- 5.1.** All applicants must fill out an Application in full, regardless of the request.
- 5.2** A church staff member shall scan and email a copy of the completed application to the staff member who serves as the benevolence team coordinator.
- 5.3.** A completed application is then submitted via email to all team members for careful consideration and input. The applicant should be made aware by any minister, pastor, or support staff, that the decision to grant or deny a request is made by a team of church members, a majority of which do not work at the church office.

5.4. Benevolence applicants may be initially interviewed by a staff following an appointment being made. The purpose of this guideline is to insure that the ministry staff or support staff dealing with benevolence applications will not be so overwhelmed with benevolence requests and service that they are unable to perform their assigned duties.

5.5 The benevolence team coordinator shall communicate with team members and determine whether the team wishes to grant, deny an applicant's request, or whether an appointment or meeting is necessary to gather more information.

5.6 The applicant will be notified in writing as soon as some decision is made. A form letter may be used. The team is not required to tell the applicant why they are being denied assistance. The letter shall be kept in a file as a record of any action taken by the team.

5.7. The applicant may make an appointment to meet with team members. Appointments will be approximately 30 minutes in length. If more time is required following a 30 minute assessment, a second appointment should be made to develop an action plan. In most instances, several members of the team will meet with an applicant on a Wednesday evening after regular prayer meeting to meet with, pray, and discuss an applicant's situation.

5.8. Payment of utility bills, rent, deposits of any kind, motel room bills, loan payments or other financial obligations can only be authorized with full team approval.

5.9. The team shall not assist fugitives. If it is discovered that an Applicant has an active arrest warrant, they will be automatically denied assistance- unless they first turn themselves in.

5.10. The team shall not post bail or approve payment for a bail bond of any kind.

5.11. An applicant shall not receive assistance if they are not in complete probation or parole compliance or if they are not meeting child support obligations. We will consider assistance of applicants who are delinquent on child support if they are in compliance with a payment plan that includes payment for arrearages.

6. Internal Workings of the Benevolence Ministry

6.1. Ministry led by the deacon body of First Baptist Wake Village

The deacon body is ultimately responsible for the benevolence ministry of the church. The active deacon body shall appoint members of the church to serve on a Benevolence Team to meet as needed, interview individuals, and make decisions regarding assistance. At least one deacon shall actively serve on the team. The Benevolence Team may call upon the deacons to settle disputes, provide leadership, offer guidance, or to provide other assistance in the benevolence work of the church at any time. Deacons may attend meetings and offer input, but may not vote at team meetings.

6.2. Who May Be Appointed to the Benevolence Team

6.2.1. Number. The Benevolence Team may be comprised of no more than twelve (12) active church members and no less than three (3).

6.2.2. Qualifications. Church Members in good standing who have expressed or exhibited a calling may serve on the Team. Team members are to be approved by the deacons. Recommendations may be made to the deacons by the nominating committee.

6.2.3. Complaints. Complaints regarding any member of the Benevolence Team shall be delivered to the Chairman of Deacons in writing. The deacons may act on complaints by requesting a meeting with the Benevolence Team.

6.2.3 Removal. Team members, following a hearing before the active deacon body, may be removed by a majority vote of the active deacons not serving on the Benevolence Team. Removal from the team is not disciplinary, nor does it affect one's membership standing in any way.

6.3. How Often the Benevolence Team Meets. Meetings are to be scheduled on an as needed basis.

6.4. Chairman Responsibilities

6.4.1 Provide leadership for meetings, formal rules of order need not be followed.

6.4.2 Set the tone spiritually at meetings (open with prayer, scripture, share testimony)

6.4.3. Independent approval for financial requests under \$100.00

6.4.4. Insure that the Benevolence Guidelines and Procedure are followed

6.5. Adjunct Partners

6.5.1. An Adjunct Partner is one who serves the Benevolence Term in a limited, specific capacity. Adjunct Partners may attend committee meetings to discuss matters pertaining to their involvement, but may not vote on specific cases.

6.5.2. When an Adjunct Partner is offering support, financial counseling, or transportation, they meet with specific individuals or provide transportation for a specified period of time. This period of time will generally not exceed one month.

6.5.3. Adjunct Partners shall not provide any supplemental financial assistance, groceries, gasoline, or other support not reported or approved by the Benevolence Team. When an Adjunct Partner is involved with a benevolence application they interview prospective Applicant in need and may make a recommendation to the Benevolence Team.

6.6. Making Decisions on Assistance

6.6.1. Financial requests coming to the Team need the following approval:

6.6.2. Any Team member or deacon can approve a request of \$40 or less without Team consent.

6.6.3. The Chairman can approve a request of \$100 or less without Team consent.

6.6.4. Requests for assistance for the first three psychological counseling sessions can

be approved automatically by any team member or deacon, provided the counselor is endorsed by the church.

6.6.5. Requests to consider setting aside a written benevolence policy must have the approval of the full Team.

6.6.6. Any other request must be approved by a majority of the Team.

6.6.7. The Senior Pastor of the Church may make gifts from the benevolence fund of without Team consent. However, the pastor is encouraged to inform team members of any gifts made without violating confidentiality.

6.6.8 If an applicant is an active member of another church, the Team should give consideration as to whether it will be helpful and appropriate to first obtain permission from the applicant’s pastor prior to giving any aid.

6.7. How a Benevolence Request is Processed:

1. A person approaching the church for assistance (the “Applicant”) will be received by the receptionist or ministry staff person on duty and dealt with in a cordial manner.
2. The Applicant will be given a benevolence resource packet that contains an explanation of our benevolence policy, an application, and community resource list.
3. The Applicant will be asked if they would like an appointment with a pastor or team member for spiritual counseling.

If the Applicant Requests and Interview with a Committee Member	If the Applicant does not wish to have an interview with the committee
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Have Applicant fill out the application 2. Remind the Applicant that it will take a few days and up to a week or two before a final decision is made on any assistance. 3. Call the Friendship Center and inquire about any past assistance offered. Write any information on the top of the last page. 4. Send out an email to Benevolence Committee Members with a scanned copy of the application. 5. Schedule an interview with a team members or pastor for spiritual counseling if requested. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Offer to provide a phone for the Applicant to contact the local resources found in the packet. Applicants may use the phone for 10 minutes to make phone calls. 2. Do not call any local organizations on behalf of the Applicant unless they are mentally or physically unable to do so themselves. (avoid paternalism)

4. A completed application should be emailed to members of the benevolence team. The committee should review and offer input regarding the application, and propose an action plan, and be able to request more information regarding a proposed action plan.

5. A meeting may be called at this point in the process, or the application request may be granted or denied.

6. The Applicant’s presence at a team meeting is not required.

7. Once an action plan has been approved by a majority of members, if necessary, a check request shall be made or other arrangements shall be made.

8. Once an action plan has been approved by a majority of members in a meeting or via email or telephone communication, if necessary, the interviewer shall begin to arrange the necessary classes or counseling appointments and transportation with the Applicant.

9. If an action plan is not approved, the Applicant will be informed in writing that the church will not be assisting. In the letter, reasons may be provided to the applicant as to why the request was denied pursuant to the stated guidelines. The written notice of denial should be kept in the applicant's file.

6.8. Request Case Histories & the Chairman's Summary Report

All Applications and Interview Forms will be kept on file in a secure and confidential location in the church office in a specific Benevolence File for a period of no less than 5 years. A copy of the Privacy Policy and Notice shall be given to every applicant. This policy shall allow the applicant to "opt out" or object to the sharing of any sensitive information with a third party. Pastors and staff, Deacons, Benevolence Team Members, Adjunct Team Members shall all be made aware of the privacy policy and notice concerning sensitive information that may be collected during the benevolence process.

7. Special Provisions

7.1. Thanksgiving and Christmas. Requests for holiday assistance shall be arranged through the Friendship Center. Each Sunday school class is encouraged to assist in providing Thanksgiving and Christmas support for needy families during the holidays by contacting the Friendship Center, at least to avoid duplicating efforts for the needy. Ideally, the benevolence funds will not be allocated to providing holiday assistance.

7.2. A copy of these policies and procedures shall be given to any applicant or organization who requests more information about our benevolence ministry.

7.3. These Policies and Procedures may be amended by the Deacons at any time.