

Communion Fund Policy and Guidelines

First Baptist Church of Madison Wisconsin

2020-05-12

How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help? Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action (1 John 3:17-18).

Purpose of the Communion Fund

The Communion Fund has been designated to assist people who are struggling to meet basic needs due to unforeseen circumstances, including members and non-members of First Baptist Church.

Sources of Revenue

There are two sources of revenue for the Communion Fund.

The first source is allocations from an account that holds accumulated gifts designated for the Communion Fund. The account is managed by the Investments and Planned Giving Subcommittee of the Board of Trustees. Each year, 5% of the account balance is allocated for disbursements in the coming year, provided that the amount remaining in the account after allocation does not fall below the original bequest.

The second source is regular and special offerings for the Communion Fund.

Oversight and Accountability

Primary oversight of the fund is the joint responsibility of the pastor and the chair of the Board of Deacons. Disbursements greater than \$300 require written approval by both the pastor and the deacons chair. If either the pastor or deacons chair is unavailable to approve an urgent request, another deacon may provide the second approval.

Records shall be kept for at least two years in a manner that protects the privacy of those requesting and receiving support. The Council may request a summary of disbursements at its discretion.

All revenue to the Communion Fund shall be recorded in the Church's ledger prior to being disbursed.

Eligibility

Members and non-members of FBC may qualify to receive assistance from the Communion Fund. In setting priorities for use of the Communion Fund, severity of need, relationship with First Baptist Church, and individual circumstances will be considered.

General Guidelines

The Communion Fund is intended as a source of last resort, to be used only after the person requesting assistance has explored all other possibilities of help from family, friends, savings, or investments. The Fund is intended to be a temporary help during a time of crisis.

Generally, assistance from the Communion Fund to a recipient or household shall not exceed \$500 within a 12-month period. In unusual circumstances, households and individuals may continue to be assisted up to an additional amount not to exceed \$1000 as the pastor and deacon chair deem appropriate.

When possible, disbursements from the Communion Fund shall be made in the form of vouchers payable to a grocery store or other vendor, or direct payments to a landlord, utility company, or other party to whom payment is due. If this is not possible, receipts are required to verify that disbursements were used for their intended purpose.

Disbursements from the Communion Fund may not be made in the form of a loan, and there shall be no expectation of repayment in money or in labor.

Communion Fund Need Categories

The stated purpose of the Communion Fund is to meet people's basic needs. This section lists some of the most basic needs or circumstances under which financial assistance may be disbursed from the Fund:

- mortgages and rent
- utilities (electricity, gas, water)
- food
- medical treatment, including medications
- transportation to or from a place of employment
- professional counseling that would directly enable the recipient to address a current financial situation.

Although not all inclusive, below is a list of some needs that normally will not be met by the Communion Fund:

- school expenses (i.e. tuition or fees), business investments, or anything that brings financial profit to the individual or household applying
- pay-off of 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.)
- paying of fines as a result of breaking the law
- legal fees and
- penalties related to late payments or irresponsible actions

Administration

An individual or household seeking assistance from the Communion Fund shall make a request to the pastor or deacon chair. The pastor and deacon chair may, at their discretion, refer the applicant to an intermediary organization that is in a better position to assess and respond to the applicant's needs.

For situations in which the pastor or deacon chair decides to handle a request directly without involving an intermediary, the following guidelines apply:

- Requests for amounts of \$50 or less may be made in writing or orally,
- Requests for amounts between \$50 and \$300 shall be made in writing, explaining the applicable circumstances,
- Requests for amounts greater than \$300 shall be made using the “Communion Fund Application,” which may be obtained from the pastor or deacon chair. The application shall be completed fully, including supporting documentation. The pastor and deacon chair may request additional information and/or contact landlords, utility companies, etc., to verify need.
- If the pastor or deacon chair determines that assistance will be provided, the applicant will be informed promptly of the amount and method of disbursement.

The pastor and deacon chair may make disbursements through an intermediary using the following process:

- Each month, the intermediary is informed as to how much support will be available for eligible expenses.
- The intermediary, in turn, will provide specific information to the pastor and deacon chair, listing the name(s) of recipients, the type of assistance they are requesting, the amount needed, the firm to which the check is to be made, the memo that the check is to contain, and the address to which the check is to be sent.

Conclusion

The Communion Fund Policy and Guidelines have been recommended by the Board of Deacons on 5/12/20.

Our intent is to comply with IRS regulations that apply to funds of this type, so that contributions will be tax-deductible by donors and disbursements will not be taxable to recipients.

Furthermore, our intent is that the Policy and Guidelines be used in a spirit of fairness, respect, confidentiality, flexibility, and accountability, consistent with the Communion Fund’s purpose of meeting people’s basic needs.



FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH
A community for all people

Communion Fund Application

APPLICANT INFORMATION:

Name: _____

Street Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone incl. Area Code: _____

E-Mail: _____

Others in Household: _____

STATEMENT OF NEED:

Amount of financial assistance requested: _____

What circumstances have led to your need? _____

PAYEE INFORMATION (for payments to be made directly to a landlord, utility company, or other party to whom payment is due)

Name of payee: _____

Street Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone incl. Area Code: _____

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL RESOURCES:

Are you, or is anyone in your household, currently employed? If yes, please describe, including name of employer. _____

Do you, or does anyone in your household, currently receive other income (for example, Social Security, income from investments, pensions, or public assistance)? If yes, please describe. _____

Have you, or has anyone in your household, previously received assistance from the Communion Fund? If yes, please describe, including dates and amounts.

What other information would you like us to consider? _____

CERTIFICATION, AUTHORIZATION, AND SIGNATURE

I certify that the information I have provided is true and complete. I understand that, while my case will be treated as confidentially as possible, I authorize First Baptist Church to independently verify the information in this application.

Signature: _____

Date: _____