

ATLANTA WESTSIDE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH BENEVOLENCE POLICY

Atlanta Westside's benevolence ministry exists to live out the good news of Jesus by holistically and practically assisting and encouraging our members and neighbors from Buckhead to Bankhead. We believe we are all in need of God's grace to transform and seek to come alongside those in need with tangible support. Our goal is to contribute to building a repentant and rejoicing community through loving, truth-telling relationships where practical, visible needs are being met while hearts are being changed through encounters with Jesus and one another. We recognize the fall has caused our own sin, the sin of others, oppressive systems, and spiritual forces to all contribute to suffering. By God's grace, we aim to honor people as image bearers of God and be a tool of God's redemption. We do this through providing immediate relief that provides temporary provision for emergency aid as well as development that involves a process of ongoing change to be in right relationship with God, self, others, and the rest of creation. In developing individuals and communities, we partner with organizations to see the growth of God's kingdom and His people on Atlanta's westside.

Atlanta Westside Presbyterian first seeks to shepherd and care for its members. As such, the priority for caring for individuals and families is toward members who have been a part of the body for at least 1 year. Requests from individuals who live on the Westside and have personal relationship with someone in the congregation will be considered. Generally, we do not provide immediate, individual assistance to those who do not have an ongoing relationship with Atlanta Westside. The diaconate of Atlanta Westside Presbyterian reserves the right to review cases on an individual basis when the requests fall outside of the guidelines.

I. RELIEF GUIDELINES

1. Physical Relief

Physical needs such as safe housing, food, clothing, and physical health are recognized. We seek to connect individuals and families with physical needs to community organizations and/or resources within the church.

2. Financial Relief

a) Generally, the benevolence fund is intended to provide assistance on a *one-time, immediate emergency basis*, but the diaconate of Atlanta Westside Presbyterian has the option of giving additional gifts as circumstances warrant.

b) Money will be distributed directly to a provider or creditor whenever possible. When a bill is to be paid, a deacon or the church administrator will make disbursement directly to the company, doctor, hospital or agency whenever possible. Money for food will be given in the form of gift certificates.

c) A request for funds should be submitted to a deacon.

a. A team of 2 or more deacons will review the request if the amount of requested funds is \$100 or less. Requests will be reviewed within one week.

b. Requests for more than \$100 require a meeting with 2 or more deacons as well as the completion of the Benevolence Intake form. This form can be completed in conjunction with the deacons. Financial documents will be requested (e.g., rent documents, mortgage documents, utilities, taxes). Additional information may be gathered from the diaconate from partner agencies. Married couples are required to meet together with the deacons unless this jeopardizes the

safety of one of the individuals. Efforts will be made to meet with the individual or family within 1 to 2 weeks. Deacons will work with the family to create a longer-term plan to function in a fiscally responsible manner. Public assistance or financial counseling may be suggested in some cases. The dispersion of any funds will be shared with a member's elder.

- d) Believing we are to freely give of our resources, it is our policy not to make loans. If recipients express a desire to repay a gift, they are encouraged to contribute that money to the general offering of the church or benevolence fund.
- e) Disbursements to an individual or family over the amount of \$500 in any given fiscal year will be brought to the full diaconate and the member's elder.

II. DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES

- 1. Partner Organizations
 - a) Separate procedures and guidelines apply to Atlanta Westside Presbyterian's work with partner organizations.
- 2. Counseling Financial Aid
 - a) Atlanta Westside prizes the heart and recognizes the value of counseling. In general, we consider requests for assistance a form of development; however, we recognize that there may be emergency, relief needs as well.
 - b) We work with members who need financial aid for counseling. We generally cover only 50% of session costs through 10 sessions for a maximum of \$500.
 - c) The diaconate will let the shepherding elder of the member know that they are providing financial aid for counseling.