

Christ the Word PCA
Deacon Board
Benevolence Program—Report to Session

1. Purpose of the Diaconal Benevolence Program

a. Encouragement to become like the Church in Macedonia:

i. 2 Cor. 8:1-5

We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own free will, begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints—and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us.

b. The purpose of the Benevolence Program is to:

i. Decentralize

ii. Hasten aid

iii. Deepen fellowship

c. The hope is that the ministries of Christ the Word will become semiautonomous associations of believers helping their fellow believers and neighbors with their spiritual and physical needs.

2. Implementation

a. In order to expedite assistance at the formal level when it becomes necessary, each ministry of the church should ordinarily be led by an ordained officer or his wife.

i. Pathways

ii. WOW

iii. Living Word Youth

iv. Basic Training

v. Women's Bible Studies

vi. Future Christ the Word ministries

b. Education of ministry leaders toward the Assistance Criteria.

3. Allocation of Benevolence Funds

- a. The Deaconate or Session, each at its own discretion or jointly, may disburse resources from the Benevolence Fund outside of requests made by the various ministries of the church.
- b. Only in extraordinary cases should the Benevolence Fund be used by the congregation's ministries to assist those in financial need; and then, only with the approval of the Deaconate up to \$1,000.
- c. If the amount exceeds \$1,000, then the decision to disburse funds should be made jointly by the Session and Deaconate.

4. Formal coordination of Physical Assistance

- a. In the case of physical assistance, the various ministries should attempt to meet the needs locally. Upon determining as a group that the task is too large, or talent within the group is unavailable, then the Deaconate should determine the best way to address the situation.

5. Extraordinary cases

- a. When assistance is requested, but the problem is due to the following grave circumstances, the ministry should mitigate further damage and then refer the individual and situation to the Session.
 - i. Ongoing and unrepentant sin
 - ii. Life-changing legal matters
 - iii. Imminent danger
 - iv. Problems due to psychological impairments
- b. In circumstances that demand immediate attention by the Session or Deaconate, each body should establish a policy for establishing emergency quorums and called meetings.

PROPOSED ASSISTANCE CRITERIA

Applicable scripture reference: 1 Timothy 5:1-16

Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father. Treat younger men like brothers, ² older women like mothers, younger women like sisters, in all purity.

³ Honor widows who are truly widows. ⁴ But if a widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show godliness to their own household and to make some return to their parents, for this is pleasing in the sight of God. ⁵ She who is truly a widow, left all alone, has set her hope on God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day, ⁶ but she who is self-indulgent is dead even while she lives. ⁷ Command these things as well, so that they may be without reproach. ⁸ But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

⁹ Let a widow be enrolled if she is not less than sixty years of age, having been the wife of one husband, ¹⁰ and having a reputation for good works: if she has brought up children, has shown hospitality, has washed the feet of the saints, has cared for the afflicted, and has devoted herself to every good work. ¹¹ But refuse to enroll younger widows, for when their passions draw them away from Christ, they desire to marry ¹² and so incur condemnation for having abandoned their former faith. ¹³ Besides that, they learn to be idlers, going about from house to house, and not only idlers, but also gossips and busybodies, saying what they should not. ¹⁴ So I would have younger widows marry, bear children, manage their households, and give the adversary no occasion for slander. ¹⁵ For some have already strayed after Satan. ¹⁶ If any believing woman has relatives who are widows, let her care for them. Let the church not be burdened, so that it may care for those who are really widows.

1. How closely are they affiliated with Christ the Word?
 - a) Ordinarily, serving the needs of a regularly attending member should come before serving the needs of others.
 - b) All others need to be carefully considered, with higher priority going in order to:
 - regularly attending non-members
 - acquaintances of members
 - strangers in need
 - c) If requested, we will also consider helping members in instances where they are undertaking acts of mercy independently.
2. Is the request a need or a want?
3. Is the problem symptomatic of a sin which must be addressed first?
 - Many problems are self-inflicted due to repeated sinful behavior that finally catches up with a person. Our first priority must be to stanch the sinful

condition in the hope that the individual can then resolve the problem for himself.

- In such cases the assistance we provide should be primarily directed to a person's spiritual condition.
4. What have they done, or what can they do, to solve the problem?
 - Can we assist effectively in some capacity which does not require CTW to assume immediate responsibility for resolution of the need?
 5. Is the request a problem Christ the Word can solve?
 - Is it beyond our abilities financially or physically?
 - If it is, are other options available that we can look to help?
 6. Is Christ the Word the sole source of help or supplemental?
 - In the past, when Christ the Word has not been in control of the schedule and scope of work there have been problems with unannounced schedule changes, cancellations, and disorganization. Such things are discouraging to volunteers who are often sacrificing time from family and other pressing needs. We need to guard against this while acknowledging there will be times we are at the mercy of others' schedules.
 - In cases where Christ the Word is coming alongside outside organizations to assist, extra effort should go into establishing chain of communication, and lead times for when and where things will be done.

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