

## ADDRESSING FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE REQUESTS BENEVOLENCE FUND GUIDELINES

The Assistance Fund is available to help persons in financial need. The Committee has been charged with administering this fund. Our Biblical basis is to follow the admonition in I John 3:17-18, “If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us love not with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.”

### Benevolence Fund Maintenance

- The Assistance Committee members will encourage giving to the fund.
- The Assistance Committee members will regularly schedule offerings to maintain the fund, with additional offerings to be taken as needs arise.
- The fund is not to be hoarded, but given away generously and cheerfully, as God gives.
- The Assistance Committee members will not accept donations earmarked for a particular assistance need, other than for the fund itself. They may, however, consider a request by a donor as to where a donation might go.
- All fund plans and fund transactions will be filed and recorded for future review.

### Benevolence Fund Distribution

- The fund will be distributed with *first priority* given to regularly attending members; *second priority* given to those who are our neighbors in our immediate community; and *third priority* to those who are our neighbors in the general area.
- The fund is available for emergency, immediate and/or unexpected needs.
- For requests from persons other than attending members, names should be checked with the ACCESS caseworkers at [caseworker@accessofwestmichigan.org](mailto:caseworker@accessofwestmichigan.org) or 774-2175 ext. 101 or 107 before responding. The ACCESS caseworkers can also provide information on other community resources that may be available.
- All requests are to be kept confidential unless the requestor has granted permission to have the need made public.
- Needs will be paid directly to the source requiring money, not giving cash or checks to the person requesting assistance, if at all possible.
- Two Assistance Committee members will review each specific request for any amount under \$200, and reach consensus on appropriate action, for anyone with *first* or *second priority*. All reasonable efforts will be made to determine actual need and hardship. They will inform the other Assistance Committee members of any action taken at the next Assistance Committee members’ meeting. All decisions for those with *third party* or any request over \$200 will be made by a majority of the Assistance Committee members. The decision to refer to another church closer to the requestor can be made by two Assistance Committee members (The ACCESS caseworkers can assist with this referral as well).
- Any requests over \$200, or repeat requests of any amount in a 12 month period will be asked to fill out an Application for Financial Assistance (see reverse side). This requires an interview with an Assistance Committee member, a waiting period, and entering into a financial counseling arrangement.