

# *Benevolence Policy*



**OPEN BIBLE  
CHURCH** <sup>OF</sup> **RAPID  
CITY**  
LOVING GOD • INVESTING IN PEOPLE

Matthew 25:34, 35, 40 NKJV

*... 'for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; [Mat 25:40 NKJV] 40 "And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did [it] to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.'*

## **BENEVOLENCE POLICY**

### **Open Bible Church of Rapid City**

#### **Church and State.... Our Views on Governmental Assistance...**

To argue the point of who should be responsible for welfare is akin to *"chasing the wind"*. The fact remains that government is involved and welfare funding comes through our tax dollars whether we agree in principle or not. Since this is the case we accept the fact that the governmental social services are going to have certain benefits available for people and we have no problem referring people to those programs.

We also understand that government's role in welfare can and may change at anytime. We must never take this for granted, therefore the church must be ready and willing to fulfill its God given role by developing programs of welfare/benevolence (meeting the needs of others) to additionally assist people.

In an effort to better fulfill our God given responsibilities these Benevolence Policies and Procedures are written to serve as the framework for a comprehensive plan to meet the needs of people, physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

#### **Who we will strive to help...**

##### ***Transients***

People passing through town and finding themselves with emergency need

Hebrews 13:2: *"Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it."*

##### ***Widows, Single Parents, Orphans***

We believe that "widows and orphans" in modern-day America encompasses, single parents, the majority of whom are women.

James 1:27: *"This is pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father, to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world."*

##### ***Prisoners and Their Families***

People in prison have spiritual needs. In addition their families may have spiritual needs, but these families are also likely to have physical needs. Part of our assistance involves the annual Angel Tree Project, which provides Christmas gifts to the children of prisoners.

##### ***Fellow Church Members/Attendees***

Finally, James 2:15-16 stresses the importance of helping a fellow Christian in need. Galatians 6:10 tells us to *"do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of faith."* We feel a special obligation to minister to people who are part of our church body. This doesn't exclude other people, but we believe that we should be especially aware of our members. We would like to create an environment where people will feel the freedom to share their financial needs as freely as they would physical or spiritual needs.

## OUR BENEVOLENCE PLAN

### I. Our partnership with Church Response... (Community Benevolence Program)

Church Response was founded in 1972, after the Rapid City flood, to provide emergency assistance to people in need. Since then it has served thousands of people in the Rapid City area. Church Response's primary support comes from churches like us. Our contributions and those of other organizations and individuals supply a financial base for operations.

In an effort to maximize our efforts, we support Church Response financially each month and generally refer requests for help to Church Response first. If Church Response has done all that they can, and confirmation to that affect is obtained, then we, as a church, will consider each request on a case by case basis.

#### Church Response helps in the following areas...

**Counseling** - is provided for those unfamiliar with available resources. Caseworkers also serve as mediator and/or client advocate in making arrangements with utility companies or landlords.

**Food** - A food pantry and bags of commodities are available to those who meet federal low income guidelines, or who demonstrate a need due to temporary financial crisis. This assistance is also available to transients traveling through Rapid City.

**Housing** - Limited funds are available for rent, rent deposits, and utility deposits. Eligibility is determined by income, current housing situation, and ability to maintain future payments.

**Utilities** - Emergency help can be provided to avoid utility disconnect. A caseworker will work with a client and the utility company to make arrangements and/or provide a voucher for the minimum amount required to maintain service. Eligibility is determined by income, proof of impending disconnect and referral.

**Transportation** - Vouchers are provided for gasoline or minibus ticket to get to and from new employment until first paycheck.

**Other areas of Assistance** - Toiletries and necessity items, baby food and formula, are available; and assistance is given to those who need help in obtaining birth certificates to get employment.

### II. Other benevolence programs sponsored/supported by OBC

A. Para church/Partnership programs

**OBC partners with local Parachurch/Partnership programs from time to time as finances are available and as approved in the current budget. Contact the Executive Pastor for current sponsorships.**

*B. Denominational programs*

**We are committed to supporting denomination programs as finances allow. Contact the Executive Pastor for current information.**

*C. OBC sponsored benevolence outreach*

**Examples of benevolence outreach and are not limited to the following:**

- General distribution of aid to the poor
- Aid through benevolence requests Provide meals for funerals
- Provide meals for those coming out of the hospital
- Financial counseling.
- Needs/skill listings in newsletter
- Men's Mobilization Teams
- Neighborhood family adoptions at Christmastime.
- Periodic mass distribution of needed items to those in need.
- Blanket Drives, Coat Drives, Food Drives, etc.

### **III. Our Guidelines for Benevolence Requests**

*A. Benevolence Limitations: (one request annually)*

***Active Attendees/Givers | Up to \$800 per occurrence***

- Active attendance at least 50% weekend (3 month look-back)
- Tithing on a regular basis
- Positive lifestyle in accordance with scripture.

***Inactive Attendees/Givers | Up to \$400 per occurrence***

- 10%-50% weekend (3 month look-back)
- Marginal giving
- Lifestyle issues

***Transient/Referred/Marginal Attendee | up to \$100 per occurrence***

- Less than 10% weekend (3 month look-back)
- Transient need must be verifiable misfortune.
- Food or Gas: \$50 limit
- Shelter: up to two nights lodging

*B. Standard Procedure:*

→ Individual requests for help may be made at the church office. Those requesting help will be referred to Church Response first if not a regular attendee of our church. If Church Response has already done all they can do then we will consider further help.

- **A benevolence application will be completed by the person receiving the assistance and information verified prior to any approvals given. If any information is deemed incorrect, the application may be immediately denied. Financial counseling must be offered at all times and may be a prerequisite before final approval is given.**
- If financial counseling is required, then a report will be filed with the Executive Pastor that the counseling has taken place and the benevolence request will be reviewed again. Financial counseling does not guarantee approval of a benevolence request.
- Should the request be an emergency need, the Executive Pastor and/or other designated staff person will have the power to authorize help and will dispense it according to policy.
- All benevolence requests and help dispensed should be recorded on the form provided and turned into the Executive Pastor. A database will be maintained with information on all requests and the resulting decisions pertaining to those requests.
- Where possible, a follow-up contact will be made to those receiving help. This follow-up contact will be for the purposes of added counseling and encouragement where needed.
- ***Decision criteria:***
  - Verifiable need
  - Misfortune or mismanagement
  - Demonstrated sincerity and willingness to get on the right path
  - Ongoing practical viability if assistance is rendered

*C. How the aid will be dispensed:*

- Meal vouchers may be provided if the Mission is not an option.
- Gas will be charged or vouchers provided and the name of the individual will be noted on the charge receipt. The Executive Pastor has the charge cards and vouchers.
- If there is a need for groceries, a delegated person will be appointed to purchase groceries and deliver them to the person's home or if the individual wishes to remain anonymous the groceries could be delivered to the church and picked up there. The groceries purchased will be from a pre-determined list of nutritious and economical food items. The limit per family member will generally be \$15. (use Food Bank when possible)
- Any other bills would be paid directly to the provider and only after confirmation of the need is met. Bills that may be considered for assistance are rent/mortgage

*D. Dealing with fraud and abusers of the system*

- No cash... Needs will be met by direct payment for the services to the provider
- No family or individual may be helped more than once within a six month window of time. (may be waived in unusual circumstances)

- References will be checked.... In order to receive help there must be proof of need. No help will be given unless confirmation of the need is made via phone, personal visit, or appropriate paper work.
- Identification must be presented (D.L., S.S. card). Most non-member requests need to be processed through Church Response first. Confirmation from Church Response as to the status of individuals will be necessary before we can proceed with help from our church.
- If there is a request for family aid, the family should be present or adequate proof given to confirm that there is a "family"
- Those with right attitudes will not resist accountability. When talking with someone who is asking for help one should not hesitate to ask tough questions about their willingness to work and the circumstances that led to their need. (All must be done in an attitude of love)

2Thes. 3:10-12: *"For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat." We hear that some among you are idle. They are not busy; they are busybodies. Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the bread they eat."* (NIV)

#### **IV. Funding of the Benevolence Program**

##### *A. Special offerings/designations*

Funding for benevolence ministries will generally be through special gifts and designations to the benevolence fund.

##### *B. General Fund (undesignated tithes & offerings)*

Additional benevolence funds needed over and above donations will come from the general fund of the church.

##### *C. Fund raisers*

In some cases we will sponsor fund raising events such as a pancake feed, etc. to raise large amounts of money to help families with catastrophic need.

### **GOD'S WORD: THE ONLY REMEDY**

When it comes to spiritual problems, no amount of money, or any other kind of help can substitute for the solution found in God's Word. Lost people need salvation, and saved people need to live according to God's will. Unfortunately, our society fails to recognize this fact and responds with its own "solutions". But only God can fill the void in people's lives. In all things we must keep this vision in focus.

2 Cor. 8:14: *"At this present time your abundance being a supply for their want, that their abundance also may become a supply for your want, that there may be equality."*