



S O J O U R N

**Sojourn Houston Benevolence Fund  
Policies & Procedures**

## **General Guidelines**

Underneath the oversight and authority of the Council of Elders, the Financial Stewardship Team is free to manage Sojourn's Benevolence Fund. All requests for financial assistance should be submitted to the Financial Stewardship Team in writing and must include: a description of the need, the amount requested, and the signature of at least one elder or deacon. To receive assistance, at least one member of the household must be working, retired, disabled, or have a pending job placement. Additionally, in assessing the need, the FST may ask to review budgets, invoices, bank statements, etc. The Financial Stewardship Team may also ask that the Neighborhood Parish contribute all or a portion of the requested amount. Under most circumstances, Sojourn's Benevolence Fund will be used to match the parish's contribution.

As a general rule, cash should not be given as a form of assistance. Whenever possible, the church should pay direct bills, such as electricity or gas, and only provide a check when appropriate receipts are received. Cash may be given only with the approval of the Council of Elders.

All benevolence requests are subject to a \$250 minimum. Any financial need less than \$250 should be met by the Neighborhood Parish.

Each calendar year, assistance is limited to \$1000 per family for Covenant Members and \$500 per family for non-members who are engaged in the life of a Neighborhood Parish. However, exceptions can be made with the approval of the Council of Elders.

Members may also receive up to a \$2,000 loan. Loans are interest-free and require the approval of the Council of Elders as well as the Financial Stewardship Team. Payment shall be made in ten equal monthly payments to commence after six months.

## **Deductible Donations**

Under current tax laws, we are not able to give a tax-deductible credit for a donation that is specifically directed to an individual or a family. Covenant members may give directly to the Benevolence Fund and then make others aware of the needs of particular individuals. The church is not bound, however, to give any money to individuals unless a thorough assessment indicates a true need. The contributor must understand there is no direct correlation between their gifts and the assistance given.

## Processing Requests

In order to best minister to individuals or families in need, all Neighborhood Parishes wishing to offer tax deductible financial assistance are asked to adhere to the following procedures:

- Assign a representative within the Neighborhood Parish to assist the person or family in submitting their written request to the Financial Stewardship Team.
- Inform Pastor Chris Magee of the need and the willingness of the Neighborhood Parish to assist. He will appoint an assigned representative to make a financial needs assessment. The representative will then relay the need to the Financial Stewardship Team.
- Following a needs assessment, the Neighborhood Parish may take an offering, to be deposited within the Benevolence Fund. Support will then be provided to the recipient in accordance with the Financial Stewardship Team's assessment and the funds currently available. The recipient will be informed of the generosity of the Neighborhood Parish that made the assistance possible. Please do not make any promises about potential assistance until the individual or family has met with a representative of the Financial Stewardship Team.
- Neighborhood Parishes may choose to provide support beyond the current parameters established, but Sojourn is unable by law to give tax credit for such contributions.