

**Bethel College Mennonite Church
Deacon Commission
Caring Fund Policies and Practices
October 27, 2016**

1
2
3
4
5
6
7 **The Caring Fund** is an above-budget benevolent fund administered by the Deacon Commission for the
8 purpose of assisting our congregation's members and community persons in need as funds are available.
9 The fund is generated by above budget offerings made payable to Bethel College Mennonite Church and
10 designated "Caring Fund." Typically, special offerings for the Caring Fund are received at Thanksgiving
11 time and on Maundy Thursday. In addition, the Church Board has given authorization for special
12 offerings to be requested for the Caring Fund at any time that the fund is in need of additional support.
13 The Deacon Commission will monitor this balance and authorize such requests. The goal is to maintain a
14 minimum balance of \$2,500.

15
16 **Confidentiality and the Congregation:** Because of the personal sensitivity involved in situations of need
17 the Caring Fund will be administered by strict expectations of confidentiality upon the part of Deacons,
18 Pastors, and those administratively responsible for the distribution. Annually the Deacon Commission
19 should give a general report of its activity to the congregation, using the broad categories of distribution
20 to BCMC members and to non-BCMC persons of our community.

21
22 **Grants to BCMC members:**

- 23 • Grants are made to members of BCMC to fulfill the scriptural command to "Bear one another's
24 burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2). We seek to respond to
25 physical, spiritual, emotional, and financial needs of members, particularly in situations where
26 financial assistance will offer redemptive and life-giving support.
- 27 • Requests for grants to members may originate with other congregational members, by
28 recommendation from the Pastoral staff, or by the Deacon Commission itself. A grant application
29 form will be completed by the person or entity requesting such a grant and be presented to the
30 Deacon Commission for processing at its next regular meeting. With Deacon approval, this form
31 will be further given to the Administrative Assistant and the Church Treasurer to prepare a check
32 and make payment.
- 33 • Where there is a continuing need for on-going financial assistance, the Deacons will review such
34 grants at least annually.
- 35 • Grants to a BCMC family are limited to \$4,000 in a 12-month period.

36
37 **Grants to non-BCMC persons:**

- 38 • Grants typically are used to meet needs such as rent, utilities, emergency travel, food, or
39 health-related costs. Grants may not be used to help pay for prescriptions.
- 40 • Grants are made only on the basis of referral from another agency such as but not limited to the
41 Salvation Army and Mid-Kansas Community Action Program (MID-CAP). The geographical
42 area in which we will make grants is defined by the service area of the local Salvation Army,
43 generally meaning within Harvey County.
- 44 • Grants to non-BCMC persons are limited to \$100 per household per year (defined as within any
45 12 months).
- 46 • Grants are not made directly as cash gifts to individuals but rather to a third party (i.e. landlord or
47 utility company), unless the use of the grant can be verified.
- 48 • Grant applications are processed using a form available from the Administrative Assistant, which
49 is then forwarded to the Treasurer to prepare a check and make payment.

- Pastors are empowered by the Deacons to determine need and eligibility and to authorize payment within these guidelines.

Any grant requests of greater than \$100 for both BCMC members and non-members must receive approval from the Deacon Commission. Pastoral Staff are granted discretionary power by the Deacon Commission to determine grants that are requested for \$100 or less, especially for non-BCMC persons.

The Administrative Assistant keeps records of grants distributed each year.

The Treasurer prepares an updated Caring Fund report showing itemized income and expenses each month to give to Administrative Assistant, pastors and Deacon Commission chair; this will be shared on an occasional basis with the entire Deacon Commission. Names of beneficiaries are included on this report, but are not included on the "Bills" report reviewed by the Finance Committee.

Contributions to the Caring Fund: Contributions to the Caring Fund are subject to Church Board policies. This means that contributions must meet IRS requirements. Members and friends are free to suggest names of those who might need and benefit from the Caring Fund. However, such suggestions shall be deemed advisory rather than mandatory in nature. The Deacon Commission is in no way bound to honor such suggestions since contributions are accepted only on the condition that they are merely nonbinding suggestions or recommendations.

Witness Commission Budget: In addition to the Caring Fund for which the Deacon Commission is responsible, it should be noted that the Witness Commission has in its annual budget an amount which is given to the Community Assistance Fund sponsored by the Newton Ministerial Alliance and administered by staff at the local Salvation Army office; it uses these funds for a similar distribution to high need situations in our community.

Everence Matching grants: The Everence (formerly MMA) Sharing Fund provides matching grants to congregations who assist either their own members or other persons in their community. It can be used to support the work of organizations or church projects that help people with basic financial needs. For this additional assistance an additional application must be signed by our Everence congregational advocate. Funds will be distributed based upon Everence guidelines, amount of funding for which our congregation is eligible in a given year, and upon whether funds are available. More detailed guidelines are available through Everence.

(The above is based upon description of Caring Fund practices written by Pastor Heidi Regier Kreider and discussion by the Deacon Commission of BCMC on August 26, 2010.

*Action by consensus to approve this document, **Caring Fund Policies and Practices**, by the Deacon Commission of Bethel College Mennonite Church, September 30, 2010. Amended by Deacon Commission, May 21, 2013, October 27, 2016.*