



evident life
CHURCH
BENEVOLENCE GUIDELINES

Purpose

The purpose of benevolent financial assistance is to aid and assist the work of God in an individual's or family's life. Benevolence is funded from a portion of the generous giving received from the Evident Life Church family and are set aside to assist an individual or a family in a time of crisis. It is not designed to support an individual or family on an ongoing basis. God works through many willing vessels. Evident Life Church is only one of those vessels.

Position

It is our position, based upon the Scriptures, that personal and family resources are used by God to prepare and test God's servants as stewards and managers for Him. Therefore when a financial crisis arises in an individual or family we must dutifully investigate the situation. Not always will it be in the interest of the individual to rush to their assistance with financial aid. It may be possible that the financial situation the person finds themselves in is a way that God is trying to redirect the course of their life. If the church quickly and without prayerful consideration provides financially, it may disrupt what God is trying to accomplish. Experience has shown that God uses time and pressure to change the course of our lives, including financial pressure.

However, some financial problems arise that do not fit in the above scenario. They are usually the result of death, illness, injury, or other crisis, which we refer to as a "special case". Each situation must be carefully and prayerfully considered to determine the root cause of the situation, and to ensure that the church's assistance is warranted, and a response to the Holy Spirit's leading.

Evident Life Church desires to teach people to fish and sometimes help them to see how they could buy the pond, but does not just continue to give fish (benevolence funds) away without solving the root cause. The participant must be willing to take small steps to change their current situation and be willing to participate in appropriate programs offered by the church.

Categories of Financial Benevolence Requests

All benevolence at Evident Life Church is divided into two categories. One category involves people outside the church. The second involves the church family. We believe we have a special responsibility to minister to our members' needs and be dedicated to addressing them.

Members of other churches should seek guidance and counsel from the fellowship they attend as an extension of God's provision. If their church is not in a position to provide assistance, outside agencies are another option.

Non-Members - Non-members are defined as any persons or families who have not been actively attending Sunday services and plugged into one of Evident Life's ministries or LifeGroups for a period of at least 6 months.

Members - Members are defined, for the purpose of benevolent assistance, as persons or families who have been actively attending Sunday services and have been plugged into one of Evident Life's ministries or LifeGroups for a period of at least 6 months.

Financial Counseling

Financial Counseling whether in a class or one-on-one setting will be *suggested* to everyone upon their first request for benevolent. Upon their second request for assistance, the person requesting funds must agree to participate in financial coaching if requested by church leadership. If they are not willing to participate in financial coaching and counseling, Evident Life Church is not able to offer financial assistance. If they agree to participate, details of the next class or available session will be given.

Priority response

The primary types of financial assistance provided are: food, essential bills (gas, electric, and water), emergency housing, and medical crisis. Non-essentials (car payments, car repairs, phone bills, etc.) will be viewed on a case-by-case request. Debt service payments (credit cards, house payments, and other loans) are not routinely included in financial assistance. Special consideration will be given to widows and single parent households.

The Benevolence Ministry will also determine whether the Life Group or immediate family should be notified of the need so they have the opportunity to offer prayer, encouragement, and assistance. If appropriate, permission will be asked to contact a family member and/or other agencies. We use this to gain direction and to determine how others may assist. Additionally, we may check with debtors to see if applicants are habitually late or if this is an isolated situation. The extent of the church's financial assistance will be determined by evaluating the circumstances and being led by the Holy Spirit.

Evident Life Church is here to move people from *getting* to *gaining* to *giving* so we always keep the responsibility for the solution on the person requesting assistance. When they commit to help themselves, Evident Life Church will respond. This prevents dependency and moves people towards personal responsibility without the church having to say "no".

Our goal is to use Evident Life's resources to build relationships, keeping the responsibility with the person, offering rewards as they take small steps to change their situation. This will lead to long-term results. Throughout the journey, our prayer is that they will experience Jesus' love.

Process

Each request for benevolence begins with the Benevolence Request Form, which must be completely filled out before it can be reviewed by Evident Life Leadership. Once the form has been completed and submitted, leadership will prayerfully review your request and determine whether or not the church can offer assistance. The church will inform you of their decision as soon as possible.

If your request is approved, checks will not be issued directly to applicants. Checks will only be issued to authorized payees (utility company, hospital, food card, etc.).

Although Evident Life Church wants to help as many people as possible, the church's benevolence resources are limited. Therefore, we will typically only consider two requests per family per calendar year for an annual total of up to \$500.00.

Sensitivity and Stewardship Responsibility

- Everyone who requests assistance will be treated with respect and kindness, and responded to through prayer and the leading of the Holy Spirit.
- Each request will be considered according to guidelines that are Biblically based.
- An individual's lack of planning, neglect, or procrastination does not create an emergency or crisis that Evident Life Church is obligated to fulfill immediately.
- We cannot be all things to all people.
- We have limited resources on a monthly basis and are required to be good stewards to those we are led by the Holy Spirit to assist.
- Please request a Benevolence Request Form by emailing office@evidentlife.org.