

Benevolence During Covid-19

If your church has a Benevolence Policy, now is the time to use it!

A good benevolence policy will help you confidently decide how to respond to calls you receive and needs you encounter. It will tell you **who** to help, **how** to help, and the **limits** of help you can provide.

If your benevolence policy is too limiting or too vague, it would be wise for the diaconate to update it. Just make sure you stay in line with your church's mission, and follow the best practices outlined below.



IF YOU DON'T HAVE A BENEVOLENCE POLICY, NOW IS THE TIME TO WRITE ONE!

Best Practices (in compliance with Canadian Charity laws)

- ✓ **Church benevolence must be available to the broader community** (not just church members). You may set geographical limits, but not membership-based ones.
- ✓ **Have clear boundaries.** *What WILL you help with? What will you NOT help with? HOW will you provide help?* If you have a restricted fund for Benevolence, make sure its uses are in line with the donors' intentions.
- ✓ **Partner with other community organizations when possible.** The CRA does not prohibit churches from giving funds to other registered charities; however you must keep your church's mission and your Benevolence Fund's intended purposes in mind.
- ✓ **Know the limitations.** Be aware that if you give someone *a series of payments* totaling more than \$500 in a year, they may have to report it to CRA and it may affect the recipient's social assistance. Single payments not included in this. See [CRA -T5007 Guide](#).
- ✗ **This is NOT a Loan Fund.** If a recipient wants to give back to the church's benevolence fund when they are able, they are free to do so.
- ✗ **No "Direct Giving".** Do not take offerings or accept gifts that are targeted to specific individuals. A charity **cannot** be involved in such "directed giving".
- ✗ **Benevolence funds are restricted.** Do not use money that was given to your benevolence fund for other purposes (eg, paying church bills) without the congregation's consent. It can only be used for the purposes your church has outlined for that fund.

POINTS TO PONDER

- ? **While churches are "closed", how do people request help?** Does your current system work or do you need to try some new methods (emailing, texting, online forms)? How do you access your messages and return calls? **Tip: If deacons are returning cold calls from home, you can dial *67 before calling the number to disable caller ID.**
- ? **How are you keeping good records?** If you've traditionally used a book to track your benevolence work, how can you share it more easily with fellow deacons? **Tip: Try creating and/or sharing a spreadsheet securely on Google Drive, Microsoft OneDrive or Dropbox!**
- ? **Who else in the congregation can help?** Deacons don't have to do it all (now or ever!) **Tip: Recruit willing, healthy, low-risk people to help with duties like driving, deliveries, and check-in phone calls.**