

Chicago AC Church Guidelines for Benevolence

Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it. – Proverbs 3:27

Frequently, we welcome visitors to our church building who communicate a material need. It can be difficult to know the best way to help. For many years our ministers have taken the lead in giving direct assistance to these individuals. Our ministers do have a system in place that includes (but is not limited to) praying with/for the person, directing him/her toward specific organizations that may offer further assistance, logging the request and any assistance that is given, and encouraging him/her to stay for lunch and services.

You may be presented with a material need during church services or possibly outside of church hours (i.e. while preparing for church lunch or Sunday School). *The following are some suggestions (not rules, please exercise prayerful judgment), of how to respond if someone communicates a material need at church:*

- If someone communicates a material need during church hours, *please refer the request to a minister.*
- Please try to avoid handing out cash. Cash is not always used in healthy ways.
- If a minister is unavailable, you may (if you feel comfortable)
 - Take time to listen to the person's story.
 - Ask if he/she knows Jesus and is praying for His help.
 - Give Jesus Christ the glory for any help we might give.
 - Pray with/for the person.
 - Make conversation until a minister is available. This may feel uncomfortable, but it is a great way to reflect Christ's love and show that we are a caring, personable church.
 - Since it may be unclear if the visitor is employed or has family nearby, alternative conversation starters may include-- What gifts, talents, or resources has God given you? What are you good at or what do you enjoy doing? *
 - Offer nutritious food, especially if you are serving church lunch.
 - Give the visitor an informational Welcome Card.
 - Invite him/her to church service and lunch.
- Please keep the exterior doors locked outside of church hours, until an usher or minister is present. (Many local churches employ full-time staff who may assist with material needs, so someone may enter an unlocked exterior door with that expectation.)
- For more information on effectively helping those with material needs, the Apostolic Christian HarvestCall website has a link to training videos from the Chalmers Center's *Helping without Hurting* Seminar (harvestcall.org/training). The book *When Helping Hurts* by Steve Corbett & Brian Fikkert is also recommended.

*These questions are related to the idea of "Asset-Based Mapping" (discussed in *Helping without Hurting* seminar), a method of boosting community health by identifying strengths of the community. These questions can help individuals to think positively about themselves and consider their personal value in God's eyes and as part of the community.