

HOPE HELPS SUPPORT FUND POLICY

1. The church has made funds available to support the immediate relief or rehabilitation of an individual or family unit during and in the aftermath of a crisis. These funds are allocated from the 'Community Fund' for distribution among church members.
2. This policy outlines the purpose and criteria for allocation of funds.
3. Poverty alleviation is a complex subject and not all situations are created equal! We often think we need to give out relief in the form of financial assistance, but in reality, the number of people needing this will be very small. Determining the difference between this and other long-term ways of supporting individuals is not within the scope of this policy.

Key principles:

4. In a crisis three principles should govern how financial aid is given in a crisis:
 - a. **Immediate:** a timely response is crucial.
 - b. **Seldom** – relief is not the usual or sole means of supporting individuals in our churches. More often long-term support strategies are required.
 - c. **Temporary:** assistance should only be provided for the time that people are unable to help themselves. Ensure recipients are fully aware of this.

Responsibilities

5. According to this policy, the following persons are responsible for:
 - a. Eldership Team:
 - i. Setting the scope and the limits of the Hope Helps Support Fund.
 - ii. Making the final decision on any contentious application, within the approved policy framework.
 - b. Trustees: Setting and reviewing the Hope Helps Support Fund policy to ensure it complies with good governance requirements.
 - c. The Hope Helps Team: Authorising and processing fund applications and liaising with relevant individuals to ensure support is received as applicable.
 - d. Pastoral Support Team: Organising follow up support to individuals, particularly where support is ongoing, to ensure any conditions are met, and support is reduced / terminated at the appropriate time.

- e. Finance Team:
 - i. Organising for payments to be made to the appropriate individual as authorised by the Hope Helps Team.
 - ii. Monitoring and reporting the usage of the Hope Helps Support Fund.
- f. Recipient: Responsible for utilising funds received for the purposes authorised as per the Hope Helps Support Fund Application.

Purpose of funds:

6. The main goal of emergency resources is to help meet basic needs. Normally, these needs will be about food and other essential household and personal hygiene items. But other needs could be considered.

7. Support funds can be used for church members in need and for assisting church members to meet needs that arise among the local community that the church is called to serve; usually where the recipient is known by a member of the church community.

Decision making criteria:

8. Requests for funds from the Hope Helps fund will be assessed individually against the following criteria:

- a. Is there a crisis really at hand? What would happen if you fail to give assistance?
- b. What is the person doing to help themselves?
- c. Does the person have family who can help? Have they been asked, and have they done as much as they can?
- d. Has the person been receiving support from you (or others) previously?
- e. What are the personal circumstances of the individual/family?
 - i. Do they have children?
 - ii. Is their home is rented?
 - iii. Is this crisis due to Covid-19? If not, what is it due to?
 - iv. Are they entitled to any Govt benefits (e.g. Universal Credit)? Have they been applied for? Does the person need help in applying for them?
 - v. Do they have any savings?
 - vi. Are they disabled/have other health issues/receiving disability benefit/should they received /can we assist with claiming for this?

9. It is important to emphasise that it is temporary support, in principle, and requirements for the funds will be reviewed by the Hope Helps Team periodically.

Exclusion criteria:

10. Example needs that the emergency fund cannot meet include:

- a. School fees, business investments or anything that generates financial gains for the applicant or his/her family.
- b. Payment of credit cards (except when an applicant has had to use a credit card in a crisis or emergency, for example, hospitalization, death, etc.)
- c. Needs of people who are wanted by law or for paying fines as a result of breaking the law.
- d. Legal Fees.

Funds Approval:

11. The use of the fund needs to be approved. Based on the amount of support requested, the following people can approve the support:

- a. Amounts up to £150 can be approved by the Hope Helps Team.
- b. For support up to £300, the Hope Helps Team must have the approval of the Elder overseeing the Pastoral Support Team.
- c. Amounts greater than £300 must be submitted to a quorum of Trustees, including the Treasurer, who will review the case and decide.

12. For any application for repeating support (e.g. weekly payment to help with groceries for 4 weeks) – the approval limits are calculated on the total amount, not the individual instalment.

13. Any repeating support requested for longer than 3 months needs to be approved by the Lead Elder, after sign-off by the Trustees.

14. The Eldership Team reserves the right to withdraw the assistance in cases it deems necessary to do so.

Application Process:

15. Applicants should complete the application form attached to this policy.

16. Some applicants may need help to complete forms, fulfil paperwork etc. perhaps due to literacy or mental health difficulties.

17. Recipients must sign an agreement form for how funds will be used and sign a receipt for funds that have been received.

Distribution of funds:

18. Funds are to be distributed to church members by Bank Transfer to ensure auditability

Record keeping:

19. It is important that good records are kept according to data protection principles. All information stored will be in accordance with the extant ChristCentral Data Protection Policies. Consent will need to be obtained for storing personal information.

20. The church will maintain the history of records and forms. It will contain information such as:

- a. The name and address of each applicant
- b. The amount intended for each person.
- c. The purpose for which help was given.
- d. How the recipient was selected.
- e. The relationship, if any, between the recipient and other members, officials, or church leaders.
- f. Receipts of funds/goods received by applicant

21. If necessary, a member of the Eldership team will verify the information provided by the applicant.

Reporting and review:

22. The Hope Helps Team should provide a monthly report of every successful application, incl. name of the individual being supported, and the total financial cost of that support. This report should be circulated to the Lead Elder and the Pastoral Support Team Leader.

23. A quarterly report of the number of successful applications, and the total cost of each award, should be provided to the Board of Trustees. This report should be anonymised.

Follow up:

24. The Hope Helps Team will follow up on the person who requested the funds in order to know the development of their situation. If that person requires pastoral counselling, the Pastoral Support Team will follow up.

- a. Those who request assistance should also be willing to receive follow up and pastoral counselling, if required.
- b. If it becomes known that negative or irresponsible behaviour is reinforced by financial aid, the Hope Helps Team have the right to suspend any support in consultation with the Pastoral Support Team Leader.
- c. If it comes to light that funds have not been used for the agreed purposes, the Hope Helps Team have the right to suspend any support in consultation with the Pastoral Support Team Leader.
- d. The Hope Helps Team will be sensitive to confidential issues yet provide full disclosure to the Pastoral Support Team Leader and the Eldership team as required.

Adoption of this policy

25. The Trustees of ChristCentral Church formally accepted this policy at the Trustee's meeting held on **14th January 2021**.



Bringing hope. Sharing Truth.

Hope Helps Support Fund | Application Form

We are reminded to 'remember the poor' (Gal 2:10) and to show the love of God in us by providing for those in need (1 John 3:17).

Purpose of Fund: to provide practical support to relieve hardship or poverty amongst persons known to ChristCentral Church Portsmouth, as detailed in the Hope Helps Support Fund Policy.

Who can apply: ChristCentral Church members may apply to the Hope Helps Support Fund for themselves or on behalf of people known to them who would benefit from the support.

How to apply: Please complete the short application form below. The request will be reviewed, with a decision aimed to be given within 10 working days.

Name of Applicant	
Name of Referrer (if applying on behalf of applicant)	
Please provide a short description of the need and the situation surrounding it.	
Estimated cost	
Contact email / tel. no.	
Signature confirming details are true to best of knowledge	
Date	

Tick to confirm that you have read the Hope Helps Support Fund Policy, that you are aware of the exclusions and that are aware that financial aid *may* affect claimable state benefits.

Please return this form to the church office by email (info@christcentral.church) or post to:
ChristCentral Church, C/O Acorn Bookshop, 109 Palmerston Road, Southsea, PO5 3PS

For office use only

<i>Approved by / date</i>	
<i>Action taken</i>	