

Policy for distributing financial gifts to people in need

aka "Helping Hands Fund" • Galileo Church

approved by Leadership Team • January 2016

modified by Missional Logistics Team • July 2016

modified by Missional Logistics Team • August 2017

modified by Spiritual Care Team • May 2021

modified by SCT/MLT • July 2022

Because the people of our compassionate God sometimes find themselves in need of financial sustenance for basic needs, and because God has made our church the steward of a collective pool of financial resources, we help each other the best that we can by the establishment and use of Galileo Church's Helping Hands Fund.

The Spiritual Care Team (SCT) has discerned that the church's resources can be shared according to the following guidelines.

1. Helping Hands money is for co-conspirators and friends of Galileo Church. People can ask for help when they've been a consistent friend or co-conspirator for at least three months.
2. Requests for Helping Hands money can be made to the Lead Evangelist or any of the Spiritual Care Team (SCT) members. Whoever receives the original request should take it to one other person – the Lead Evangelist, if the original request was not made to the Lead Evangelist; or one of the SCT members, if the original request was made to the Lead Evangelist. If those two agree, they should ask the treasurer to write a check according to their instructions or use the church credit card to pay the bill. If agreement cannot be reached about the necessity or wisdom of the request, further consult with the whole SCT should be sought.
3. The treasurer from the MLT should keep the SCT apprised of how much money is available in the Helping Hands fund, with a regular report of income and outflow from the HH account. The SCT should seek ways to report the overall condition of the Helping Hands fund to the MLT, including its broad uses and its financial health (i.e. whether the fund requires more money to continue helping all who ask and qualify).
4. Whenever possible, Helping Hands payments should be made for specific expenses: to the utility company, the landlord, the mechanic, the pharmacy, or whatever entity to whom payment is due. If that is not possible, a check may under special circumstances be written to the individual requesting help.
5. An individual or household may receive Helping Hands money multiple times per year, totaling no more than \$650 per year, except under special circumstances that the whole SCT approves.
6. Helping Hands requests and disbursements are completely confidential; only the Lead Evangelist and the treasurer are privy to the whole list.

7. Helping Hands funds are replenished by the generous gifts of Galileo co-conspirators and friends in two ways:
 - a. Gifts designated to Helping Hands will be dedicated 100% to that fund and cannot be used for any expenses other than the forms of help outlined here.
 - b. Beginning in July 2022, regular transfers from Galileo Church's operating funds will be made to Helping Hands. For July through December 2022, those transfers will be \$1500 per month, or about 10% of local giving in the first half of 2022. ("Local" in this case is a designation for givers who participate regularly in the worship and life of Galileo Church, either onsite or online, in contrast to "non-local" givers who do not participate in Galileo Church's worship or life together.) Both the percentage and the amount will be reevaluated by the finance team, working with the SCT, every six months thereafter.
8. We funnel proceeds from our Amazon Smile account and our Kroger Community account to Helping Hands.
9. The Helping Hands fund is not for lending money, and recipients should not be encouraged to pay back their gifts. If, however, recipients are able to replenish the fund in the future, thus paying it forward, thanks be to God.
10. The SCT recognizes 3 categories of need that the Helping Hands fund can address:

Emergency help is for immediate needs that are household-specific, and is subject to the \$650 annual max (see #5).

Crisis/catastrophe help can be activated by the SCT to administer block grants when a crisis has affected our entire community (i.e. COVID-19, 2021 winter storm power outages). Block grants will usually be distributed as checks to households for their immediate relief in a crisis. These are not subject to the limits on emergency help. Galileo Church often seeks outside grants for these distributions.

Household furnishing help can be offered to individuals or families who are re/building a place to live. Galileo Church participates in the Tarrant County Furniture Bank, and provides up to \$300 per person (\$1200 max per household) in TCFB vouchers. Additionally, Helping Hands will provide one set of bed linens per bed for household furnishing.