

Mercy Policy  
Christ Community Church  
5/27/12

Dt 15.11: There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be openhanded toward your brothers and toward the poor and needy in your land.

Psalm 72: 1 Endow the king with your justice, O God, the royal son with your righteousness.... 4 He will defend the afflicted among the people and save the children of the needy... 13 He will take pity on the weak and needy...

Ps 82.4: Rescue the weak and needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.

Micah 6.8: He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

Mt 7.6: Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs.

Mt 7.16: By their fruit you will recognize them.

Mt 10.38: anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.

Mt 25.37-40: “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’ The King will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.’”

Mt 28.19-20 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.

Lk 4.27 And there were many in Israel with leprosy in the time of Elisha the prophet, yet not one of them was cleansed—only Naaman the Syrian.

Luke 6.36: Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

Lk 10.33 But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him.

Lk 14.13-14: But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed.

Acts 13.46: We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles.

Gal 6.10: Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

2 Th 1.5: All this is evidence that God's judgment is right, and as a result you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering.

2 Th 3.10: If a man will not work, he shall not eat.

Heb 6.8: But land that produces thorns and thistles is worthless and is in danger of being cursed. In the end it will be burned.

Jm 1.7: Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

Jm 2.15-16 Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it?

1. **The Example of Christ:** God is the father of all mercies. His greatest mercy to us is his Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ. Christ's ministry of mercy is especially an act of his kingly role, where the king brings relief to those facing difficulty because the king has the resources to set right some things that are wrong. As the prophet mediates God to man and the priest mediates man to God, so the king mediates among men with justice and mercy. In his first appearance, though the coming judgment was made clear, our King was characterized mostly by works of mercy. "Have mercy on me, Son of David." Christ came preaching the Gospel of forgiveness in himself and bringing healing, freedom, and life. Christ exercised his Gospel ministry in word and deed together. Christ's mercy was, in some ways, free and universal, in that it came to some who were not seeking it and some who rejected it. Yet Christ's mercy was also directed by his particular calling and limited by providential circumstances, for he went only to certain places and not others, and he healed some and not others. Christ initiated his ministry of grace based on his own purposes and not the worthiness of those to whom he ministered. Yet continuing participation in the benefits of his ministry was signaled by a willingness to follow him.
2. **The Example of the Early Church:** The earliest Church was marked by mercy both to those inside and those outside the church, as was observed by Pliny and other Roman rulers. Some assumed it would be the Church's downfall that through her mercy, she was attracting the weak, sick, and poor, just as her master had done. But, just as with her master, those who were of no account in the world's view, when they came under the influence of the sovereign Holy Spirit, became powerful to change their world. As the Christian university was unique in claiming all learning for Christ, so the Christian hospital was unique in declaring the low and weak to be

worthy of divine service. Previously, it was unheard of that a culture's best efforts should go toward the sick and helpless.

3. **Acts of Mercy Accompany the Gospel:** Christ's Church continues Christ's kingly role of relief, healing, and help as an expression of Christ's dominion. Whereas the Church's kingly authority does not, at this time, extend beyond the bounds of her willing children, her kingly mercy overflows in conjunction with her gospel invitation that the thirsty should come and drink. We are called to follow Christ in his ministry of grace and mercy in word and deed. As true faith produces fruit, so Christ's preaching of mercy was inevitably accompanied by manifestations of mercy. We should never allow word and deed to be separated. The Church's visible membership is not the boundaries of this mercy, just as the boundaries of Christ's teaching and mercy were not his disciples. As with prophetic teaching, the work of kingly mercy extends beyond the boundaries of the church. The bounds of the Church's mercy are coextensive with the bounds of her evangelism.
4. **Mercy Is For Christ's Sake:** We will attempt to make clear to any recipient of our mercy ministry that we give in Christ's name and that Christ is the only true help for their deep needs. Thus, mercy in Christ's name calls forth the same obedience of faith motivating that mercy.
5. **An Act of Mercy Is Not an Ultimate Cure, but Should Point to It:** Our acts of mercy must show the benefits of the Gospel in a world of almost unlimited need. The Church's mercy is not a bribe to get people to listen, nor were Christ's works of mercy. Rather, those who are open to receiving help in the name of Christ place themselves in a position to receive a foretaste of some of the benefits of redemption. Christ's earthly ministry was not the complete setting right of all things, but a foretaste. He did not change the essential nature of this world as a punitive place where mankind bears suffering as the consequence of rejecting God. Rather, he showed how peace with God through Christ is able to harness the hardships of this world for our good. It takes divine wisdom to exercise a ministry of mercy that offers immediate help and also points to the need for a fundamental change of heart. We do not attempt to erase all suffering that is part of this fallen world but to give a real taste of help that can be had in Christ.
6. **Wisdom and Love Will Direct Mercy:** All the challenges we face in choosing how to direct our word ministry we also face in choosing how to direct our ministry in deeds. How will we determine how to exercise either obligation? It should come through the God-given relationships and providential opportunities laid before the congregation. Some mercy and evangelism will be coordinated in large efforts with other Christians or even with outside institutions. Other works will be done by the congregation and others by individuals. Mercy is ruled largely by biblical wisdom in the face of providential circumstances. We are neither able nor obligated to address the needs of all those around us. To understand how to fulfill our obligation to mercy, we must understand our calling before God as individuals and our calling as a

congregation. The vision for CCC set by the session helps us understand how acts of mercy fit in to our calling as a congregation.

7. **The Error of the so-called Social Gospel:** In the past, the church has sometimes pursued acts of mercy divorced from the claims of the Gospel for repentance, faith, and obedience. Only the words of Scripture are able to bring the wisdom of God for salvation. Extending mercy is not preaching the gospel. So while all extensions of mercy honor God by reflecting his common grace and by acknowledging man's inherent dignity as the image of God, the *church's* responsibility is to diligently work to bind the call of the gospel with the offer of mercy as providence allows. The greatest of all mercies is God's mercy offered in the gospel.
8. **The Church is to Equip All For the Ministry of Mercy:** As we instruct Christ's people in the obedience of faith, we will encourage and equip them for acts of mercy.
9. **We have a particular obligation to our near neighbors:** We will look for opportunities within our community where we are particularly able to be helpful.
10. **Common Grace May Play a Part in Mercy:** We may partner in acts of mercy with organizations which are not Christian if they do not oppose or undermine the Gospel, and if we are allowed to minister in the name of Christ.
11. **Mercy the Responsibility of All:** Though the church leadership, particularly the Local Outreach Team, will work to cultivate opportunities for members to work together in deeds of mercy, most works of mercy, like evangelism, should be happening through each member seeking Divine opportunities to help others in his or her life. We all have various circles of relationship within which we may be called on to offer help to another: immediate and extended family; small groups within the church, church family, and extended church relationships; civil society in our local and wider communities.
12. **The Deacons and the Local Outreach Team:** Deacons should lead, equip, and encourage all members to show mercy inside the church. All sorts of acts of mercy should be happening regularly among CCC members. The Deacons are not necessarily involved in such acts of mercy, but they are available to assist where they can should a mercy need exceed the capabilities of those involved. The Deacons will decide on any material help given from CCC to a member of the church, and they will take direct oversight of that aid. The Local Outreach Team, under the authority of the Session, will oversee any acts of external mercy conducted corporately by CCC as a whole church to non-members. At least one Deacon should always be a member of the Local Outreach Team.
13. **The Deacons' Fund and Local Outreach Team budget:** The Deacons will request the Session annually to set aside a certain amount for the Deacons' Fund which is to be used for providing appropriate relief to church members. The Deacons also, with the advice of the Local Outreach Team, will request the Session annually to set aside a certain amount for the Local Outreach Team budget, to be used specifically for

corporate mercy activities directed toward non-members. As with any budget item, a request to the Session is required to change these. The Deacons are responsible to approve and track how both these funds are spent. They will give the Session a spending report at the end of each fiscal year. The Deacons may ask the Session to authorize a special offering for either fund for appropriate causes.

14. **Mercy to Church Members Is a Higher Duty Than Mercy To Those Outside the Church:** We distinguish between mercy shown to members of the church, which is based on the principle of family duty in the household of God, and mercy shown to those outside the church, which is based on the universal proclamation of the Gospel. God's Word makes clear that each individual is responsible to provide for himself as best he can. Next, each family is responsible to provide for its members appropriately depending on the circumstances and relationship of that individual. Christians with material needs beyond these resources may also turn to the church for help. This does not mean only the leadership of the church can intervene with aid, but each member should consider how he or she can assist another member in extraordinary need. After our obligation to care first for our natural family, we are also obligated to care for, as best we can, those in extraordinary need in our congregation and, to a lesser degree, in the Church at large.
15. **Mercy to Members:** We will help, within the limits of God's provisions and the other requirements of the church, every member in good standing to avoid falling into poverty or other extreme need. As with all mercy, it is a duty for all members to look after one another with material provision, and we should look to the prosperity of all our brothers and sisters in Christ. **CCC looks to community groups, ministry teams, and friends in the church as the first line of help for those within the church with a particular mercy need.** The Deacons may get involved if appropriate and the need extends beyond the abilities of individual members.
16. **Mercy to Non-Members Flows from Helping One Another:** Mercy to those outside the congregation should be a natural extension to the church working for the well-being of their own families and for other members. As we grow in working out our love for each other in the church, we should grow in showing mercy to those outside the church as well. As we visit the sick within our families and our church, we will naturally be visiting other sick we happen to know. As we bring meals to new mothers in our extended families and the church, we will naturally be bringing new meals to other new mothers we happen to know.
17. **Help Given from CCC to Non-Members Is Based on a Providential Connection to the Church:** Besides individual members or groups within CCC showing mercy to those outside the church, CCC may act corporately as a church to help some outside the church. CCC cannot help everyone in need. Help given from CCC to non-members is normally initiated by a particular trial in their life and a special providence that puts them in the way of the church and forms the basis for a relationship. Help given to non-members normally addresses this particular trial and is therefore temporary. It is to give a taste of God's grace in helping that person

through their trial. It is given with the hope that an act of mercy might turn them toward God. The temporary nature of the aid and its expected limit in amount and time should be made clear from the start or soon thereafter. The period of assistance will not exceed six months without approval of the session. The amount of assistance will be within the Local Outreach Team budget. Requests for mercy made by individual non-members are vetted and overseen by the Deacons. Mercy opportunities initiated by CCC are organized and overseen by the Local Outreach Team.

18. **Mercy Comes with Accountability:** God's mercy comes undeserved, but it cannot come unanswered. Those who receive mercy always respond, either showing thanksgiving in increasing obedience, or showing increasing rebellion, sometimes by a false thankfulness that is lip service or by using the mercy to perpetuate their pattern of sin. The more help, the more accountability to the church and the more we must know about the finances and circumstances involved. Accountability applies to member or non-members, though it will be different depending on circumstances. The purpose of accountability is to help the recipient of mercy understand God's wisdom in making the most of this gracious opportunity. Thus, it is instruction that must be suited to the one receiving it. Accountability also serves to prove the giver is innocent of misfeasance.
19. **Providing Accountability:** When we use the resources of the church to help someone, we will attempt to confirm the actual circumstances and to give the aid with appropriate counsel. We will also make clear in a loving and understanding way appropriate accountability associated with the aid, for example, required receipts, actions, or reports.
20. **Mercy is wisely suited to the individual:** God's mercy comes to each of us in a way that is intimately suited to each of us. This requires that the one giving mercy get to know the one in need to an appropriate level as Christ came to live with us. One who refuses to be known, not being open and honest about his need (within the bounds of reasonable modesty) cannot beneficially receive mercy. Just so, without confessing our need to God, we cannot receive his help.
21. **Mercy seeks to restore something that is broken:** Mercy should target an area of need in a person's life in a way that helps that person fulfill their duties to God and man. The particular type of help will be suited to equipping, healing, and building up that individual. Mercy does not sustain an individual in a pattern of sin without challenge. We should say, "You have received the mercy of Christ in this help. Our prayer is that you will use this to move toward greater obedience to Christ."
22. **Mercy seeks out those in need:** Though God may allow us to reside in circumstances that insulate us from many in need, we are responsible to follow him by making an effort to seek the lost and needy to whom he is calling us.

23. **Mercy sometimes leaves a person to bear the effects of sin:** Poverty and hunger are sometimes God's merciful rebuke to irresponsibility and sloth. It may be we sometimes will have to say, "From what we can see, you have not responded responsibly to move toward greater obedience to Christ. We can offer you no encouragement in this course."
24. **Unanswered Mercy Is Not In Vain:** Though we pray for a harvest of righteousness in response to God's mercy, it is not a failure when we give help to someone outside the church and we do not see him or her respond by following Christ. Just as with the ministry of the Word, we are called to minister with deeds of mercy and to leave the outcome up to God. A common course for evangelism, as well as acts of mercy, is that many people might plant and cultivate God's grace in someone's life over many years before any fruit is visible. Each messenger gives grace with appropriate warnings and accountability, but it is on the head of the receiver of grace how he responds. The giver will benefit by being a channel of grace whatever the outcome, and God will always be glorified when his grace is displayed.
25. **Other Guidelines:**  
All mercy ministry should be conducted in appropriate confidence.  
Consider whether other sources of aid may be more appropriate such as family, home church, social agencies.  
Remember the difference between fundamental needs--such as food, clothing, and shelter--and other things people may desire.