

Resurrection Presbyterian Church (OPC)

Guidelines for Mercy Ministry

Purpose

Our purpose is to provide spiritual counseling and material assistance in the Name and to the glory of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. This ministry is intended to be an explicit testimony to the love of Jesus Christ.

This document describes the scope, policy, and guidelines of Mercy Ministry at Resurrection Presbyterian Church. This document is *not* intended to exhaustively cover the diversity of Mercy Ministry opportunities; rather, it establishes a consistent methodology to guide the common elements of each Mercy Ministry case.

Priority and Scope

The priority of this ministry is as follows: 1) members within our church, 2) Christians outside our church, and 3) Non-Christians.

Our help to Non-Christians is generally limited to those inside the region of Matthews and Charlotte, North Carolina. As a condition of assistance, we require that Non-Christians seeking assistance attend a RPC worship service, and are of sober mind and good behavior.

The scope of our Mercy Ministry provides material assistance such as food, clothing, shelter (including rent and utilities), and financial and spiritual counseling and development. In as much as possible, we intend to supplement existing channels of help and assistance, rather than to replace them.

Procedures

For Members of RPC

The process for giving diaconal assistance to the members in our church is not structured or formalized. A general awareness of the need is made known, either from the member in need, a service committee, a friend, or an elder or pastor. The deacon must understand and give purposeful attention to the relational dynamics within the church, so as to be fully aware of what needs are present within the church, and how they are made known.

As a practice, Mercy Ministry to Members at RPC include the following:

1. Generosity, including no-questions-asked cash gifts for specific needs, gift cards, meals, transportation, home repair, and other tangible, helpful, and encouraging acts of mercy
2. Financial gifts towards the expenses associated with the birth of new covenant children
3. Financial and counseling assistance with adoption
4. Financial and counseling assistance with healthcare and medical expenses
5. Financial assistance towards major and unexpected expenses (such as auto, home, deaths, and travel)
6. Financial assistance with educational expenses

Each deacon is encouraged to look for and find opportunities to encourage the members at RPC, whether it be through visiting, praying, counseling, or material and financial assistance.

Development Assistance as a Mercy Ministry at RPC

Of the three kinds of diaconal assistance (relief, rehabilitation, and development), it is primarily “development” that is needed by members and those outside of our church who come to our congregation for help. Long-term

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development assistance is a situation with regular, reasonably identifiable debts and/or deficiencies in education, employment, or housing, which continue into the future.

1. Developmental assistance requires long term relationships in which the spiritual roots of material problems are biblically addressed through counsel and accountability.
2. A root-cause of spiritual neglect or direct sinfulness will not always be present in persons who require long-term assistance. Illness, tragedy, or large-scale economic patterns can also be causes for this type of poverty alleviation.
3. To the extent that developmental assistance consists of evangelism and discipleship, it is the responsibility of both elders and deacons, and indeed, of the whole church.
4. Providing material assistance to those with primarily developmental needs can often be counterproductive, unless it is done with a view to opening avenues for broader ministry by tangible expressions of love.
5. Accountability is an important part of long-term development assistance. Material assistance to those with primarily developmental needs should not be continued past their willingness to submit to counsel and accountability.
6. Generally, a budget and other important documentation and information is required at the start of any long-term assistance, and any plan including financial assistance will be for a period of no longer than twelve months, and requires board approval to continue further.
7. Limits and exclusions with assistance should be considered with any long-term development assistance plan. For example, a maximum limit of monthly financial support would be given or only support with a certain type of expense.
8. Certain conditions and requirements should also be established such as periodic reviews of budget, minimum job-hunting efforts, financial counseling or other reasonable considerations.

For the Stranger and Non-Christian Seeking Assistance:

For non-members seeking assistance, it is required that they attend a Sunday Worship Service. At the conclusion of the service, two deacons will meet with the individual in the Fellowship Hall to inquire of the need and gather contact information.

1. Pray with and present the gospel, including a Bible and a tract. Connect their material need to their spiritual need.
2. As a practice, no cash is provided to strangers and non-members who ask us for assistance.
3. As a practice, be generous and kind to strangers and Non-Christians who are in need
4. As a practice, employ various kinds of accountability when working with strangers and non-members in instances of long-term assistance. Accountability could be in the form of reference checks, proof of payment, routine sharing of a budget, or regular times of counsel after a worship service.
5. As a practice, seek wisdom from the diaconate as a whole, in order to obtain other valuable perspectives and experiences
6. Personal information from the deacons, such as a phone number and home address should not be given to Strangers and Non-Christians
7. Up to \$250 can be given to Strangers and Non-Christians who ask for assistance, but must be in the form of a gift-card for food or gas, or be designated to a particular need, such as a utility.

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8. A general limit of no more than \$1,500 can be given to a particular need of a stranger or non-member, but must be approved by a majority of the deacon board. Those being assisted materially will also be asked to conform to the following requirements:
 - a. Regularly attend morning and evening Sunday worship services
 - b. Honestly and confidentially be open to the questions of the Diaconate
 - c. Receive and follow the Diaconate's counsel

Policy

The Session and Diaconate should meet together at least once a year in order pray for and encourage one another in in the work of the Lord, and to review the progress and overall effectiveness of the mercy ministry of the church, and .

Appendix I – Local Community Resources

Appendix II – Southeast Presbytery OPC Contact Information

Appendix III – Presbytery of the Southeast Diaconal Committee Contact Information