

How to manage approaches for financial assistance from the community.

Context:

On a number of occasions, MHCC members have been approached by people seeking financial assistance from either individual members or the church as a whole. This policy is intended to prompt discussion amongst MHCC members about this issue and proposes guidelines to manage such approaches.

Principles:

1. As a Christian community, we should strive to act towards others as Jesus would have; that is, with love, compassion, generosity and wisdom.
2. Much of Jesus' teaching was about giving to the poor and needy. Some examples of His statements are recorded in Mark 10:21 (also Matthew 19:21), Acts 20:35, Matthew 6:1-4 and Luke 6:38 amongst many others.
3. It is also true that giving in a modern welfare state like Australia is more complex than in Jesus' time. In some cases, providing financial assistance without reflection may compound disadvantage and lead to poorer outcomes for the recipient/s. Our aim should be to provide support in ways that maintain human dignity.

Guidelines:

- MHCC members as individuals are encouraged to respond to requests for assistance in line with the above principles and their own personal values around such giving. They should not feel required to provide financial assistance, if approached, as representatives of MHCC.
- Care should be taken when considering requests to avoid setting up a dependency on the part of the recipient/s, or contributing to other poor outcomes.
- Discernment can be difficult, so seeking assistance through prayer and discussion with other MHCC members or elders may be useful. Where necessary, an alternative time may need to be made with an applicant to answer the request so that clarity can be sought.
- Where it is decided that MHCC resources are to be used to assist applicants, a member of the MHCC Property & Finance Committee should be consulted and appropriate documentation of the assistance should be recorded. This assists with transparency and may also assist in tracking demand.
- Safety is important. Where MHCC members are handling money on behalf of MHCC or partner bodies, it is recommended that this be done in a secure environment and that cash not be openly displayed.