

First Parish Church of Stow and Acton

Minister's Discretionary Fund

Policy # 031

Revision # 000

I. POLICY STATEMENT

The Minister's Discretionary Fund (MDF) is a fund which is within the discretion of the minister to determine how this money is spent, with the exception that it cannot be used for the minister's personal or family support. An exception to this rule is fees for FPC programs and events which the minister's family is encouraged or expected to attend.

II. SCOPE

The MDF is funded through gifts from church members designated for the MDF. An annual appeal to the congregation for funds may be made for the Christmas season. Additional appeals for funds to the congregation should be approved by the board, unless they are in response to an immediate pastoral need.

The funds for the MDF will be held in the church account. The minister may use the funds by submitting receipts or a record of amounts used to the treasurer, or, such as in cases of large amounts, by having the treasurer pay directly to the person or institution where funds are needed. The minister will keep a record of monies spent where payments are made directly to the minister, which will be confidential unless audited or there is reasonable suspicion of embezzlement.

The MDF's primary purpose is to provide financial assistance to members of the church and the greater community in times of need. Such assistance can be for such things as rent, utilities, auto repairs, motel rooms, gas, medical supplies and prescriptions, baby supplies, clothing, food, holiday gifts for children, and more. Need-based financial assistance also includes covering fees for other church events and programs such as OWL or the Ferry Beach trip.

Additional occasional uses for the MDF are:

1. Small gifts or tokens to members for pastoral visits, such as flowers, plants, cards, etc. Lay ministers, as an official extension of the pastoral ministry of the church, may be reimbursed for items for pastoral visits, as well.
2. Items needed for special church events, interfaith events, and social justice events that weren't planned for in the budget, including speaker fees, additional food, childcare, and supplies.
3. Conferences or continuing education for staff and members when the budget does not contain funds.

III. RESPONSIBILITY

The minister may make policies around how much money to give and how often to give funds. These policies may vary with the situation and with the membership status and connection level to the church of the person appealing for funds.

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IV. DEFINITIONS

None

V. REFERENCES

None

VI. APPROVAL SIGNATURES

Rev. Cynthia Landrum 02/18/2021

Originator / Date

On behalf of the Board of Trustees



March 12, 2021

FPC President / Date

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Attachment 1

Policy Attachment(s)

From the Rev. Tom Rosiello
Minister from 2002 to 2017

To: The Interim and Settled Ministers

CC: The Committee on Ministry, Treasurer, and Board of Trustees

Since early in my ministry, FPC has had a Minister's Discretionary Fund (MDF) which has been funded by gifts from parish members and friends. Many of these gifts came at Christmas time in response to a notice in the Order of Services and The Chronicle. Others came when a service (wedding or memorial service) was performed for a church member. It was my policy not to accept gifts for performing these services from church members so they would often make a gift to the MDF. Some donations came from people in the community that just like to help in this fashion, even some who have been helped by the fund in the past and wanted to give back in order to help others. A few people give on a regular basis and one person has given \$50 a month to this fund for many years. The fund has ranged from a few hundred dollars to 7,000 or 8,000 dollars.

The Fund has used for a variety of things and it is totally within the discretion of the minister to determine how this money is spent

The ways I have used the fund include:

1. The main purpose of the fund has always been to provide financial assistance to members of the church and the greater community in times of need. I rarely gave cash or a check made to the person; rather I paid a part of the rent or a utility bill or for auto repairs. I have paid for motel rooms for a couple of nights, for gas, and for medical supplies... things like that. I have purchased and given out many gift cards for buying clothing, baby supplies, toys for holiday gifts, etc. Also, I gave out Shaw's grocery store cards to those in need but that demand has lessened since the local food pantries have become more active. I always leave a few gift cards with the church administrator/and/or lay ministers for people who drop in asking for help.
2. Another use of these funds is to buy flowers, plants or small gifts to bring when visiting the sick or shut-ins. I usually spent about \$10 to bring a bit of cheer from the church. Lay ministers were reimbursed from this fund for similar purchases.
3. Sometimes funds have been used to provide food for church receptions. These include extra items for pot luck suppers; food for the Minister Lunches; some receptions; retreats; and, for the Vestry Café. (The contributions people leave only cover about 1/3 of the cost to keep it stocked.) Funds have been used to pay for babysitting for church events.

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4. Sometimes the MDF is used to pay for conferences or Continuing Education for both staff and volunteers when there were no funds for this in the budget. This has included things such as training of OWL Facilitators; going to a district workshop; training for Small Group Ministry Facilitators and Lay Ministers; and, going to General Assembly.
 5. For many years, an annual contribution of \$500 was given from this fund to our Partner church to buy staples for the elderly and chocolate and a small toy for the children at Christmas time. There is now a Partner Church Committee that handles this.
 6. Funds to help with FPC's Social Justice efforts such as the India Project and the Guest Table program as well as for interfaith multi-congregation events.
 7. Almost every year the Fund has been used to provide assistance to parish members who could not afford the Parish retreat or other church event where a fee was charged.

The MDF is held in a Checking Account at Citizens Bank. The treasurer is also on the Account. I will give [him] the checkbook and balance when I leave. Lay Ministers and the Interim Minister should be in touch with him if they need to use the fund.

In the past, I have sometimes discussed the expenditures from the fund with the Committee on Ministry. I think it would be an excellent practice for the Committee on Ministry to review the checks written each month with the minister.

In summary, the fund has allowed me to assist many in the community and in the church at difficult times and also to advance the ministry and programs of the church in ways not provided for in the regular budget.