

Compassionate Aid Fund

There is a story in the Gospel of John (12:8) when Mary anoints Jesus with a LOT of very expensive perfume, the disciples told her she was wasteful for being so reckless with her spending when people were starving. Jesus tells his disciples, **"You always have the poor with you."** Sometimes people think this means that we can't save everyone, so don't try to save everyone. Or, giving away money and resources recklessly is foolish and not the purpose of Christ.

Jesus was actually speaking in references to one of the oldest teachings of the Old Testament from Deuteronomy 15:7-11 where Moses is conveying the laws from God to the people and says:

*If there is among you anyone in need, a member of your community in any of your towns within the land that the Lord your God is giving you, do not be hard-hearted or tight-fisted toward your needy neighbor. You should rather open your hand, willingly lending enough to meet the need, whatever it may be. Be careful that you do not entertain a mean thought... and therefore view your needy neighbor with hostility and give nothing; your neighbor might cry to the Lord against you, and you would incur guilt. Give liberally and be ungrudging when you do so, for on this account the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in all that you undertake. **Since there will never cease to be some in need on the earth, I therefore command you, 'Open your hand to the poor and needy neighbor in your land.'***

There will always be someone in need in our community. And there are many ways that our community can and does help people. There is help for housing, utilities, food, gas, medical care, learning, working....all kinds of ways that we help. And still, there is more need. Sometimes all of the agencies and groups help, and still the need is not met. Sometimes the need does not qualify for help from one agency or another group.

Helping others has always been a practice of this congregation. It has taken many forms over the years, always shifting to meet the current needs of the community. This year, the council proposed a new line item in our budget called "Discretionary Assistance." That was a bad name because it's not clear what this money is for. So, we're going to try calling them Compassionate Aid Funds.

These funds take an old idea - of the pastor having a discretionary spending account from which he could give money to anyone in need - and expanding it to an ongoing ministry of the whole church. Thus, fulfilling our mission to "serve all".

These funds in our general operating expenses are an annual commitment that this congregation will try to help anyone in need. There will be times when the needs of individuals will reach beyond the boundaries and abilities of other helping groups, organizations, and individuals. This line item in our general budget means we foresee this eventuality and plan to commit a portion of our offerings to respond with grace and mercy.

Your regular giving funds this ministry of our church just as it does the backpack ministry, bus rides to worship, food pantry, the Kitowo partnership, Luther Point, ELCA ministries, and many others. If you would like to increase our ability to help individuals on an as-needed basis for the rest of this fiscal year, your special offering for the month of September will help us to say "yes" when others ask for help.