

# Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of All Saints' Sidmouth

## Hardship Fund Policy and Procedures

Adopted 14 March 2017

### Introduction and Purpose

The Hardship Fund is an officially recognised and restricted fund, established within the accounts of All Saints' Church Sidmouth. As such, it is an approved recipient for designated giving. It has no budget for either income or expenditure. The Hardship Fund's receipts consist entirely of designated giving, as outlined below, and its expenses consist of funds disbursed for its stated intended purposes at the direction of the Standing Committee or the PCC.

PCC has delegated responsibility to Standing Committee, or the Treasurer as detailed below, for the operation of the Hardship Fund. It is to be made clear to all donors that, should at any time in the future, All Saints' PCC vote to close the Hardship Fund, all money in the Fund at that time will transfer to the General Fund.

The purpose of the Hardship Fund is to meet people's basic needs on a short-term interim basis. The fund achieves this purpose through specific disbursement at the direction of the Standing Committee or the PCC.

### Source of Funding

The Hardship Fund shall receive income from two sources:

1. Through the receipt of designated giving by individuals wishing to donate to the Hardship Fund or,
2. Through the transfer of funds from the General Fund when deemed necessary and appropriate by the Standing Committee upon approval by the PCC.

### Contributions to the Hardship Fund

All Saints' Church encourages its members to minister directly to other members of the congregation as they become aware of specific needs. However, gifts made directly by a member to a needy individual or family are not able to be Gift Aided. To comply with Gift Aid regulations concerning charitable contributions, all gifts to the Hardship Fund must be unconditional and without personal benefit to the donor.

The administration of the fund, including all disbursements, is carried out by the Treasurer subject to the control and discretion of the Standing Committee or the PCC. The Standing Committee or the PCC may consider recommendations from anyone, but in no event, will it be bound in any way to honour those recommendations.

Contributions to the Hardship Fund in the form of a cheque should be made payable to All Saints' PCC with a note that the funds are to be placed in the All Saints' Church Hardship Fund.

### Guidelines for Disbursement

#### General Guidelines

The Hardship Fund is intended as a source of last resort, to be used when the family or individual requesting assistance has explored all other possibilities of help from local and national government sources, family, friends, savings, or investments. It is intended to be a temporary help during a time of crisis or other hardship.

Assistance from the Hardship fund is intended to be a one-time gift. In unusual circumstances, the Standing Committee may decide to help more than once.

Disbursements from the Hardship Fund may not be in the form of a loan.

Those requesting assistance may also be encouraged to accept financial, or some other form of counselling. Subsequent requests for assistance for the same persons(s) will require them to accept financial, or some other form of counselling.

The Standing Committee will not provide help to anyone who, in its estimation, will have negative or irresponsible behaviour reinforced by financial help.

Those requesting help must be willing to give the Treasurer of All Saints' permission to follow up on any of the information provided to the Standing Committee. The Standing Committee will be sensitive to confidential issues.

### **Recipients of Assistance**

In order of priority, recipients of assistance from the Hardship Funds shall be:

1. Members of All Saints' Church (i.e. on the Electoral Roll)
2. Frequent regular attenders of All Saints' Church
3. Others for whom All Saints' Church considers itself in some way responsible through one of its many ministries.

### **Criteria**

The stated purpose of the Hardship Fund is to meet people's basic needs. Normally, these needs are defined as, but are not limited to the following:

1. Accommodation (mortgage or rent)
2. Utilities (electricity, gas, water, council tax)
3. Transportation to or from a place of employment
4. Children's school expenses
5. Funeral expenses

Needs that may not be met by the Hardship Fund include, but are not limited to the following:

1. Needs of individuals who are wanted by the police or for paying fines as a result of breaking the law
2. Penalties relating to late payments or irresponsible actions
3. Business ventures or debts
4. Gambling debts

### **Levels of Support**

#### **Basic (up to £100 per situation)**

The Treasurer may approve this level of assistance in any single situation, subject to agreement with at least one of the Churchwardens, or the Vicar. Repeat support at this level places the assistance at the Advanced level.

#### **Advanced (over £100 per situation)**

This level of assistance per situation must be reviewed and approved by the Standing Committee subject to meeting all specified criteria.

Generally, assistance from the Hardship Fund will not exceed £1,500 per person or family (this is a cumulative cap in the unusual case of someone who receives more than one gift from the fund). In very unusual circumstances, families and individuals who are in need of substantial

funds (over £1,500) can continue to be assisted up to whatever limit the Standing Committee deems appropriate. Such cases should be reviewed carefully and, when appropriate, additional agreement should be sought from the PCC.

Special projects, sometimes funded by special offerings designated for the Hardship Fund, might include supporting local outreach ministries to the poor, or helping to provide assistance during times of catastrophe or major crises.

## **Procedure for Disbursement**

### **Application and Approval Process**

Individuals or families seeking assistance from the Hardship Fund shall approach the Treasurer themselves or another church member may approach the Treasurer on their behalf, either with or without their knowledge.

The Treasurer will assess the position and may ask to see supporting documentation, which could take the form of :

1. Completion of a CAP Money Course style income and expenditure analysis
2. Paperwork to support that income and expenditure analysis
3. Interview(s) with the Treasurer, or someone with financial expertise designated by the Treasurer if he/she were unavailable, and a Standing Committee colleague.

It may be a requirement of assistance that the applicant(s) attend a CAP Money Course as soon as is practicable.

The Treasurer will produce a recommendation to the Standing Committee.

Review and approval of the application, as well as written communication of the amount and form of assistance, shall be done by the Standing Committee at the earliest practicable date.

If appropriate, payments from the Hardship Fund may be made directly to third party service providers rather than to the individual requesting assistance.

In all cases, the Standing Committee reserves the right to award an amount of less (or more) than the amount requested.

The Treasurer will maintain the necessary accounting records as part of the process required to produce annual independently examined accounts.

## **Approval**

This policy was approved and adopted by All Saints' PCC at its meeting on 14 March 2017.

The PCC will review this policy annually; last review November 2020.