

Lazarus Fund

Pittsburgh Presbytery

The Vision

Whereas, the Lazarus Fund is a component of the Presbytery Mission Ministry Team whose state purpose is to “proclaim the Gospel in word and deed through ministries to the spiritual, physical, and social needs of individuals and society beyond the congregation;”

Whereas, the Lazarus Fund is to provide “direct economic aid to families and individuals within the bounds of Presbytery *who have been sponsored* by a pastor or session of Presbytery” and the nature of “sponsorship” is not currently defined;

Whereas, the Lazarus Fund requires no commitment by and provides no resources to participating congregations for furthering the underlying purpose of the Fund (enabling persons to overcome their economic difficulties through the grace and love of Jesus Christ as demonstrated by Presbyterian congregations);

Whereas, the Lazarus Fund should be an integrated and strategic component of a church’s overall mission outreach program;

Whereas, the Lazarus Fund should be an integrated and strategic component of the mission objectives of the Presbytery;

Whereas, the Lazarus Fund is a unique and important tool for working toward larger goals of evangelism, peace, and justice by giving individual members of congregations opportunities to work hand-in-hand with disadvantaged families and individuals;

Whereas, support for the Lazarus Fund is significantly less than it could be in terms of number of congregations which support the Fund financially (or in any way), the amount of support from congregations which donate, and the number of congregations accepting Lazarus Fund applications;

Whereas, the Lazarus Fund offers additional support to that already offered by secular, social service organizations yet the Lazarus Fund congregations often have little to no contact nor information about public resources which could be combined with Lazarus Fund grants to provide more effective long-term assistance to Fund recipients;

Whereas, the current gap between the “haves” and the “have nots” will only widen as the “wealthy” are asked for more funding for the nameless and faceless “poor,” as the “wealthy” receive mostly negative feedback about the abuses in both public and private programs for the “poor,” and as the “wealthy” see the results of poverty (eg. crime and violence) infringing more and more on their chosen lifestyles;

Therefore, let the Lazarus Fund be positioned as a program, which, in conjunction with a congregation's own mission outreach goals, brings the members of our churches into direct and personal contact with the needy;

Therefore, let the Lazarus Fund coordinate with other committees and programs of Presbytery to energize and equip congregations to battle the structural problems of poverty out of a personal, practical understanding of those problems;

Therefore, let the Lazarus Fund require at least a short-term (3 month) commitment, on the part of both intake and donating congregations, to the people who apply to the Fund; and a longer-term (annual) commitment to the battle against the institutional causes of poverty;

Therefore, let the Lazarus Fund work with applicants to move toward longer-term wholeness in all areas of their lives, in addition to addressing the immediate, financial need;

Therefore, let the Lazarus Fund Committee make a plan that we will work with congregations within the Pittsburgh Presbytery to promote the purpose of the Lazarus Fund; to equip intake congregations with the resources necessary to their work; and to equip donating congregations with periodic feedback, speakers, and opportunities for personal contact with Fund recipients.