United Methodist churches commonly have a fund called the Pastor's Discretionary Fund, which is intended to give the pastor and the Benevolence team discretion and authority to provide confidential financial support to persons in need. The Sudlersville charge has a fund known as the Pastor's Purse for this purpose.

This policy establishes guidelines and priorities for the disbursement of funds from the Pastor's Purse to Sudlersville Charge Members, regular attenders, members of other churches, and the community at large in need. Based on Paul’s instructions to the church in Galatia to “carry one another’s burdens”, priority will be given to members of the Sudlersville charge who are in need, but consideration will also be given to regular attenders and members of other churches. When monies are sufficient, aid will be made available to the community of the northern Queen Anne County living within a 5 mile radius of the charge as well.

As a general rule, disbursements shall be expended to the benefit of applicants no more frequently than once in six months. The amounts will be expended as follows:

• Rent/Security deposit assistance: $150.00

• Electric/oil/heat: $100.00

• Medical assistance: $100.00

• Clothing for homeless: $ 75.00

• Gasoline Cards $ 25.00

• Transportation (bus, etc.) $ 75.00

Food assistance will be handled by the Sudlersville Food Pantry.

For assistance over $99, we ask that a complete application be submitted. For applicants who have received assistance in the past, the Benevolence team will ask for an interview in addition to the application to provide more intensive assistance. Further, when disbursements are to be made above and beyond the guidelines, the Benevolence Team will advise the pastor for or against these disbursements.

There are no guarantees or promises for assistance to any applicant. All disbursements will be for services and goods made payable to the vendor, landlord, or other service provider; not to an individual or applicant. At no time will there be cash assistance. This is to protect the pastor, church and the persons receiving assistance from accusation of irregularity or private inurnment. The pastor or his/her family shall never be the recipient of the funds disbursed.

The Pastor's Purse Fund shall be audited with the other church accounts on an annual basis and a reporting of expenditures and receipts will be included in the Administrative Council treasury reports on a quarterly basis. All confidentiality controls will continue to be maintained as to the specific persons who will benefit. The Pastor's Purse Fund shall be maintained as an independent checking account insuring his/her discretionary ability.

In summary, regardless, of how a church decides to fund a pastor's discretionary account (through annual budget, special offerings, etc.) this written policy on usage with specificity and clarity, together with sound internal controls, are important protections for the pastor, the church and those who are recipients of the funds. Confidentiality for recipients can be maintained even with these sound internal controls. Protecting the church assets is a matter of good stewardship of the gifts that have been entrusted to the church to do God's work in the community and world.

The Benevolence team consists of:

* Pastor
* Charge Admin Assistant
* Church Ad Council Chairs
* Volunteer Advocates