

Memorial Fund Policy

Epiphany Lutheran Church has adopted this Memorial Fund Policy to provide individuals the opportunity to honor a loved one through designated or undesignated contributions that support the ministries of Epiphany Lutheran Church.

Such gifts fulfill mutual needs: the donor finds a meaningful way of expressing his or her gratitude, love and remembrance, and the gift benefits the Church and furthers its mission. Epiphany Lutheran Church is grateful for all gifts regardless of amount. Anonymous memorials are also accepted.

A. GENERAL

All gifts to Epiphany Lutheran Church are assumed to be intended for the congregation's general operating fund and general operating purposes, unless specifically noted as a designated gift to benefit a special fund or a special purpose (see information on designated gifts in Section C below). Final decisions on the use and disbursement of all memorial funds will be made by vote of the Congregation Council.

The Epiphany Congregation Council will:

- Promote and encourage memorials/gift giving
- Send acknowledgments for all memorials/gifts received
- Maintain a record of memorials/gifts, recording donors and memorials/gifts
- After consultation with appropriate Epiphany teams, administer purchase of approved items
- Facilitate and plan appropriate dedication and blessing events for gifts
- See that all memorials/gifts are properly used and cared for

B. MEMORIAL GIFTS

All memorial gifts are placed in one general memorial fund. Donations made to memorials will remain in this fund until the Council votes to spend them on items required for Epiphany's worship and/or congregational life. Gifts to Epiphany in memory of a deceased member are not to be restricted, except with the express prior approval of Council. Suggestions for use of donations will be prayerfully considered, in light of other congregation needs. Epiphany reserves the right to refuse any donation if an unreasonable restriction or expectation is specified by its donor.

All gifts in memory or honor of specific persons should clearly designate the person, in writing. Gifts of unrestricted cash, marketable securities, or any similar property easily converted into cash are always most welcome and appropriate, and require no approval process.

B. ESTATE GIFTS

Estate gifts may be designated or undesignated. The Epiphany Council will make every effort to use donor gifts for their intended purpose, taking into consideration how that gift aligns with the congregation's mission, vision, and values. Epiphany encourages all donors considering an estate gift to discuss their wishes and the needs of the church with their financial advisor and Epiphany's Pastor before making a final decision, if desired.



C. DESIGNATED GIFTS

Epiphany will not place the congregation in a situation where acceptance of a designated gift strains the operating budget, management resources, administrative or pastoral staff of the congregation; or where the designation of a gift does not align with Epiphany's stated mission goals, congregational needs, or ELCA guidelines. Memorial/gift proposals should represent the values of the congregation as well as the donor or the person being honored. Potential donors should also be mindful of future generations.

For this reason Epiphany Lutheran Church has set forth guidelines under which it may accept designated gifts. The Congregation Council is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the following guidelines are followed:

- Designated gifts will only be accepted for existing Designated Fund accounts established by the Council. These include:
 - Capital campaigns for specific purposes
 - Synod and church wide benevolence
 - Missions of Epiphany
 - Debt retirement
 - Evangelism events and special worship services
 - Other designated accounts as determined by Council
- Epiphany makes every effort to honor a donor's designation. If circumstances change to the point where using a gift for its original purpose is no longer feasible, the donor or his/her heirs or trustees will be contacted to discuss other potential uses for the gift.
- All designated gifts must be accompanied by a written request detailing the use of the funds.
- Epiphany encourages all members to tithe to meet the congregation's annual operating expenses, thus Epiphany will not accept designated gifts to fund specific line items in the annual Ministry Plan budget. Designated gifts are understood to be over and above a member's tithe or annual pledge to the general operating fund.

D. IN-KIND GIFTS

From time to time the Congregation Council, with appropriate input, may solicit and establish a list of suggested memorials/gifts.

Donors are reminded that the IRS allows an individual to deduct the full fair market value of a gift in kind if it is kept by the congregation and used for a tax-exempt purpose. It is the sole responsibility of the donor to determine the value of a gift in kind; the Council cannot assign a value to the donated item(s). The donor is responsible for obtaining an in-kind receipt from the Epiphany Financial Secretary.

E. ADOPTION OF POLICY

This policy is recommended by the Congregation Council and is hereby adopted on 12 December, 2017.

Basic Memorial Guidelines

Appoint a Memorial Team – The Team’s responsibilities go beyond simply accounting for the monies received (which should always be in a separate, interest-bearing account.) The Team shall also be charged with developing Memorial policies, creating a list of desired memorials, deciding how memorials will be recognized, and considering requests for memorials not on the list.

Make a List of Needed or Acceptable Memorials – Families of persons being memorialized should be contacted after several weeks to see if they would like to designate gifts toward the purchase of something on the list. Undesignated gifts will be used to fund one or more of the items on the prioritized list of memorials. If someone wants to fund an item not on the list, it must be approved by the Memorial Team (or Church Council if no Memorial Team is yet in place). An effort is always made to respect the donor’s wishes, but the gift must be in harmony with the theology and worship guidelines of the ELCA, and Epiphany tradition and future goals.

A Memorial Fund is Not an Endowment Fund – Memorial Funds are working accounts, designed to enable the purchase or funding of specific items or projects. They are not intended to be savings accounts or contingency reserves. The Council will disburse all memorial donations within 18 – 24 months of their receipt. (If a gift amount falls short of a priority item’s purchase price, the Memorial Team or Council may contact the donors to seek an additional donation, apply funds from the undesignated funds, or recommend another item/project.) There may be certain longer-term exceptions wherein Council votes to raise the remaining funds through a capital campaign. Epiphany does not endorse or practice “borrowing from” the Memorial Fund. If operating funds are needed in extreme circumstances, the Council and congregation may vote to designate a portion of undesignated Memorial Funds to the general ministry of the congregation.

Determine How Gifts will be Acknowledged and Permanently Recognized— All Memorial Fund gifts will be promptly acknowledged to the donor and to the family of the deceased or honoree. The Memorial Team and the Congregation Council will develop a policy for permanent recognition of gifts, in the mindset that as all gifts are given to God’s glory, the names of donors will not be permanently affixed to items, but listed in a Book of Memorials. If large gifts are contingent upon certain recognition, Council will determine whether or not to accept the gift and how to recognize the major donor.