

## Walk-In-Ministry During COVID-19

Many of you have asked: How do you screen people who need support? How do you decide who gets priority? How do you decide how much each family receives? Who is coming to you for help?

During COVID-19, we now have 3 different funds. We have our traditional **Walk-In-Ministry Fund** that comes from the Service and Mission budget, Westminster Presbyterian Church and the Hunger for Change Grant. We have our **Stimulus Fund** that resulted from members of the congregation making donations of part or all of their stimulus checks. We have our **Duke-Durham COVID-19 Community Fund** that came from successfully writing grants to Duke. These three sources of funds are administered in both similar and different ways.

### **The Funds are all alike in that:**

- ✓ Money is given only to Durham County residents.
- ✓ Each client is required to send a copy of photo identification and their bill. Because of COVID, all of this information is sent by email or text.
- ✓ Each client has a phone interview. They are asked questions concerning their income, living arrangements, number of household occupants, work history, alternative sources of assistance, plans to work out future financial obligations, etc.
- ✓ When their paperwork is received, the landlord/agency/utility is contacted to confirm the amount owed. A pledge for a dollar amount is given and a check is sent within 7-10 days.
- ✓ A check is written to the landlord or utility company, never directly to the client.
- ✓ FPC volunteers administer the program. FPC covers any additional administrative costs. 100% of all donated money goes directly for assistance to the clients who ask for help.
- ✓ All assistance is on a "first come first serve" basis.

The Funds are different in that:

### **Walk In Ministry:**

The funds are given in increments of \$100.00 or less. Each client can receive assistance only one time within the calendar year. These funds reflect a monthly budgeted amount and are focused on those with the greatest need such as evidence of an eviction notice or threat of utilities being turned off. Assistance in setting up payment plans and referrals to other agencies are given as needed. In addition to rent and utilities, these funds can also be used for medications, food cards, bus or train tickets for out of town, gas cards, snack and toiletry bags and in town bus tickets for job interviews or medical appointments.

### **FPC Stimulus Fund and Duke-Durham COVID-19 Community Fund:**

These funds are restricted to individuals/families whose income has been directly affected by COVID-19. They are only for rent or utilities. The maximum amount given is \$200.00 for rent or \$125 for utilities.

**Outcome:**

The applicants that we have assisted so far reflect those who have been most vulnerable to the effects of COVID-19. They are workers who have lost jobs or reduced hours in the service sector (restaurant workers, childcare workers, school aids, etc.). Many indicate that they have never asked for assistance before the pandemic. The majority are individuals of color and individuals/families without a social safety net. Most of our referrals have come from Catholic Charities, Salvation Army, other churches, and the Durham Housing Authority. At this point, we have served 128 individuals/families.