



Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church
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Holy Trinity Agape Fund Guidelines

Revised December 18, 2018

PREAMBLE

“The King will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed thee, or thirsty and give You drink? And when did we see You a stranger and welcome You, or naked and clothe You? And when did we see You sick or in prison and visit You?’ And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.’” (Matthew 25.34-40)

The **Holy Trinity Agape Fund** was created in obedience to the Holy Gospel’s exhortation to reach out to all people in need and as part of implementing the Mission Statement unanimously adopted by the Holy Trinity Parish General Assembly on November 19, 1999, which includes “An outreach ministry which fulfills the command of Jesus Christ to reach out to the sick and needy, to serve the least of our brethren, and to spread the Gospel both locally and throughout the world.”

The Holy Trinity Agape Fund was established in November, 2002, through an endowment gift from the James G. Paras Memorial Endowment Fund of \$125,000.00, which represents a tithe of the Paras Endowment, offered in thanks back to the Lord in accordance with the biblical tradition of offering a “tithe” (a tenth) of our first-fruits to the Lord (Leviticus 27.30).

Administered by the Priest, reviewed regularly by an Agape Fund Committee comprised of members of the parish and reviewed by an independent outside accountant annually, this fund will be used to assist needy families, charitable agencies, church-related institutions, parish ministries and to foster and promote forms of outreach and assistance compatible with the teachings of our Orthodox Christian faith in fulfillment of the Gospel and commands of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

GUIDELINES

I. The Agape Fund Committee

A. Committee Membership

1. The Agape Committee shall consist of five members:
 - a. The Priest (the head priest in the event of more than one clergy in the parish)
 - b. Two members representing the Parish Council
 - c. Two members representing the Community.
2. The Priest is the only permanent member and serves as the presiding officer.
3. The representatives for the Community shall be appointed by the Priest and with the approval of the Parish Council on an annual basis for a one-year term.
4. The Parish Council members shall be appointed by the Parish Council on an annual basis for a one-year term.

B. Committee Responsibilities

1. The Agape Fund Committee shall meet twice annually to review the status of the Agape Fund, with three members constituting a quorum. Other meetings may be convened as needed by the Priest.
2. The Priest shall prepare a formal report showing either in detail or summary form, the record of all incoming funds and disbursements. All reports shall maintain the confidentiality of individual recipients and donors.
3. The Agape Fund Committee members shall review for approval the reports prepared by the Priest. They will also review the approvals for disbursements given during the interim period since the last meeting (see section IV A. 5.).
4. The Agape Fund Committee shall review the annual independent financial review (see Section VII) and review policies or procedures for any necessary changes.

II. Agape Fund Accounts

A. The Agape Fund shall consist of two accounts:

1. The Agape Fund Endowment
 - a. This fund shall maintain the invested funds from the founding donation and any other major investment bequests received.
 - b. This fund shall be administered by the Parish Council Investments Committee in consultation with the Agape Fund Committee.
 - c. Monies shall be transferred from this fund to the Agape Fund Account (Section II.A.2 below) on a periodic basis in accordance with the policy described in Section V.A.1 below.
2. The Agape Fund Account, which shall be used for the receiving and disbursing of funds on a daily basis.
 - a. This account shall be administered by the Priest, who shall be the sole signatory.
 - b. This account must have check-writing capabilities.
 - c. In addition to regular statements, this fund shall receive facsimiles of all cancelled checks back in paper form for use by the accountant for the financial review (Section VII).

III. Records and Reports

- A. The Priest shall keep a record of all monies received. This will include the donor or other source of the funds, the amount, date and any restrictions made by the donor. If funds are earmarked, the donation shall be cross-referenced to show that the funds were disbursed as requested.
- B. The contents of both the income and disbursement records shall be kept in a safe place by the Priest and the contents disclosed only to the Agape Committee as required.
- C. All disbursements shall be made by check from a special Agape checking account fund. The Priest shall be the only signatory to the account to maintain the confidentiality of the recipients.
- D. The Priest shall submit a semi-annual summary financial report of the status of the Agape Fund to the Parish Council and an annual report to the Parish General Assembly.

- E. In order to protect the confidentiality of donors and recipients, their names shall not be revealed in the regular reports for the Agape Fund Committee, Parish Council or General Assembly (unless specifically instructed by the parties).

IV. Procedures for Disbursement of Agape Fund Monies

- A. Needy individuals in local area (taken from funds not designated for a specific person)
 - 1. The Priest or the Agape Fund Committee is made aware of a needy person.
 - 2. Need is verified to extent possible by the Priest and/or Committee members.
 - 3. If the amount required is up to \$500, the Priest may distribute the amount needed according to his own discernment.
 - 4. If the amount is over \$500, prior Agape Fund Committee approval is required.
 - 5. If a needy person is in need of continual help in which will result in two or more donations between Agape Fund Committee meetings, each less than \$500 but the total of which will exceed \$500, the Priest shall notify the Agape Fund Committee and obtain written (paper or electronic) approval of at least two members.
 - 6. Agape Fund monies may not be issued to the Priest except in cases of reimbursements as noted in IV.A.7 below. Any disbursements to relatives of the Priest or members of the Committee must have prior approval from the Agape Fund Committee except in cases of reimbursements as noted in IV.A.7 below.
 - 7. Agape Fund monies may be distributed to any individual, including the Priest, for purposes of reimbursement of monies used to pay for approved Agape Fund disbursements, provided documentation of the expense is provided in the form of receipts or letters of verification.
- B. Needy individuals in local area (taken from funds designated for a specific person)
 - 1. If money has been donated specifically earmarked for a needy person or other purpose, Agape Committee approval is not required regardless of the amount of disbursement.
 - 2. The Priest shall notify the Agape Committee of all such incoming funds and disbursements at the next regular meeting. This also includes funds raised specifically for a given purpose.
- C. Local, National and International Organizations, Ministries and Causes
 - 1. The Procedure is the same as for needy individuals except that Committee approval is required for all disbursements over \$200, except those designated as Earmarked Funds.
- D. Emergency Distributions Resulting From Catastrophic Event Affecting Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church
 - 1. In the event of a catastrophic occurrence or catastrophic occurrences which significantly affect Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church (for example, fire, flood, severe financial hardship or devastating events), the General Assembly may authorize the withdrawal of necessary funds from the Agape Fund with a two-thirds majority approval. The motion to make such a withdrawal can only be made by unanimous request of the Parish Council.
- E. Special Disbursements Resulting From Substantial Growth of Agape Fund Endowment
 - 1. At any time the balance in the Agape Fund Endowment exceeds twice the initial endowment gift of \$125,000, the Agape Fund Committee may authorize a special transfer of principal from the Agape Fund Endowment to the Agape Fund Checking Account of the excess amount for special purposes consistent with the Agape Fund Guidelines, provided such transfers do not cause the principal balance in the Agape Fund Endowment to drop below \$250,000. The lump sum of such special disbursements must be approved by the Parish Council.

V. Sources of Agape Funds Monies

- A. Monies collected for the Agape Fund can come from any of the following sources:
 - 1. Initial Endowment Investment Income
 - a. The Agape Fund shall annually distribute the greater of 50% of the Endowment Fund Total Return (defined as total ending value minus total beginning value for the calendar year) or 2% of the total ending value of the Endowment Fund.
 - b. These monies shall be transferred from the Endowment to the Agape Fund Checking account at the beginning of each year by the Parish Council Investment Committee at the request of the Priest.
 - c. To ensure the active operations of the Agape Fund, the goal of the Agape Fund Committee

shall be to use the entire amount of each year's Investment Income contribution for disbursements, rather than for accumulation. Monies remaining in the Agape Fund Checking Account at the end of the calendar year shall remain in that account for future disbursement.

2. Parish Council Budget contributions
 - a. The Parish Council may choose to use the Agape Fund as a vehicle for charitable contributions made by the parish.
 3. Parish Organizations contributions
 - a. Parish organizations are encouraged to make donations to the Agape Fund from their budget each year as a part of their Christian mission.
 4. Private Donations
 - a. Direct to the Church Office or Priest
 - b. Indirect via Agape Fund Collection Box
 - c. Special Fund-raising programs or appeals
- B. Private donations can be made for either general use or can be earmarked for a specific person or other need. Earmarked funds will be identified as such and treated accordingly.
- C. All donations shall be made payable to "Holy Trinity Agape Fund" (or, as an exception, "Holy Trinity Church."). Donations shall not be made payable to any individual.

VI. Priority of Non-Designated Agape Fund Monies Disbursements

- A. Local needy individuals, widows, unemployed, disabled, ill, etc. (Local is defined as Parish or immediate Pittsburgh area).
- B. Local organizations, ministries or appeals originating in the Pittsburgh area. (Diocesan programs and ministries, Ecumenical Agencies and Ministries, Charitable Institutions, Orthodox Monasteries, Home Missions, Foundations, etc.)
- C. National and international organizations or appeals (Greek Orthodox Archdiocese programs and ministries, Holy Cross Seminary, St. Basil's Academy, Disaster Relief, Orthodox Christian Missions Center, non-profit agencies etc.)

VII. External Financial Reviews

- A. To assure the proper operation of the Agape Fund and to provide an official review of all operations, an annual financial review shall be made by a qualified external accountant. This must be an independent entity with no parishioners involved with the financial review.
- B. The accountant shall review all receipts, deposits and reports to ensure that all receipts were properly deposited and all disbursements were properly made to the individuals indicated. The accountant shall have access to all records, including the names of donors and recipients, in order to validate through a review of cancelled checks and donation designation records that monies were properly disbursed and received.
- C. The accountant shall work with the Priest to resolve any discrepancies and answer any questions regarding the operation of the fund.
- D. The accountant shall issue a report to the Agape Fund Committee and Parish Council with results of the financial review, verifying the accuracy and validity of the Agape Fund Committee's reports and noting any exceptions or problems and making recommendations for improvements.
- E. The financial review shall be paid for from the Agape Fund.

VIII. Guidelines

- A. Changes to these guidelines may be made by the Agape Fund Committee and must be approved by the Parish Council.

Document History:

- 02/11/2003 – Unanimously approved by Holy Trinity Parish Council.
- 03/27/2003 – Sections IV.D. and IV.E. added.
- 10/14/2003 – Section IV.A.6 modified and IV.A.7. added to accommodate reimbursement needs.
- 11/18/2008 – Replaced references to "audit" with "financial review" and "auditor" with "accountant" throughout document to facilitate more affordable and less cumbersome financial review process. Added "facsimiles of" to II.A.2.c.
- 12/18/2018 – Updated Section I.A.1.a with revised formula for annual distribution from Endowment to Checking.