

Girdwood Chapel

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May 14, 2020

Rotary of Girdwood

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To our friends and neighbors with Rotary of Girdwood:

First and foremost I thank you for the deep and abiding commitment to our community that your Club lives through its service and generosity. As I learn more about Girdwood, I am learning what an outstanding partner in service to our community Rotary has been for many years. From the community Thanksgiving gatherings, to the Community Garden, to your previous gift to the Girdwood Food Pantry, we at Girdwood Chapel thank you.

If there has been a blessing in this crisis, it has been the connections and friendships built through the community's support of the Food Pantry. It has been amazing and humbling to experience as a newer Girdwood resident. Donors from restaurants and local businesses, our congregation, residents and former residents, and service clubs are all stepping up to respond. As we forecast future needs, we are partnering with others to ensure we can sustain the increased need for the next 12 to 18 months. We all know the impact of lack of tourism this summer will extend through the fall and beyond. Further, we have begun serving additional communities along Turnagain Arm, including ten (and growing) families from Whittier.

On behalf of the Food Pantry I thank you for again considering us a partner to keep our community fed through this difficult season. Partnering with your club recently and working on this letter have reminded me that both my father and grandfather were Rotarians. I remember hanging on the wall of the social hall in White Salmon, WA a banner with Rotary's four-way test. Serving our community through this crisis is a testament to our shared values.

For your grant considerations, I would like to share some recent numbers and our commitment to policy and procedure. I spent some time refreshing my memory on Rotary's Charter as well to ensure our pantry's program can be an ideal partner for this proposed grant.

Previously, the Food Pantry operated out of a closet at the Chapel. We were open once per month (twice in October through December), serving an average of 45 people. In March and April 2020, we expanded goods to the worship area, borrowed additional refrigerators and freezers through donation, and now serve an average of 50 people weekly who receive meal kits (modeled on Bean's Cafe boxes) and produce if we have it. Twice per month we serve 150 people for larger orders, including fresh produce, meat, and kitchen staples.

Love God, Love Others, Change the World

As you can imagine, that increased our food cost. Pre-COVID-19 Pandemic, we spent \$200 per month and were able to acquire nearly all of what we distributed from the Food Bank of Alaska. Now, we spend an average of \$3000 to \$4000 per month, depending on availability of meat and how we can source the food. The increased use of our building, increased need for cleaning and sanitization, and the energy used from more appliances increased our operating costs to serve more people more often.

Initially, these costs were offset by generous monetary donations (including you!) and restaurants' food donations (some that you Rotarians coordinated, thank you!), but those have mostly waned. We received federal food distributions twice per month, and those are set to expire May 31, 2020. We also anticipate individual donor fatigue, but have faith that provisions and resources will come. It is hard to predict what the next few months will look like financially for the Food Pantry, but we expect to operate at an expanded capacity for 12 to 18 months.

The Girdwood Food Pantry operates as a partner organization with the Food Bank of Alaska, which means we are governed by many of their policies and procedures in addition to being highly resourced through FBA. Ultimate responsibility for the Food Pantry rests with the Girdwood Chapel Council (functionally the Chapel's Board of Directors) since legally the Chapel is the partner organization, but operations and procedures are delegated to a Food Pantry Committee composed of both Chapel and community members.

Finances are tracked by the Chapel's elected treasurer (currently Terry Sherwood) and are audited annually by a CPA. Food Pantry finances are tracked in a separate dedicated fund as required by both the IRS (as they are directed gifts) and our church rules. This is a common procedure for the Chapel and any non-profit receiving dedicated funds.

Before the COVID-19 crisis began the Food Pantry reimbursed the Chapel \$50 monthly to help defray the cost of building usage (e.g., electricity, water, cleaning, etc.). This came about through an explicit gift from a donor who is not a Chapel member. Typically, increased operating costs are covered through now-canceled community fundraisers. In response to the Food Pantry's more frequent use of the Chapel's building, we reassessed what overhead needs and bills the Food Pantry had. Because it is a permissible and common use of funds under Federal guidelines, our Chapel's Council (Board of Directors) voted on April 28th, 2020 to temporarily allocate up to 25% of Food Pantry donations to pay for non-food purchasing operating costs. The Council recognized that our Treasurer needed clear guidance for fiduciary responsibility and compliance. The decision was also reached after speaking with several donors whose donations to the Food Pantry account for more than 25% of the previous month's total Food Pantry donations. When services return to pre-COVID-19 levels, the Chapel and Food Pantry Committee will revise the financial operations costs accordingly.

To govern how the potential Rotary grant is spent, I propose a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the Rotary Club of Girdwood's Board and the Chapel's Council (Board of Directors). I am open to content, but the main goal is to make sure the funds are allocated in a manner that aligns with Rotary's Four Way Test and serves the Pantry's needs. I would be honored to work on a draft to be included in the grant application, along with the project

description and recent photos, and support letters from other donors. Your gift helps us provide, but we will continue to engage partners and donors, and pursue state and federal assistance programs, to fill the anticipated need for 18 months.

From my own past experiences in working with Rotary clubs, I am aware that Rotary grants cannot be used to promote a particular religious viewpoint or to support purely religious functions at churches. So, to be explicitly clear, I want to reassure you all that no Food Pantry funds are being used to pay for worship, Christian education, or any part of my salary as Pastor of Girdwood Chapel. Any other exclusions would be included in an MOA.

Again, thank you for considering further support to the Girdwood Food Pantry. Resources to support our friends and neighbors who have lost jobs or are underemployed are scarce in Girdwood. We have seen so many neighbors coming in, sharing that they are in a brand new set of circumstances, needing to seek help for the first time in their lives. The abundance of food we have been able to provide not only fills bellies - it alleviates stress and anxiety, it helps pay rent and put gas in the tank, and it provides a tangible sign of hope amongst so much despair and distress.

Together, I know that we have enough resources for each and every one of us to not just survive, but to thrive. Thank you for helping make that happen.

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