

RETIRED MINISTERS AND MISSIONARIES OFFERING

Thank You For...



2012 GETTING STARTED GUIDE

AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES USA

*“I do not cease to give thanks for you as
I remember you in my prayers.”*

—Ephesians 1:16



In this familiar passage from Paul’s letter to the church at Ephesus, he showed his gratitude for the love and devotion this community of faith displayed as he ministered to them. This culture of gratitude — where spiritual leaders give thanks for the church’s fellowship and God’s followers give thanks for ministers’ and missionaries’ spiritual guidance — is deeply ingrained in the Christian faith.

The Retired Ministers and Missionaries Offering (RMMO) reflects Paul’s message. It is a personal offering, one rooted in thanks for the countless ways ministers and missionaries guide each member of the church along their spiritual journey. This year, RMMO will showcase this gratitude by offering your congregation, along with retired ministers and missionaries, a chance to say:

Thank You For...

Supporting me when my spouse got sick.

Celebrating my daughter’s wedding.

Helping me purchase the hearing aid I needed so much.

Showing me that God had a plan for me when I felt lost.

... All of the ways ministers, missionaries and the congregation have enriched each other’s lives.

We hope you are inspired to make RMMO and its culture of gratitude a tradition in your congregation.



This year, we have redesigned the structure of this offering to make it both more meaningful to church members and easier to administer. This guide provides a blueprint and the specific materials you need to showcase church members' thankfulness and generosity through RMMO.

Before the Offering:

FOUR QUICK STEPS FOR GETTING STARTED

Some simple preparation can make organizing RMMO easy, no matter the size of your church.

1. **Set the Date:** RMMO traditionally takes place the first Sunday in December, but you can structure timing in a way that makes the most sense for your congregation. Some churches choose a different Sunday or receive RMMO as part of a month-long focus on thankfulness.
2. **Set the Goal:** Setting a specific offering goal helps church members better understand what they are working toward and allows you to celebrate the success of reaching that goal.
3. **Build Opportunities into the Calendar to Say “Thank you for ...”:** In the weeks around your scheduled RMMO, create moments when your congregation can say thank you in ways that are not tied to a financial gift. This guide offers ideas for activities during church services, sermons, Sunday school and more that reinforce RMMO's expression of gratitude.
4. **Introduce the Offering to your Congregation:** Kickoff RMMO by explaining the offering's purpose, history and significance during Sunday morning services.

Thank You For...

The roots of RMMO go back to the mid-1930s, when American Baptist congregations received a Communion Fellowship Offering on the first Sunday of each month to support needy and elderly clergy within their churches. In 1948 churches began donating to the November Communion Fellowship Offering, providing financial assistance to the denomination's elderly ministers, missionaries and their widowed spouses. In 1977 American Baptist Churches USA launched the Retired Ministers and Missionaries Offering (RMMO) to continue this tradition of thankfulness.

Today RMMO is a tangible way for American Baptist congregations to say “Thank you for ...” the commitment, service and spiritual guidance of retired ministers, missionaries and their widowed spouses. The offering supports those who have devoted their lives to God's service by providing emergency assistance in their times of need and, for those eligible, a “Thank You” check at the end of each year. In 2011, RMMO provided Thank You checks to more than 3,300 recipients. This year's national RMMO campaign goal is \$1.2 million.

BEFORE THE OFFERING: PROMOTIONAL IDEAS

Collecting Stories of Thanks

Sharing stories of gratitude is one of the most meaningful ways to personalize RMMO for your congregation. Giving thanks, both for the service of retired ministers and missionaries and for the gifts given by your congregation, helps church members connect to the spirit of RMMO and fosters a culture of gratitude within your community.

- **Donors:** Identify past donors and ask them to share the personal stories of why they gave — ask them to be the messenger and to serve as the catalyst for getting other individuals to share their stories. A donor story may sound like:

Thank You For... Answering the call.

"My wife and I would say that we're not missionaries; we're business people. But we understand the value of missionaries and what they're doing. Since we were never called to be there, we've always felt that we have the responsibility to support someone who has made that sacrifice, whether they're on or off the field, and to thank them for their service."

—Peter and Judy Swenson, Brewster, MA. RMMO donors

- **Recipients:** Identify RMMO recipients within your community and ask them to share the significance this support had to them, along with their thanks to the congregation. A recipient story may sound like:

Thank You For... Providing in my time of need.

"At our age, there seem to be more and more dental and medical emergencies. These unexpected expenses can really put a drain on our resources. Thank you for your generous support. It is encouraging to know that we have a place to turn when these unexpected financial situations arise."

—Retired minister in VT

- **Church Members:** Encourage all church members to express their gratitude to the retired ministers and missionaries in their own lives by saying “Thank you for ...” a specific time that person made an impact in their life. This story may sound like:

Thank You For...Devoting your life to God's work.

“I remember a missionary who spent 25 years ministering in Africa and a pastor who supported my friend during the loss of a child. This work is so important, but there is a tendency to forget these people’s service when they are no longer in the field or the pulpit. I think that is a real shame. RMMO is a way to say thank you, not just to one individual, but to everyone who has served.”

—Dr. Andrew K. Palmer, Eastham, MA.



Collect the stories, thank you notes and other expressions of thanks and use them to build engagement among your congregation and to highlight your church’s culture of gratitude. Share materials and save them to help promote this and next year’s offerings.

Sharing Stories of Thanks

Stories of gratitude are more meaningful when you share them. Now that you’ve collected stories from your congregation, find ways to share them with others and encourage new acts of gratitude during the RMMO campaign.

Highlight Stories of Thanks, along with details about your congregation’s participation in RMMO,

- In the church newsletter
- In an insert in the Sunday service bulletin
- On the church website or Facebook page
- On posters throughout the church facilities
- On a special “Thank you for ...” wall displayed in the church lobby

Thank You For...Being my strong, inspiring American Baptist family.

“I feel so much a part of my American Baptist family, no matter where I am or what I’m doing. At just five years old, Adoniram Judson, a missionary who served for 40 years in Burma, was my hero. I wanted to be just like him. I admired how he left his family, friends and home to go somewhere he didn’t speak the language just to teach them about God.

Being part of my American Baptist family has allowed me to share God’s love with others, just like my childhood hero. I remember one woman in my congregation had a brain tumor. In the three months after her diagnosis, I visited her every single day. She played this game to figure out what time I would visit her. I am so thankful to have been able to spend that time with her. Her husband and two children still thank me for how well I treated their wife and mother. But I feel thankful to have been a part of their family during that difficult time.”

—Rev. Veronica “Ronnie” Lanier, Melrose, MA. RMMO recipient



DURING THE OFFERING: ADMINISTERING RMMO

When to Collect the Offering

The most popular time for collecting the RMMO is typically between the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays, when many of us are already focused on giving thanks for the good things in our life. During this time it also makes sense to reflect on and express our gratitude to those who have helped us on our Christian journey. Some congregations with successful RMMO traditions suggest:

- Designating one day for RMMO, the first Sunday in December (Dec. 2 this year) in most churches.
- Receiving RMMO during Christmas Eve services.
- Receiving RMMO at the end of Sunday services during the announcements.
- Setting up online giving through the church's website to supplement in-person giving.

Thank You For...

Sharing the news of Christ with others.

"We celebrate the good news of Jesus' birth at Christmas, so it feels appropriate to give our first Christmas gift, our Christmas Eve Offering, to RMMO, as a way to say thank you to the men and women who have invested their lives in sharing the good news of Christ with others. We can't out give God. When we focus on giving to others, including the retired ministers, missionaries and their widowed spouses who deserve our thanks and sometimes require our help, God always meets our own needs."

—Rev. Doug Scalise, Brewster, MA.



How to Collect the Offering

Creating a memorable tradition for your congregation's RMMO can help make the offering more meaningful to members. Some ideas include:

- Having the pastor read a thank you note from a retired minister or missionary who is a member of the congregation, prior to collection.
- Sharing the "Thank you for ..." stories collected from church members and retired ministers and missionaries during preparation for RMMO.
- Asking church members to stand and share personal stories of specific times when retired ministers or missionaries were a blessing in their lives. Arrange for several church members to be ready to share stories to spark participation.

Key Materials

Review and consider using the materials included with this kickoff packet, which can help make RMMO a more meaningful act of gratitude in your congregation. These include:

- **Giving Envelopes:** Each envelope has a place for individuals to contribute their “Thank you for...” story so that those who cannot donate can still express their gratitude. Provide them to church members when you take your RMMO offering.
- **Bulletin Inserts:** These inserts include stories that demonstrate the significance of RMMO and help personalize the offering. They include customizable fields so you can add your congregation’s RMMO collection date, goal and Stories of Thanks. Customize them, and then print as many copies as you need.
- **Posters:** These posters can help build awareness of RMMO among church members and include customizable fields so you can add your congregation’s RMMO collection date, goal and Stories of Thanks. One of the posters is interactive, allowing church members to add their own Stories of Thanks. If you choose to use this poster, supply Post-it® notes and pens near the poster display and ask a few church leaders to add their stories to the poster as an example for others.
- **Newsletter Template:** This article provides a useful format to help your church highlight the contributions and gratitude of retired ministers and missionaries during RMMO and beyond. Include the article as written or adapt it to your needs. You can also create quarterly articles about the contributions of retired ministers and missionaries. This article can be posted to your church’s website as well.

To order free promotional materials, call Judson Press at 1-800-458-2766.

DURING THE OFFERING: IDEAS

Remembering Personal Ministries

Many retired ministers and missionaries continue to do God’s work long after they retire. And ministry work by your church members can touch the lives of retired ministers and missionaries within the church community, even if these people aren’t members of your own church.

RMMO is a wonderful opportunity to highlight these personal ministries and the ongoing impact retired ministers and missionaries make in the community. Consider talking to church members who oversee various ministry programs to uncover personal stories. These may include:

- Meal deliveries to the elderly
- Nursing home visits
- Hospital outreach
- Volunteer programs at homeless shelters

When you identify retired ministers and missionaries who are still serving the community or are being reached through your own church’s ministries, highlight these stories as another way to say “Thank you for...”

BEYOND THE OFFERING: CONTINUING A CULTURE OF GRATITUDE

RMMO provides financial support for the retired ministers, missionaries and widowed spouses who have helped build our churches. But it is about much more than that. Through RMMO, American Baptist churches have an opportunity to highlight their congregations' thankfulness for all of the ways that spiritual leaders have contributed to their lives as Christians. RMMO can help to build a culture of gratitude throughout the special offering season and the rest of the year.

Engaging Youth

Young church members may not be able to participate in RMMO by giving money, but we are never too young to learn to show gratitude for the contributions others have made to our lives. Use RMMO as an opportunity to teach children about the service of your own church's current leaders, along with retired ministers and missionaries. Some ideas include:

- **Sunday School:** Encourage youth groups to write letters or draw pictures of thanks to ministers or missionaries who touched their lives.
- **Children's Sermon:** Invite a retired minister or missionary to share the children's sermon during service, highlighting ministry experience and gratitude.

SCRIPTURE

RMMO is rooted in Christianity's culture of gratitude, which is reinforced through scripture. Use RMMO as an opportunity to highlight our call to be thankful as Christians.

I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus.

—I Corinthians 1:4

I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers.

—Ephesians 1:16

I am grateful to God whom I worship with a clear conscience, as my ancestors did, when I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day.

—2 Timothy 1:3



Reconnecting with Retirees

RMMO can give your congregation a chance to learn from retired ministers and missionaries. Some may still be active in your church community, while others may rarely make it to church anymore due to health concerns and other obstacles. Regardless of their involvement, these former leaders still have lessons to share that are resonant today. Some ideas include:

- **Special Service or Reception:** Invite a retired minister or missionary to your church to share stories of his or her life and work during a special event after regular Sunday morning service.
- **Guest Sermon:** Invite a retired minister or missionary to deliver a sermon and ask him or her to include stories of service and the importance of gratitude.
- **Outreach Visit:** Organize visits to the homes of retired ministers and missionaries in your community. Deliver a “thank you” package and stay to talk about their service.

Thank You For... Helping my family care for our son's health.

“Our son was born in 1968 and in 1984 developed a heart problem. Treatment was quite expensive, but the support provided through RMMO helped us cover the fees. Knowing fellow believers still stand behind my family makes me so grateful, and makes me want to share my gratitude with others.”

—Rev. George Daniels,
Oro Valley, AZ.
RMMO recipient



Sharing Thanks Year-Round

Gratitude is a lesson for Christians throughout the year, not just around the time of RMMO. Many of the ways you promote RMMO can be extended year-round to help reinforce a culture of gratitude within your congregation. Some ideas include:

- **Regular Sermons:** Look for ways to include lessons of gratitude and the contributions of your retired ministers and missionaries in sermons throughout the year.
- **Expressions of Gratitude:** Provide opportunities for church members and leaders to share their thanks year-round. Create a gratitude box where they can contribute stories of thanks, then post them on a wall or share them regularly during services.

Thank You For... Helping my friend see the doctor he needed.

“A former colleague of mine had put off an eye exam for months because his family couldn't afford it. The check from RMMO came right in time for him to see the doctor and get the glasses he needed. This special gift not only helps recipients during their time of need, it helps us all feel the gratitude and support of our Christian family.”

—Rev. Dr. Dan MacDonald, Ronks, PA. RMMO recipient



SAMPLE CALENDAR

by October 15:

- Identify RMMO committee members and schedule first meeting.

October 16–November 3:

- Begin gathering stories of gratitude from church members and retired ministers and missionaries.
- Identify and order RMMO support materials.
- Plan offering date(s) and schedule opportunities to say “Thank you for ...” around it.

November 1:

- Include article in church newsletter about RMMO, a retired minister or missionary. Post article to church website or Facebook page as well.

November 3:

- Display RMMO posters and encourage church members to add their stories of thanks.

November 4:

- Include bulletin insert.
- Hold a Sunday school “Thankfulness” activity.

November 11:

- Include bulletin insert.
- Guest sermon from retired minister or missionary.
- Host a special reception with retired minister or missionary.

November 14:

- Organize a group visit to retired minister or missionary.

November 18:

- Include bulletin insert.
- Pastor shares “Thank you for ...” stories during Thanksgiving Sunday services.

November 25:

- Include bulletin insert.
- Children’s sermon from retired minister or missionary.

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December 2:

- Include bulletin insert.
- Church members and retired ministers and missionaries share "Thank you for ..." stories during Sunday announcements.
- RMMO collection.

December 9:

- Include bulletin insert.
- Provide a RMMO goal update and host a celebration.

February:

- Guest sermon from a retired minister or missionary.
- Include article in church newsletter about a retired minister or missionary. Post article to church website or Facebook page as well.

March-April:

- Set up and promote contributions to a church gratitude box.
- Share gratitude box submissions during Sunday services.

May:

- Sunday service sermon focused on thankfulness.
- Create wall display of gratitude box submissions.
- Include article in church newsletter about the importance of gratitude. Post article to church website or Facebook page as well.

June-July:

- Share gratitude box submissions during Sunday services.

August:

- Organize an outreach visit to the home of a retired minister or missionary in your church community.
- Share gratitude box submissions during Sunday services.
- Include article in church newsletter about a retired minister or missionary. Post article to church website or Facebook page as well.

September-October:

- Share gratitude box submissions during Sunday services.

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