

Retired Ministers & Missionaries Offering



Thank You For...

**2013 RMMO
GETTING STARTED GUIDE**

AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES USA

“In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.”

—1 Thessalonians 5:18

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.

Since the mid-1930s, American Baptist congregations have 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 officially launched the Retired Ministers and Missionaries Offering (RMMO) to continue this tradition of thankfulness. Since 1980, MMBB has sent “Thank You” checks drawn directly from the MMBB endowment to eligible retired lay church employees.

The Retired Ministers and Missionaries Offering commemorates the anonymous gift in 1981 of a Vietnamese refugee woman worshipping with the First Chinese Baptist Church of Fresno, California. Not knowing the full intent of the offering, but understanding the words “thank you” printed on the offering envelope, she slipped off her wristwatch, her only possession of value, and placed it in the envelope.

The Retired Ministers and Missionaries Offering 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. It provides 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 2012, RMMO provided Thank You checks to more than 3,300 recipients. For 2013, the national RMMO goal is \$1.2 million.

This year, RMMO will showcase this gratitude by offering your congregation, along with retired ministers and missionaries, a chance to say...

Thank You!

GETTING STARTED

In order to make this offering more meaningful to church members and easier to administer, we provide this guide and the accompanying materials. This guide provides a blueprint and the specific materials you need to showcase church members’ thankfulness and generosity through RMMO.

1. SET THE DATE:

RMMO traditionally takes place the first Sunday in December, but you can hold the offering at a time 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. In the materials section you’ll see we’ve provided a poster for you to set your goal and measure your congregation’s progress. Monitoring this will create a sense of urgency for your congregation and encourage more donations and higher levels of participation.

3. BUILD SOME 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.

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... Serving God.

“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 at the pulpit. 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

- **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... Warming my heart.

“Every year the thank you check comes and it is a nice heartwarming moment when I realize that there are people that remember me.”

— Pastor Richard Bausman, Springfield, MA

- **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 just believe that if the lord has blessed us with enough money to give, then it’s what we should be doing if they’re serving and we’re not. Some people can serve and some people can give.”

— Nancy Smith, Brewster, MA. RMMO Donor

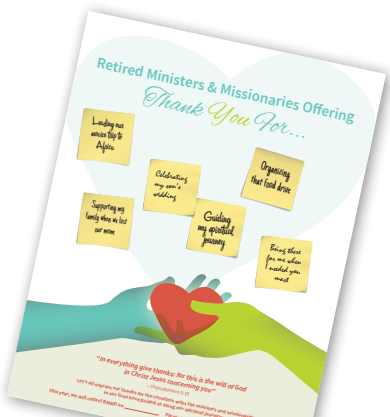
Collect the stories, thank you notes and other expressions of thanks and use them to build engagement among your congregation and to highlight your church’s culture of gratitude. Share materials and save them to help promote this and next year’s offerings.

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
- During the Sunday service
- 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... Leading the Way

“We all know in life we stand on the shoulders of those who have gone before us (worked hard, loved us), and the same is true when it comes to our Christian faith. If there weren’t ministers and missionaries and their spouses who have been faithful in the generations before us, we wouldn’t have this church, this mission.”

— Rev. Dr. Doug Scalise, Brewster, MA



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.
- Selecting a time that will not compete with too many other offerings, even if it is a smaller window, so as to get your congregation’s full attention.

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.
- Invite a former missionary to come and share their stories of their life abroad with the congregation.
- 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.



“Really we don’t need to do much more than listen to them [retired ministers and missionaries]. Everyone knows them. The congregation knows their stories, these are people they deeply love. We just took that strength and just played with it.”

— Pastor Steve Langley, Widows Mite Award Recipient

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:

1. 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.

2. 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.

3. POSTERS

Posters will build awareness of RMMO among church members. They include customizable fields so you can add your congregation’s RMMO collection date and goal. One of the posters is interactive; supply Post-it® notes and encourage church members to add their own Stories of Thanks.

4. NEWSLETTER TEMPLATE

The newsletter provides a format for you to share pertinent information about the offering and customize for your church’s individual goals.

TO ORDER FREE PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS, CALL JUDSON PRESS AT 1-800-458-3766.

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.

Contact us for assistance in identifying retired ministers and missionaries in your area.

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
- Volunteer programs at homeless shelters
- Nursing home visits
- Hospital outreach

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 extend 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 they are never too young to learn to show gratitude for the contributions others have made to their lives. Use RMMO as an opportunity to teach children about the service of your church’s current leaders, along with retired ministers and missionaries. Some ideas include:

- **SOCIAL MEDIA:** If you have a church page on Facebook encourage younger members to engage there and share messages of thanks and gratitude.
- **SERVICE WORK:** Identify a recipient of RMMO still working to serve God and their community and arrange a day for younger members of the church to join them in their missions. This could be delivering food to the elderly, helping to clean up a park nearby your church or running a clothing drive.
- **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.

“Children love stories. And it’s important they learn the discipline of giving and stewardship that way. Any time we can involve children, it’s great. Sharing stories of mission trips in far off countries or just stories of how the church and town used to be — the lessons we should pass on — that’s important. That’s what we should talk about.”

— Anonymous Pastor, Florida



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 poor health and other obstacles. Regardless of their involvement, these former leaders still have lessons that resonate 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.

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... Making me feel like part of your family.

“Every time I get a check it reminds me that I’m part of the family. It’s a very significant gesture of appreciation. Now I have a fund that I try to help grow for mission work in various places and to benefit other missionaries.”

— RMMO Recipient James A. Scott

*Thank You For...
A well-timed gift*

“It’s a gift for which we’re extremely grateful and blessed and it always seems to come along at a time when there are medical bills.”

— RMMO Recipient Craig Collemer



Sample Sermon

Text: Philippians 4:10:

“I rejoice in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned for me, but you had no opportunity to show it.”

The occasion for Paul’s writing to the church at Philippi was a visit from Epaphroditus, who had been sent by the church with a love gift for Paul, who was in prison. Touched by the church’s concern for him, Paul replied with a letter known in the New Testament as “Philippians.” Paul thanked the congregation for their gift and described his condition and state of mind. The entire letter is filled with joy, happiness and hope.

What did the gift from the Philippian church do for Paul?

It renewed his trust in the gospel of Jesus Christ (1.3-11).
It assured him of the providential care of God (1.12, 21).
It encouraged him (2.1).
It gave him hope (3.14).
It lightened his load (4:14).

Through the Retired Ministers and Missionaries Offering, American Baptist congregations have the opportunity, much like that of the Philippian church, to say thank you for your ministry with a gift. And like Paul, recipients of Thank You checks and emergency and other financial assistance, express their gratitude for caring Christian friends.

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.

“Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.”

— Ephesians 1:16-18

“Always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

— Ephesians 5:20

SAMPLE CALENDAR

by November 1:

- Identify RMMO committee members and schedule first meeting.

November 4:

- 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 6:

- Include article in church newsletter about RMMO, a retired minister or missionary. Post article to church website or Facebook page as well.
- Display RMMO posters and encourage church members to add their stories of thanks.

November 10:

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

November 13:

- Organize a group visit to retired minister or missionary.

November 17:

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

November 24:

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

December 1:

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

December 8:

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

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NOVEMBER 2013

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DECEMBER 2013

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29	30	31				

December-January:

- Continue to collect RMMO donations.
- Invite members of the congregation to share why they give and how they are celebrating the matriarchs and patriarchs of their family this holiday season.
- Continue to provide regular updates on how fundraising is going and set a final deadline for donations to be in by.

February-April:

- Guest sermon from a retired minister or missionary.
- Include article in church newsletter about a retired minister or missionary.
- Share thank you letters from retired ministers and missionaries who received the offering.

May-August:

- Sunday service sermon focused on giving thanks for the generations who came before us, whether or not they served the church.
- Post article to church website or Facebook page as well.
- Organize an outreach visit to the home of a retired minister or missionary in your church community.

September-October:

- Share gratitude box submissions during Sunday services.

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