

SHARING THE LIGHT FOR 75 YEARS

A LETTER FROM YOUR WORLD RELIEF OFFICER

“Let me tell you why you are here...You’re here to be light, bringing out the God-colors in the world...Keep open house; be generous with your lives.” (Matthew 5:13-16, The Message)

Dear American Baptist Leaders,

On Easter Sunday in 1949, on nation-wide radio, Christians were challenged to donate one million dollars in one hour to help people devastated by the aftermath of World War II. Faithful Christians answered the challenge and the goal was met. That was the beginning of the One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) offering!

In 1973 American Baptists formally joined the movement that had been carried forward by several Protestant denominations. Giving to OGHS in 1973 was \$82,045. Over the decades since, American Baptists have increased their support for the offering and in doing so have been sharing the light in all corners of the world—at times during some of the darkest moments in human history.

Providing for the myriad needs that result from famine and hunger crises, displacement of people due to war and natural disasters, and recurring and extraordinary natural disasters have been the focus of OGHS. But not just in the immediate aftermath. Today OGHS continues to provide emergency relief after disasters while at the same time supporting development work around the world that seeks to address chronic conditions that linger for years or decades longer.

I love Eugene Peterson’s paraphrase of these verses in Matthew 5, and the clear commission they give to show up brightly in the world and be generous with our lives. That is the invitation extended in this year’s theme, **Share the Light**. And it’s an invitation that American Baptists have accepted and responded to for over 50 years.

The scriptures tell us that huge crowds were gathering, drawn to Jesus by his teachings and the miracles of healing he performed. So Jesus climbed a hill and delivered his “sermon on the mount” to an audience captivated by his message and ways. He offered them blessings, affirming them in ways probably no one had before.

Then he described a life of discipleship characterized by prayer, humility, love of one’s enemies, and a steady practice of being ‘salt and light,’ generously sharing the goodness of God in all the world.

One Great Hour of Sharing is a beautiful opportunity to do just that. When we participate in One Great Hour of Sharing, we become a dazzling prism of light scattering blessing in places that desperately need it. We offer hope to people forced to flee their homes in search of safety and new promise. We support life-giving recovery efforts when disasters devastate communities and lives. We empower partners in their labors to build sustainable futures. We plant seeds of peace where war has multiplied despair and destruction.

This is why we are here: to be shining witnesses of uncommon love and enduring hope and to be generous with our lives. I hope you will invite giving to the One Great Hour of Sharing offering this year with the same spirit of joyful generosity you have for so many years!



In grateful partnership,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lisa Rothenberger-Winter".

Lisa Rothenberger-Winter
World Relief Officer

GUIDE TO YOUR PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS

Your box of resources includes the following items.

If you need additional quantities, call Claudia Wong at 610-768-2404 or email cwong@internationalministries.org.



2024 Planning and Resource Guide

Inside you will find great content to help you promote the offering. Each page is perforated to be removed and distributed to those who can help build enthusiasm for the offering—the pastor, worship team, teachers, etc.

Video

The 2024 video is “Share the Light.” This video features Don Pedro and his family achieving their dream of a bountiful harvest and healthy livestock. But the story doesn’t stop there. Don Pedro is sharing the light with his fellow farmers and community in Honduras. See how God is transforming the lives of farmers, families, and communities through One Great Hour of Sharing. Runtime is 2:00 and the video can be found at <http://abc-oghs.org/resources/media-videos>.

One Great Hour of Sharing Poster (available in English and Spanish)

Create a prominent display with the poster. Call attention to the poster each week through announcements in worship and Sunday school hours and in newsletters.

Printed Bulletin Insert

Use this fold-over bulletin insert as an educational resource in worship, in your newsletter, and at meals and meetings.

Offering Envelopes (available in English & Spanish)

Distribute envelopes generously. Include them in a letter from your pastor to all members and friends, in pews and Sunday bulletins. Put envelopes in several places to make it easy for people to give when it is most convenient.

NEW AND AVAILABLE TO BE ORDERED: Sticker Sheet

A sticker sheet is not included with your box of materials, but is available to order.

Use the stickers with children and adults—in Sunday School class, after worship, etc.

NOTE: Due to the increased cost of paper and labor, we have discontinued producing coin boxes. We know that some churches used them faithfully, while others asked annually that they not be included with their materials. Thanks for your patience as we introduce a new resource and learn how you are finding it helpful.



PROMOTION CHECKLIST

Thanks for saying “Yes!” to coordinating the One Great Hour of Sharing offering for your congregation.

Here are some tips that we hope are helpful to you.

PREPARE! (During April)

Review all promotion resources; order additional quantities if needed by calling Claudia Wong at 610-768-2404 or email cwong@internationalministries.org.

- Involve others! Share the individual resources found in the 2024 Planning and Resource Guide with the pastor, the worship team, teachers, etc. as appropriate.
- Choose a leadership team if you need one.
- With your leadership team, set a realistic, but challenging, offering goal. Challenge your congregation to reflect on Matthew 5: 14-16.
- Set a date(s) when you will receive the offering. Put this date on your church calendar.
- Be creative! Plan promotional activities to involve people of all ages. Ask teachers to use the materials in the weeks leading up to the offering.
- Familiarize yourself with each of the promotional pieces:
 - 2024 Planning and Resource Guide
 - New video “Share the Light” (Runtime of 2:00) can be found at <http://abc-oghs.org/resources/media-videos>
 - Poster
 - Printed bulletin inserts
 - Offering envelopes
 - NEW AND AVAILABLE FOR ORDER: Sticker Sheet

EDUCATE AND PROCLAIM! (During May)

- Know what the offering is and what it provides. Yes, OGHS is a tangible way American Baptists provide for the human needs of our world. The offering provides:
 - **Emergency relief** available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for urgent or acute needs brought about by disasters of natural or human origin;
 - **Development projects** focused on meeting chronic human need by enabling individuals or groups to establish or maintain a more adequate quality of life; and
 - **Ministries to displaced persons** focused on holistic ministry to immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants—those within the U.S. and around the world who find themselves someplace other than what they have known to be home.
- Include announcements and mission stories in your newsletter.
- Make sure offering envelopes are in the pew racks each week.
- Display the offering poster in a prominent place. Set up a visual display to track the offering. Update your display each week.
- Enclose bulletin inserts in weekly bulletins. Create additional bulletin inserts by photocopying the Mission Stories found in this guide.





photo: @disciplephoto

WORSHIP! (During June)

- Personalize the offering with a testimony from a church member or guest about why giving to this offering is important to them. Many people have been personally impacted by natural disasters—hurricanes, fires, mudslides, etc. Others have personal testimonies about helping to resettle refugees in their community—invite them to share.
- Read Mission Stories during worship services as “Mission Moments.”
- Have a One Great Hour of Sharing sermon and children’s chat prior to the week you receive the offering.
- Use the worship resources during worship services and in small groups.

CELEBRATE! (During June)

- Announce to the congregation the final result of their gifts and celebrate their generosity. Offer thanks and announce the gift total in your newsletter and worship bulletin. (If you did not meet your goal, celebrate what you have received and announce that you have set aside one or two more Sundays for people to give.)

FOLLOW-UP

- Keep a record of promotional activities and what worked well for your church. Archive resources for future years.
- Forward offering receipts to either your Regional Office or the ABCUSA, P.O. Box 851, Valley Forge, PA 19482.**

Alternative schedule
Does your worship attendance drop in June? Does your Sunday school “shut down”? Consider receiving the One Great Hour of Sharing offering in May—before people get into summer mode. Receiving the offering on a Sunday with maximum attendance can make a big difference.

MEET YOUR WORLD RELIEF COMMITTEE

Have you ever wondered how the gifts that you give to the One Great Hour of Sharing offering get to the places where they make a difference? This is the responsibility of the World Relief Committee ("Committee"). The Committee's purpose is to support, enable and encourage emergency relief and disaster rehabilitation, development assistance, and ministry to displaced persons. The source of funds for this work is the gifts you give to the One Great Hour of Sharing annual offering.

The Committee is made up of people from different parts of our American Baptist life:

- 7 voting members elected as follows:
 - 2 from the Board of Directors of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society (International Ministries);
 - 2 from the Board of Directors of the American Baptist Home Mission Societies;
 - 2 from the Board of General Ministries; and
 - 1 from the Executive Committee of the American Baptist Women's Ministries.
- 4 staff members: a representative each from the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society (International Ministries), the American Baptist Home Mission Societies, the American Baptist Churches USA, and the American Baptist Women's Ministries.
- The World Relief Officer serves as staff to the committee.

The Committee meets two times a year. Each individual project proposal is submitted via a completed application that is presented by the appropriate staff representative and then considered by the Committee. A formal vote is taken on each application. Although only the voting members vote on final decisions, all members can give input on each of the grant applications prior to the decision being made. The approval process is followed by a time of prayer for the partners who will receive the funding and for the people whose lives will be made better in some way by the project.

The Committee also receives and reviews the annual financial report of the income and use of all One Great Hour of Sharing monies.

Your committee members are as follows:

Mrs. Janice Fletcher (Chair), North Kingstown, RI

Rev. Mia Chang, Princeton Junction, NJ

Rev. Corey Fields, Wilmington, DE

Mrs. DuRhonda Pinegar, Greenwood, IN

Mr. Bill Poland, Ellis, KS

Rev. Susan Rice, Cincinnati, OH

Rev. Dr. Christina Smith, Shaker Heights, OH





Photo: Public Domain, trumanlibrary.gov

Harry S. Truman, 33rd U.S. President

The One Great Hour of Sharing offering began **seventy-five years ago** in response to the devastation of World War II. On Saturday evening, March 26, 1949, a national broadcast titled "One Great Hour" featured a remarkable assembly of national leaders and celebrities. The 33rd U.S. President, Harry S. Truman's, radio address during the broadcast included the following::

"There are thousands of children in foreign lands today who have no memory of their parents, no knowledge of the meaning of the words "home" and "family," and who have forgotten what it feels like to have enough to eat. There are hopeless thousands who wander among the shattered towns seeking a place to rest, seeking security and a chance to begin their lives anew. There are many who pray to God only in secret, fearing persecution if they profess their beliefs openly.

It is hard for us to comprehend grief and distress such as this because we in America are so much more fortunate. Our country has been blessed with material riches. Our homes are secure. We can go to our churches and worship God as we desire.

We know that we enjoy these great blessings not because of any special merit on our part, but because of the bounty of God. It is to His Providence that we owe the richness of our country and our heritage of freedom. Since these good things come to us from Him, we know that we must use them for the good of others in accordance with His will."

The broadcast concluded by asking Americans to give generously the next morning in their churches. More than 75,000 churches responded.

Today, One Great Hour of Sharing serves people in over 80 countries around the world. Sponsored by five Christian U.S. denominations and Church World Service, One Great Hour of Sharing makes sure that we can respond to needs as soon as they happen and that tens of thousands of people receive support for ongoing relief, rehabilitation, and development.

The World Relief Committee of the American Baptist Board of General Ministries reviews each development project request funded by the One Great Hour of Sharing offering received from American Baptists. Gifts reach the ministries and people in need through a network of regional and international partnerships with the following:

American Baptist Foreign Mission Society (International Ministries)

American Baptist Home Mission Societies

Baptist World Aid - the compassionate arm of the Baptist World Alliance, supporting three areas of ministry: relief, development, and support of national partners.

Church World Service - Founded in 1946, Church World Service is a relief, development, and refugee assistance ministry supported by 36 Protestant, Orthodox, and Anglican denominations in the United States. Church World Service transforms communities around the globe through just and sustainable responses to hunger, poverty, displacement, and disaster.

THEME INTERPRETATION: SHARE THE LIGHT

SCRIPTURE: MATTHEW 5:14-16 [THE MESSAGE]

“Here’s another way to put it: You’re here to be light, bringing out the God-colors in the world. God is not a secret to be kept. We’re going public with this, as public as a city on a hill. If I make you light-bearers, you don’t think I’m going to hide you under a bucket, do you? I’m putting you on a light stand. Now that I’ve put you there on a hilltop, on a light stand—shine! Keep open house; be generous with your lives. By opening up to others, you’ll prompt people to open up with God, this generous [Father] in heaven.”

This little light of mine, I’m gonna let it shine...

Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine...

If Jesus had a playlist of music, surely this familiar hymn would be among the Top Five; at least, Matthew’s Jesus would rank it high.

Matthew opens the Gospel by placing Jesus squarely within the story of God’s ongoing relationship to and intention for humanity—people called into God’s own household, as sons and daughters, grounded in loving connection to each other and creation. God invites all of humanity into God’s house, regardless of nationality, tribal affiliation, social status, or gender.

As the fulfillment of Israel’s hopes and purposes, Jesus calls men and women to follow him—and they do. He names them disciples—and they are. He outlines their responsibilities—and they respond. Their lives are transformed, and they begin living from the inside out—less for themselves and more for others.

Jesus teaches that faith calls for action—as a response to the God who loves them unconditionally. They are now co-creators with God to bring peace, harmony, unity, compassion, care, love—shalom—right now.

Discipleship is like the kaleidoscope—an optical tube containing loose bits of colored material between two plates and two mirrors; when turned, the bits of material are reflected in an endless variety of patterns.

Sharing our light, as the diverse and colorful expression of God’s love here on earth, leads to making blankets, staffing food pantries, cooking meals, building houses and schools, signing petitions for worthy causes, and protesting injustices.

We also **share the light** through our contributions to One Great Hour of Sharing [OGHS]—supporting sisters and brothers after natural disasters; providing care and safety in places where war rages and poverty prevails; sharing techniques for sustainable agriculture, energy efficiency, and clean water; and advocating for the dignity of those who are marginalized.

Each of our playlists should include the hymn, “This Little Light of Mine.” A simple song with a simple message—let your light shine, share in the kaleidoscope of care and love. Your light is on a light stand, for all to see—shine and share.

On any given day, in many places, in the midst of many situations, light is shining because we are there through your gifts to OGHS.

Your contributions make a difference. Your dollars count. Give generously. **Share the light!**

¹Lift Every Voice and Sing II: An African American Hymnal (New York: Church Publishing Incorporated, 1993), #221.

²<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/kaleidoscope>