



Rocky Mountain Presbyterian Church Mercy Ministry Policy¹

Policy General

1. The RMPC mercy ministry is under the authority of the Diaconate. The Diaconate, in turn, is under the authority of the Session.
2. It is the responsibility of the Diaconate to revise and edit the RMPC Mercy Ministry Policy (hereafter Policy). All revisions must be finally approved by the Session.
3. The Diaconate will revise the Policy every five years. However, the Diaconate reserves the right, with the approval of the Session, to re-evaluate its Policy at any time.
4. The Policy is intended to guide the implementation of the principles set forth in the RMPC Philosophy of Mercy Ministry.

Ministry Focus

- RMPC seeks to be generous with its time, talents and treasures. We also recognize that we live in a fallen world with limited resources, and this requires us to prioritize the allocation of those resources. Therefore, our first priority for mercy ministry are the members and regular attenders of our church (Gal. 6:10).
- We are eager to minister to neighbors in need outside our congregation. But given our finite human and financial resources, RMPC will limit its mercy ministry to our neighbors located in Westminster, Broomfield, Arvada, Thornton and Northglenn. Representatives of RMPC will not travel outside these communities to meet with people in need or deliver financial assistance. We trust that the Lord will work through local churches and agencies to help the materially poor in other communities.

Allocation of Financial Resources

- The vast majority of people in need require development rather than relief or rehabilitation. Therefore RMPC will allocate 75% of its mercy ministry budget to development and rehabilitation, and the other 25% to relief.

¹ This policy is based on two books by Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert: 1) *When Helping Hurts* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2012). 2) *Helping Without Hurting in Church Benevolence* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2015).

- RMPC does not provide financial assistance in the form of cash or check to anyone. Help with rent, utilities or other services will be paid directly to the landlord or service provider. We will also provide prepaid gift cards for groceries, gas and other services. Bills for “rent-to-own” electronics, cable television or luxury items will not be considered for financial assistance.
- The frequency of financial assistance will depend on the type of alleviation we are offering.
 - Relief: RMPC will offer financial assistance once/year.
 - Rehabilitation and Development: To account for the unique circumstances of each case, there is no cap on the frequency of financial assistance in rehabilitation or development cases. However, any assistance we provide will be in the context of a long-term process of change. The goal of such a process is to empower our neighbors to live in right relationship with creation by supporting themselves and their families with the fruit of their work. Every step of the way, we will avoid creating an unhealthy relationship of dependance that would undermine this goal. Any financial assistance we offer will be designed to compliment our neighbors’ use of their own gifts, abilities and resources to journey from material poverty to human flourishing.
- Because there is no financial cap on rehabilitation or development cases, there will also not be a cap on the amount of money in the mercy ministry fund. The journey from poverty to human flourishing takes time and resources. Therefore it is appropriate that we accumulate the necessary funds to support our neighbors on their difficult journey.
- God has ordained work as part of the fabric of his good creation. Humanity’s calling to work precedes the fall and is an indispensable ingredient in human flourishing (Gen. 2:15). Therefore, people who are capable but unwilling to work full-time will not receive financial assistance from RMPC. Providing such assistance would be unbiblical and harmful (2 Thes. 3:6-15; 1 Tim. 5:3-16).
- We will seek to incorporate all household members who are contributing to the income and expenses into the change process. Specifically, we will strongly encourage equal participation by husbands and wives, except in cases of abuse. In cases where the wife approaches the church and asks for assistance, the mercy ministry team will assign a woman to be the point person for walking with her. This point person will do everything possible to account for the wife’s feelings, and to ensure she does not feel confused or belittled as we attempt to involve her husband.

Process and Procedures

- Regular attenders of RMPC and people outside the congregation can begin the process of requesting financial assistance by calling the church office. The director of communication will pass the request on to the deacons, who will work with the person in need to schedule a time for an intake. Members of RMPC can schedule an intake by directly contacting their flock's deacon or deaconess, who will be the point person for that case.
- Every person requesting financial assistance will be required to complete an intake form, unless the person is in immediate danger. The intake form gathers basic information such as contact information, background, current situation, and financial information. Deacons and deaconesses are encouraged to verbally ask the intake questions and fill in the form. This conversational approach will help build a relationship.
- Before entering into a change process with people in need, the diaconate will use information provided in the intake form to perform the following fact-checking:
 - Calls to references
 - Communication with churches or agencies where the person is receiving help
 - Utilizing community databases to access information about who has assisted the person in the past and what type of assistance they have provided.
- The diaconate will use the intake form to determine whether or not to assist the person, the type of help they need (relief, rehabilitation or development), and how receptive they are to long-term change. In most cases a majority of the diaconate will be needed to approve a person for receiving assistance. In emergency situations a minimum of two deacons or deaconesses are required for approval.
- In cases of development or rehabilitation, the diaconate will work with the person in need to develop an action plan. The action plan will help our neighbor set their own goals, identify their abilities and resources, and commit to taking steps to improve their lives. In addition, the action plan will describe what RMPC will do to support our neighbor in the change process. The diaconate will not provide financial assistance in development or rehabilitation cases until an action plan is completed.
- **Once an action plan is created, the diaconate will form a mercy ministry team to walk with our neighbors long-term as they complete their plan. The mercy ministry team will be composed of at least one deacon or deaconess, and one or two volunteers who have completed the Chalmers Center Training "Helping Without**

Hurting in Church Benevolence.” If a woman is requesting assistance, at least one woman from RMPC will be on her mercy ministry team. The team will provide support, encouragement and accountability to help our neighbor take meaningful steps toward lasting change.

- Any changes in the action plan that involve the addition or removal of financial assistance must be approved by a majority of the diaconate. Other changes in the action plan can be handled by the mercy ministry team.
- Throughout the change process, we will refer our neighbors to organizations in our community resource directory to help meet needs that RMPC cannot address on its own. Such organizations may include, but will not be limited to: job training programs, financial management courses, trauma therapists, and substance abuse programs. The mercy ministry team will continue walking with our neighbors in need before, during and after they utilize these resources in order to provide them with the spiritual, emotional and financial support they need to make lasting changes in their lives.
- Mercy ministry team members will look for opportunities to share the gospel in word and deed with our neighbors. However, people in need will not be required to listen to a gospel presentation in order to receive our help.
- If abuse has contributed to a person’s poverty, the victim’s safety will be our top priority. Victims fleeing abuse fall into the category of relief. The diaconate will refer the victim to a women’s shelter or other appropriate agency, and offer financial assistance as appropriate. After providing relief, the diaconate will invite the victim to create an action plan for rehabilitation. No attempt will be made to contact the perpetrator of abuse. Nor will members of the diaconate report the abuse to the police or any other government entity. However, the diaconate and other mercy ministry volunteers are mandatory reporters of child abuse under Colorado Revised Statute 19-3-304. If they suspect child abuse, they will report it using the child abuse hotline reporting system.
- Deacons and deaconesses will offer to pray with every person requesting financial assistance. Mercy ministry team members will also offer to pray over each action plan during regular meetings.

Communication Plan

- The lead pastor will cast a vision for our new mercy ministry in a sermon or ministry spotlight.
- The diaconate will update the congregation on our mercy ministry during quarterly ministry spotlights. Deacons and deaconesses will tell stories of people who have received our help and the ways God is working in their lives.
- Flyers or brochures that promote the RMPC mercy ministry will be placed on the information table in the sanctuary and the church office. The flyer or brochure will contain a summary of our mercy ministry philosophy and policies. It can be given to people both inside and outside our congregation who request financial assistance.
- A summary of our mercy ministry philosophy and policies will be listed on our website.