



HONORING THE LEADERS IN YOUR CHURCH

Your Guide to Pastor Appreciation Month

THANK YOU FOR EXPRESSING AN INTEREST IN CELEBRATING AND APPRECIATING YOUR PASTORAL STAFF.

*The elders who direct
the affairs of the
church
well are worthy
of double honor,
especially those
whose work is
preaching and
teaching.*

1 Timothy 5:17

Focus on the Family believes in the significant role that pastors and their families play in the local church and community; therefore, we gladly celebrate and promote Clergy Appreciation Month.

Clergy appreciation is emphasized in October, but we want to encourage you to celebrate, honor and affirm your pastor all year long. Often pastors and their families feel isolated and burnt out—often wondering if what they do makes a difference.

As a ministry, we want to come alongside them and be their “Aaron” in this generation. We want to encourage and support them, help shoulder their burdens, strengthen their families, ignite their faith and applaud their efforts. In this guide you will find lots of tips and ideas on how to do just that.

At Focus on the Family, our Church Resources department exists to serve pastors and church leaders as they serve His Bride, the church. We sincerely appreciate your desire to do something special for your pastors and their families. It’s a great opportunity to say “thank you.” We know they will be grateful.

WHY SHOULD WE HONOR PASTORS?

Why is it appropriate to set aside a special time each year to give recognition and affirmation to our clergy and their families? How are their needs and circumstances different from those of any other job or profession?

SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP

One distinction lies in the nature of the service these leaders provide. God has entrusted to them one of the most precious of assignments—the spiritual well-being of His flock. When a pastor becomes weary, the very souls of his or her church community are endangered.

EXPECTATIONS

Numerous surveys have found that a very high percentage of pastors feel pressure to be the ideal role model of a Christian family—which is impossible, of course.

As a result, four out of five pastors feel their families are negatively impacted by unrealistic expectations—whether self-imposed or congregation-imposed—and that ministry is an outright hazard to the health of their families.

Indeed, the “pedestal” is not all it’s cracked up to be. As pastors and their families try to please the God who called them to ministry while also trying to meet the expectations of their congregations, one result is dangerous stress.

In fact, 75 percent of those surveyed reported experiencing a significant stress-related crisis at least once in their ministry.

FINANCES

Pastors typically make substantially less each year than their own board members and deacons. Nearly 70 percent of pastoral spouses work outside the home, most often due to financial need.

Not everyone is a professional event planner, so putting together a big celebration might seem overwhelming! So as you and your congregation prepare for Clergy Appreciation Month (CAM), we hope the following suggestions will help you in planning a creative, memorable celebration. In all of your activities, remember that CAM is not about glorifying a man or a woman. It is an opportunity (which is consistent and acknowledged in Scripture) to recognize and encourage those whom God has called to proclaim His message and lead His people.

PLANNING SUGGESTIONS:

- Begin your plans early, since some ideas can require a substantial amount of time to develop.
- Select a weekend service in October to honor your entire leadership staff as a congregation.
- Select a CAM planning committee to oversee preparations for this event. Ideally, the committee should be representative of all members of the congregation (i.e., age, race, gender, church activity), but should remain small enough to be effective and efficient.
- Plan the details. Your goal is to express appreciation to your entire pastoral staff and their families. List the specific activities you want to undertake to achieve this goal.
- Delegate the responsibilities. Assign the responsibility for each activity on your list to one person. This person may need to enlist the assistance of others in the congregation, but making one person accountable will improve your results. Also, be sure to involve those under the direct ministry of staff pastors, such as calling on youth group members to help honor a youth pastor.
- Communicate your plans to those in your congregation and community.
- Promote your activities. Carefully determine the best means to promote your activities and encourage participation.
- Monitor your progress. Be sure that each responsible person on your planning team reports his or her progress at regular intervals. Avoid a surprise resulting from a last-minute crisis.

- Thank the participants. Make sure that each person who helped plan, prepare, decorate, serve, lead, entertain, speak, clean up, etc., knows how significant his or her contribution was to the success of your celebration activities.

APPRECIATION & CELEBRATION IDEAS:

We hope that some of the following ideas may work for your congregation or may inspire you to create your own.

- Host a card shower at which members and friends present either purchased or homemade greeting cards to each pastor's family. Or, distribute blank thank-you notes to be used for expressing appreciation. Encourage those participating in these types of events to be as specific as possible in their praise, revisiting favorite sermons or moments when the pastor's ministry made a difference.
- A full-scale plan of recognition might include a banquet, a special ceremony during a worship service, special guests or speakers, a church family reunion of present and former members, gifts, plaques, flowers or an open letter of appreciation in the local newspaper. A more casual approach might simply involve a moment of recognition during a morning service.
- Team up with your local Christian bookstore or radio station to recognize and honor your pastoral families through activities and/or gifted resources.
- Submit an open letter to your local newspaper to announce to the community your genuine appreciation for your pastoral staff and their families.
- Schedule a "thank you flash mob." Have various groups of people stand up during the service and shout out "We love you pastor!" or "Thank you pastor, you are great!"

- Have a super text event. Choose a day and have people text the pastor hourly with a heartfelt message of how he has touched their lives.

- Provide a testimony time during a worship service for those involved in the church's various ministries to share the joy they experience in serving the church. Have them emphasize the blessing one receives in using God-given gifts for the benefit of the body.

- Plan a special banquet in honor of your pastor. Have guest speakers and an entertaining program that highlight the accomplishments of the church under the pastor's leadership. Prepare a "This is Your Life" show or celebrity roast. If such an event is not possible, arrange for several members of the congregation to take the pastoral staff and their families to lunch or dinner.

- Invite local dignitaries to participate in the various appreciation events. Ask them to say a word of gratitude for your pastor and the influence of your church in the community. Invite denominational leaders who oversee your area or district to attend and participate. (You may impress them with the high regard in which you hold your pastor.)

- Present your pastoral family with a significant gift, including a card signed by as many people as possible. The cost of such a gift may be covered through your church budget or by asking for special donations. Consider simple gifts (a gift certificate to a local bookstore, restaurant or car wash; a magazine subscription), personal gifts (a new pair of shoes, a new suit or dress, a new set of tires), generous gifts (an all-expense-paid trip to a resort, bed and breakfast, or overnight railway trip) or even practical gifts (an iPad, Kindle, sports equipment that he/she might enjoy using).

- Make banners of appreciation and display them throughout the church property. Distribute appreciation ribbons, buttons, stickers or t-shirts to every member of the congregation and wear them proudly throughout the month.

- Urge the Sunday school and other children's groups to make creative appreciation messages for the staff using construction paper and bright colors. Have the pastor visit them for their own ceremonies of gratitude. Then decorate staff offices with the children's artwork.

- Plant a tree or some shrubs in honor of your pastoral staff. These can make long-lasting tributes to your clergy, past and present, and can form the basis for future conversations as you talk to your children and grandchildren about the value of their spiritual leaders.

- Send a letter to members of the congregation explaining Clergy Appreciation Month and include offering envelopes for a special love offering.

- Set up a "leafless" tree that can be decorated with a variety of small gifts.

- Plan a church picnic, circus or other festive event to celebrate the day.

- Play taped audio or video greetings from special friends, children, fellow ministers and district officials of your pastoral staff at a special service.

- Invite a guest speaker to conduct worship and give your pastor an extra paid day off.

- Schedule special prayer sessions to pray specifically for your pastors and their families. Make this a yearlong commitment, and assign special categories to each month, such as good health for the pastor's family, financial stability, courage and freedom to dream, and the pastor's marriage.

GIFTS OF APPRECIATION:

- Some tangible expressions of appreciation that could be ongoing for the month of October: meals, handcrafts, small gifts, bouquets of flowers or balloons, personal poetry.
- Design a memorial scrapbook. Insert photos and other souvenirs of the previous 12 months of your pastoral staff's ministry. Be sure to include lots of pictures of congregation members. You might hire a photographer to capture your Clergy Appreciation Month activities as the fitting conclusion of your scrapbook.
- Participate in renovating part of the pastor's home. There are almost always home improvements that pastors need, but cannot afford or do not have the skill or time to accomplish.
- Present each of your pastors with a packet of personal service coupons. Have members of the congregation pledge to provide services for your pastoral families, such as lawn service, child care, car repairs or catered dinners. You might even pledge to assist with projects around the church campus, such as fixing a sign, repainting the parking lot stripes or teaching the pastor's class one Sunday. And don't forget spiritual tasks, such as a commitment to pray each day for every member of your pastoral families.
- Ask business members throughout your community to use a portion of their advertising marquee to extend your congregation's message of appreciation. A discount for your pastor's family might also be offered by that business during the month of October.
- Distribute individual quilt squares to congregation members and encourage each contributing family to personalize their square. The finished quilt would become a longlasting reminder of appreciation.
- Print bumper stickers with the message, "We love our pastor!—from the congregation of [your church]"
- Improve your pastor's working environment by upgrading or expanding his office or study, adding bookcases and file cabinets, or replacing out-of-date office equipment and furniture.
- Film a video scrapbook that highlights your pastor's ministry, coworkers and congregation members.

- Give tickets to activities especially enjoyed by your pastoral staff, such as sporting events, the symphony, a play or dinner theater, a rodeo, a home or gardening show, an antique auction or antique car show, etc.

- Make a paper prayer chain. On separate strips of colored construction paper, have each family (children included) write down the specific prayer topics concerning their pastor for which they will regularly remember to pray.

- Prepare a "Rainy Day Jar" for each pastoral family. Fill a large decorative jar with notes containing favorite Scripture verses and/or encouragement to be read anytime a boost is needed.

INVEST IN YOUR PASTOR YEAR-ROUND

It is important that your appreciation of your pastor not be confined to just one weekend or one month. It should occur throughout the entire year. In fact, it needs to be present throughout their entire ministry with your church.

There are a number of long-term ways your congregation can show its love and appreciation for your pastor and demonstrate its respect for their divine calling. Here are a few very important things your church can do to provide the ongoing care God expects from you:

1. ESTABLISH A PASTORAL CARE TEAM

Select a handful of people from your congregation who will be charged with overseeing the welfare of your pastor and family. They will be their advocates.

As such, they will regularly monitor their physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well-being; offer suggestions to congregational leaders that would improve their living conditions; represent the pastor's interests in any discussions on such matters; and ensure that the following entitlements are properly available.

2. PROVIDE FAIR AND ADEQUATE SALARY, COMPENSATION AND RETIREMENT BENEFITS

The Bible says, “The worker deserves his wages” (Luke 10:7, NIV). A pastor should be compensated on a par with the people being served and other ministers in the same community. Leadership in every church should be more concerned about the physical and fiscal well-being of the pastor than nearly any other area.

The quality of such care is a reflection upon you as a congregation and a witness to your community of Christ’s love in action. Recognize your pastor as a uniquely trained professional with related education loans to repay, familyraising needs and expenses similar to your own, and a right to a comfortable retirement. Make this support a priority. Review it and adjust it regularly. Give your pastor the freedom to minister instead of worry.

3. ALLOW TIME OFF FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Encourage your pastor to continually challenge improve herself by underwriting her participation in spiritual retreats, conferences, denominational functions and continuing education each year.

4. ALLOW TIME OFF FOR RELAXATION AND RESTORATION

All pastors need time away with their families, as well as time alone with God. Give your pastor at least one or two days off each week, and respect his privacy during those days. Set boundaries and make sure the members of the congregation respect them. Grant your pastor adequate vacation days, based on the total number of years in full-time ministry, not tenure at your church. Also, give time off (replacement days) for holidays worked, and allow guilt-free time away for personal matters or bereavement.

5. BE WILLING TO PARTICIPATE ENTHUSIASTICALLY IN SHARED MINISTRY

The most exhilarating moment a pastor can experience is to have a layperson say, “Pastor, I really want to make a difference in my world for Christ. I want to put on the whole armor of God and enter the fray. Will you help me? Will you train me?

Will you pray for me?” Join your pastor in God’s ministry.

6. SUPPORT YOUR PASTOR WITH REGULAR PRAYER, LOVE AND ENCOURAGEMENT

These are the most important things a church member can provide for a pastor. Prayer empowers pastors to be the people God called them to be. It is difficult to pray for someone and be critical at the same time. Love your pastor as Jesus loves them, and show it through regular, tangible acts of encouragement (such as simple cards or notes) all year long.

7. CREATE AN ATMOSPHERE THAT MINIMIZES MINISTRY STRESS AND UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

Cherish your minister’s Christ-like character as a priceless asset for your church. Avoid grumbling, poisonous humor or a negative spirit. Be loyal. Come alongside him to facilitate personal renewal and restoration. Keep him accountable in avoiding an excessive schedule and maintaining healthy priorities.

8. CARE FOR YOUR PASTOR’S FAMILY

Don’t expect pastoral families to be any more perfect than your own. Recognize that every family is unique and eliminate unrealistic expectations. Encourage your pastor to make family a priority (even above ministry to you) and to give it the time, energy and effort required to keep it healthy. Recognize the tremendous sacrifices he makes on your behalf and offer massive affection and affirmation. Provide for their comfort, needs and preferences. Don’t cut corners.

10. SUPPORT PASTORAL CARE GIVING MINISTRIES

Pastors burn out. Even though you do everything within your power to care for them, statistics show that your pastor or his family may someday need unique care giving assistance. Facilitate such care by financially supporting one of the special ministries or denominational programs that offer assistance to pastors and their families.



*THE FOCUSED Pastor*TM

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PASTORAL CARE LINE: (877) 233-4455

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