

Pastor Appreciation Month (October)

“Real Rest:

10 Ways Congregations Can Show Appreciation to Their Pastors”

By: The BGCVA Clergy Ministry

28 “Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. 29Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. 30Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.”

Matthew 11:28-30 (Message Translation)

Pastor Appreciation Month takes place in October of every year. Having begun in the mid-1990’s, it is purposed to help congregations, church leaders, and church members learn how to show appreciation to and give thanks for their Pastors.

It was hard, yet easier in the 1990’s, before livestreaming was popularized in churches for Pastors to find respite from church life and work. Before most of us had ever heard of Zoom and attended a Teams virtual meeting, Pastors could at least “leave the office” and escape the stresses of ministry life. The technological age of cell phones, Apple watches, emails, and text messages has seemingly made it nearly impossible for Pastors to have a moment of peace.

Pastors often feel more expectations from than we do appreciations. There is always another task to fulfill, but seldom help to accomplish it. Another call to make to unkind voices on the other end. Another email to answer address a ministry need. Another meeting to attend to .

I believe the hardest part of my Pastoral ministry has been trying to love members who preferred that I not be their Pastor. After writing sermons and preparing Bible studies on a relentlessly, regimented schedule, Pastors sometimes desire (and every now and then, need) a sweet smile, a kind “Amen” of affirmation, or a rest from ministry preparations. But Sundays and Wednesday never stop coming. Before you finish one, you are always under pressure to begin another.

And then, there is the dreaded church fight, argument with a ministry leader, or a church member demanding that the Pastor follow his/her lead rather than being led by the Lord. There is just no shortage of the stress, strain, and struggles of Pastoral leadership and there is no such thing as a true vacation nor even a guaranteed “day off”.

Below are 10 thoughtful ways every church and congregation can encourage and show appreciation to Pastors during Clergy Appreciation Month.

1. Be Kind ...What good is a card saying “Thank You” if your next words are filled with strife?
2. Be a Safe Haven ...Transform your church into a “No Conflict Zone” that allows disagreements, but not discord allowing your Pastor to serve in peace.
3. Help and Serve Along Side of Your Pastor in Ministry ...Pastors often feel lonely and isolated in the thought, “If I don’t do it, no-one else will”.
4. Follow the Leader ...It’s a childhood game that many adults never learned or refuse to do.
5. Do a “Gift Tree” ...Before Advent and Christmas begins, set up the Chrismon (not Christmas) tree and for the entire month of October and decorate it with loving photos of yourself with your Pastor. On Sunday, October 29, 2023 (the last Sunday of Clergy Appreciation Month, have ministry groups, ministry leaders, and church members surprise your Pastor with the Appreciation Tree packed with love gifts under it.
6. Forgive and Restore Relationships ...Pastors are not perfect. We are Servants of the Lord who represent God AND we make mistakes. Sometimes, we find ourselves in situations we started, but don’t know how to get out of. Be forgiving towards your Pastor and restore a relationship in Christ with him/her.
7. Pray ...The Pastor is called by God to lead, sometimes, in times and areas where the he/she is uncertain what to do. Your Pastor may not feel comfortable admitting our deficiencies or asking you for help, but please pray for him/her asking God to lead and guide in the direction God would have your church to go.
8. Attend & Participate ...Post-quarantine attendance in church is low. Call your fellow members surprise us by committing to attending and participating in worship and Bible study on a consistent basis.
9. Do an Appreciation Video ...and give it to your Pastor on the last Sunday of Clergy Appreciation Month complete with photos, cards, and comments of appreciation.

10. Give Your Pastor a True Rest ... Arrange for your Pastor to have some time off away from the responsibilities of ministry and Pastoral leadership. Sickness and death have no respect for a Pastor's vacation. "Pastor, I know you're on vacation, but..." is a common reminder that Pastors are often called to place the needs of the congregation before their own.