
Clergy Appreciation } from the Clergy Care Network Planning Guide } at Focus on the Family Canada

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CANADA

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Why Honour Pastors?

Churches in North America have chosen to set aside October as a special time to show honour, thanks and appreciation to their pastors and their families. At the Clergy Care Network, we often hear from pastors and their spouses who love their churches and love being in ministry, but experience times of burnout, discouragement, stress or depression.

We know firsthand that your loving actions or words of encouragement can go a long way in maintaining the spirits of your pastor and his/her family. That's why we strongly encourage churches and congregation members to participate in Clergy Appreciation Month!

Here are lots of ideas and tips that may go a long way in bringing a smile to your pastor's face. Show him/her that their service does matter to you! Some ideas will not cost a penny but will have priceless, long-term effects.

1 Timothy 5:17

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

“Over the years I have been privileged to be the recipient of some wonderful gestures to celebrate Clergy Appreciation Month: flowers, hugs, notes, dinners and a really great scrapbook. I can't begin to express how much I enjoy these evidences of love and appreciation. I love the people of my parish and when they take the time to express their appreciation it is very meaningful to me - and it affirms the work that I am doing with and for them.”

A Canadian pastor

Planning Guidelines

As your congregation prepares for Clergy Appreciation Month (CAM), the following guidelines will help you in planning a creative, memorable celebration.

① 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.

② 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.

③ 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 honour a youth pastor.

④ Communicate your plans to those in your congregation and community.

Carefully determine the best means to promote your activities and encourage participation.

⑤ 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.

⑥ 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.

Celebration Suggestions

In all of your activities, remember that Clergy Appreciation Month is not about glorifying a man or a woman. It is a Biblically consistent opportunity to recognize and encourage those whom God has called to proclaim His message and lead His people (1 Thess. 5:12-13). It is a time when the entire congregation can become unified in celebration of what God is doing in its midst. Perhaps some of the following ideas may work for your congregation or may inspire you to create your own.

- * **Determine an appropriate level of involvement for your church.** For example, 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(s) or radio station(s)** to recognize and honour your pastoral families through activities appropriate to your community.
- * **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 among the congregation to be used for expressing appreciation. Encourage those participating in these types of events to be as specific as possible in their praise, revisiting favourite sermons or moments when the pastor's ministry made a difference.
- * **Hold a people-pleasin' pizza party.** Plan an informal time of sharing and caring around lots and lots of pizza and pop. If your pastoral families love pizza, give them certificates to a local pizza parlour to last throughout the year.
- * **Contact a local trophy company and order a small plaque for your pastor(s).** A simple inscription might read:

In deepest appreciation of
[Pastor's name] and [his or her] family
for unselfish commitment to the body of Jesus Christ at
[Church name]
Clergy Appreciation Month
October [Year]

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Celebration Suggestions

- * **Plan a special appreciation service during your normal worship time(s) on the second weekend of the month.** During this service, use a variety of means to honour your pastor(s). Work closely with your worship leader to make the celebration a very special one. Sing songs of commitment, read Scriptures of dedication and exhortation, and include a time of tribute for your pastor(s) that includes representatives of your denomination, your community, your church leadership, and others in the congregation. (See the sample order of worship that follows.) This would also be a wonderful opportunity to call those in attendance to a renewed commitment to the church mission and vision. Then ask the pastor(s) to share their dreams and vision for the future of the church, concluding with a laying-on-of-hands ceremony or other time of personal dedication.
- * **Plan an evening bonfire celebration** with the theme of church unity. Share the joys and sorrows you have experienced together, especially identifying the role your pastor and his family have played. Make it a time of recommitment and bonding for your entire church family.
- * **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 satisfaction one receives in using God-given gifts for the benefit of the Body. Subsequently, offer training courses on identifying and using spiritual gifts, then encourage members to sign up for the various ministries and service needs that currently exist and that match their gifts, abilities and interests.
- * **Hold an offering for the Clergy Care Network** which supports your pastor and pastors across Canada.
- * **Plan a special banquet in honour of your pastor(s).** 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(s)).

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Celebration Suggestions

- * **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, or 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 (a personal digital assistant (PDA), a conference or seminar).
- * **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(s) visit them for their own ceremonies of gratitude. Then decorate staff offices with the children's artwork.
- * **Plant a tree or some shrubs in honour 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 for your pastor(s), such as a favourite treat (chocolate chip cookies, candy), hobby items (fishing flies), small envelopes with gift certificates (clothing stores, restaurants, bookstores, haircuts, dry cleaning, etc.) or money.
- * **Provide paid time off and travel funds for your pastoral families to visit their relatives.** Getting away for special holidays or family events can be a memorable time of respite and relaxation.
- * **Give your pastor(s) a cell phone (for personal use only) and pay for the first year of charges.** Or give your pastor a phone card for prepaid long-distance calling.
- * **Provide your pastor's family with upgraded hardware equipment or a software package** for their home computer.
- * **Name something after your pastor(s)**, such as a room or banquet hall in the church, a scholarship fund or an annual church picnic.
- * **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.
- * **Create a pastors' hall of fame in your church** with photos and memorabilia of your present and past ministers.

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Celebration Suggestions

- * **Film a video scrapbook and tribute** that highlights your pastor's ministry, co-workers and congregation members.
- * **Build a praise puzzle.** Buy a large picture puzzle, assemble it, then have the congregation write personal notes of appreciation on the back in various colors and handwriting. When the messages are complete, disassemble the puzzle and give each family in the congregation a few random pieces with a date when they are to send their pieces to the pastor(s). As the puzzle is gradually assembled, it will surely be a blessing. (This works especially well in a small congregation.)
- * **Plan theme dinners throughout the month** at individual homes, assigning all participating non-host adult members of the congregation to the host homes (along with pastoral staff and their spouses). Each adult couple/individual should bring part of the meal. Plan an intimate time of sharing with the pastoral staff couple, including how each member has been blessed by their ministries.
- * **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 show or gardening show, an antique auction or antique car show, etc.
- * **Plaster signs on your church vans/buses** that proclaim the message to your community of how much you love your pastoral staff.
- * **Make a paper prayer chain.** On separate strips of coloured construction paper, have each family (children included) write down the specific prayer topics concerning their pastor(s) for which they will regularly remember to pray.
- * **Prepare a "Sunshine Jar" for each pastoral family.** Fill a large decorative jar with notes containing favourite Scripture verses and/or encouragement to be read anytime a boost is needed.

Always be looking for new ways to honour and recognize your full pastoral staff and their families throughout the entire year. And don't forget to continually support them through your prayers.

Long-Term Care of Your Pastor

It is virtuous, invigorating and Biblical to set aside time each year to honour your pastoral staff and their families. It can be one of the most enjoyable and unifying times your congregation will experience. But it is also imperative that your appreciation of your pastor(s) not be confined to just one weekend or one month. It needs to 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(s) and demonstrate its respect for their divine calling among you. 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, family-raising 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 and improve himself/herself by underwriting his/her participation in spiritual retreats, conferences, denominational functions and continuing education each year. Every church will be better served if its leader is filled with new insights and motivation.

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 or her 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.

Long-Term Care of Your Pastor

5 Give freedom to dream and permission to lead.

Be open to new ideas. Your pastor has access to resources and new concepts from the world's greatest religious leaders. That means he/she will probably come to you with ideas and dreams for your congregation that may at first seem a bit grandiose or unrealistic. But stay open. Dreams are fragile. Work to keep your pastor dreaming and alive. Don't be afraid to let him/her fail occasionally. Follow his/her leadership rather than presenting constant opposition. Allow and expect him/her to speak out honestly against sin and injustice. Let the Holy Spirit work.

6 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 armour 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.

7 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(s) as Jesus loves them, and show it through regular, tangible acts of encouragement (such as simple cards or notes) all year long.

8 Create an atmosphere that minimizes ministry stress and unrealistic expectations.

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

9 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/she makes on your behalf and offer affection and affirmation. Provide for their comfort, needs and preferences. Don't cut corners.

10 Support pastoral caregiving ministries.

Pastors do burn out. Even though you do everything within your power to care for them, statistics show that your pastor or his/her family may some day need unique caregiving assistance. There is no shame in it, neither for you nor them. Facilitate such care by financially supporting one of the special ministries or denominational programs that offer assistance to pastors and their families. If and when it becomes necessary, cover any costs associated with renewing your pastor to full strength and restoring his/her ministry.

Sample Order of Worship

- * Call to worship
- * Greetings and welcome to Clergy Appreciation Month service
- * Congregational hymn or worship chorus
- * Responsive reading
- * Inspirational singing and praise
- * Scripture reading
- * Prayer for unity of the Church
- * Introduction of pastors and their families
- * Tribute #1 (from a young person)
- * Tribute #2 (from a single adult)
- * Special song or choir selection
- * Tribute #3 (from a married couple with a family)
- * Tribute #4 (from a senior citizen)
- * Clergy Care offering with special music
- * Sermon (a 10-minute challenge from a layman to the congregation)
- * Pastoral responses
- * Prayer for pastors and their families
- * Presentations to pastors
- * Benediction
- * Closing hymn

(This suggested order of worship can be altered to fit your congregation's worship style and format.)

Share Your Experience

We want to hear about your Clergy Appreciation Month activities and celebrations, and especially how they impacted your pastor(s), their families and your congregation.

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If you are willing to allow Focus on the Family Canada to use your testimony in future promotions of Clergy Appreciation Month, please specifically grant that permission in your message.

Clergy Care Network

Providing hope and help to Canadian clergy and their families

The Clergy Care Network (CCN) is a ministry based out of Focus on the Family Canada; we are unique in that we are also supported by Canadian denominations that want to provide a confidential service for their pastors. We exist solely to provide support and encouragement to pastors and their families.

We recognize that the needs and concerns that clergy families face are unique and require specialized care. We offer a toll-free Clergy Line (1.888.5.CLERGY) that provides general information, resources, referrals, counselling and consultation. CCN also ministers through its website (Clergycare.ca) and through workshops and events that are specifically held for clergy.

If you would like to make a financial donation to help support the Clergy Care Network, you can send it to the above address, or call 1.800.661.9800. Please be sure to specify that your contribution is for the Clergy Care Network. Thank you for your generosity!

Wendy Kittlitz
Program Manager
Clergy Care Network
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DID YOU KNOW?

1,200+

The Clergy Care Network has received over 1,200 calls from pastors and their families in just over three years!

Gifts and Resources

The following gifts and resources are available from Focus on the Family Canada online at Focusonthefamily.ca or by writing to Focus on the Family Canada, PO Box 9800 Stn. Terminal, Vancouver, BC, V6B 4G3 or by calling 1.800.661.9800.

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The Clergy Care Network offers all pastors a complimentary subscription to *The Signpost*. This free, monthly e-newsletter for Canadian pastors provides encouragement, news and ministry updates. Let your pastor know that he/she can sign up for this great resource at **Clergycare.ca**.



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