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HEALTHY MINISTERS, VIBRANT CHURCHES
AND SPIRIT-DRIVEN RELEVANCE

May 15, 2024

Greetings Leadership Team,

I am writing to remind you of Pastor Appreciation Month. Each year October is a month set aside nationally to recognize and show appreciation for your pastor. Although that is still a few months away, it's always good to plan early. Whether it is a small way or large, is not the point. The point is the Bible instructs communities of faith to express appreciation to those who feed our souls saying,

"Brothers and sisters, we ask you to show appreciation to those who are working hard among you and those who are your leaders as they guide and instruct you in the Lord—they are priceless. When you think about them, let it be with great love in your heart because of all the work they have done." 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13

"Give your leaders reason to be joyful and not to regret their duty, for that will be of no good to you." Hebrews 13:7

"Leaders who are leading well should be admired and valued. Double up on the honor shown them; care for them well—especially those constantly and consistently teaching the word and preaching." 1 Timothy 5:17

One of the primary reasons churches fail to participate in Pastor Appreciation Day is that everyone thinks "someone else" is taking care of it. Pastors can even feel awkward bringing it up. That is why we hope you would consider asking your local deacon/elder/trustee board if you can help spearhead this initiative. The District Presbytery dedicated one entire meeting to brainstorming and providing a list of practical ways you can bless your pastor and/or pastoral staff. The list is attached to this letter. Thank you for encouraging the spiritual water carriers of our Network.

Contending for community,

Gene Roncone
Rocky Mountain Ministry Network
District Superintendent/Network Pastor (aka "helper")

Possible Suggestions for Local Churches

A. Four ways to bless your pastor immediately.

1. **Use helpful resources.** For ideas on how to bless your pastor, visit www.blessyourpastor.org. The site offers the opportunity to sign up to receive more resources and tools to help launch an appreciation campaign at your church, including the NAE article entitled, "Over 50 Creative Ways to Bless your Pastor and Staff," a short training video for church boards and leadership teams, template letters and emails, and social media graphics.
2. **Honor your pastor and spouse publicly before the church.** This can be done in less than five minutes by calling them up in front of the church to officially thank them for their service, present them with a gift and lead the church in praying over them as leaders. Honoring them in proportion to their years of service is wise.
3. **Present them with a financial gift.** This can be achieved in any of the following ways.
 - The board can authorize a church check to be written for a determined amount.
 - The board can take a love offering from the church that is announced each of the three weeks beforehand and publicly present your pastor/s with the check.
 - The board can do a combination of the above by determining a set amount to be given from the church budget and then adding to it any additional funds that come in through a pre-announced love offering.
4. **Establish annual procedures.** Diffusion of responsibility is a term that describes the reason for group neglect. It basically means that sometimes important things do not get done because everyone thinks someone else is doing it. Some ways to protect your church from this unfortunate reality is to
 - Place Pastor Appreciation on your monthly board agenda as a reminder.
 - Appoint one board member or faithful leader to head up this annual initiative.
 - Budget for this initiative each year.

B. Four ways to bless your pastor in the long term.

1. **Investing in your pastor's retirement.** According to a 2017 survey conducted by Gray Matter Research and Consulting for the Assemblies of God on Ministers and Finances:
 - 40 % of senior pastors have under \$10,000 of retirement savings.
 - 37% of ministers under the age of 45 have no retirement savings.
 - **The median retirement savings of AG lead pastors is \$20,000.**Your church can become part of the solution and help your pastor plan for retirement with peace, freedom, and dignity by beginning to make a modest monthly contribution to your pastor's retirement fund. Superintendent Roncone created the following two resources to help church boards learn more about practical ways to do this.
 - **Short paperback book for board members** entitled, *Stewarding the Future, Church Boards and Ministerial Retirement* that can be accessed at [this link](#).

- ***Why and How to Start a Church Retirement Plan*** (PDF download) to help your board address the practical steps needed to start a retirement plan for a church of any size. It is not as complex as you may think and can be accomplished relatively quickly by following a few easy steps. Download this helpful resource at [this link](#).
2. **Invest in your pastor's peer relationships.** Statistics show that strong peer relationships are one of the most productive ways to strengthen resiliency in ministry. One way to do that is to make sure that your church budgets funds each year for your pastor to attend Network events that minister to them and strengthen peer relationships. You can bless your pastor by making sure the following Network events are in your budget each and every year.
 - Network Council held every year in April in Colorado or Utah.
 - Sectional Tour held every year in February at a location in your region.
 - Sectional meetings (informal gatherings for fellowship and lunch) are held locally between 1-10 times a year.
 - General Council- once every 2 years held in one of America's premier conference cities.
 3. **Invest in your pastor's education.** Set aside funds that allow your pastor to pursue formal education opportunities.
 - Send your pastor to conferences designed for pastors and church leaders.
 - If your pastor's current credential is either certified or licensed, provide a scholarship for them to advance to the next level through one of the Network's educational partners. More information can be obtained at www.agspe.org/Preparation.pdf
 - The Network offers the "Trinity Ordination Scholarship to all of our ordained ministers. This scholarship covers 50% of tuition for all graduate programs (MA & Ph.D) at Trinity Bible College and Graduate School. If your pastor is ordained, your church can partner with the Network by covering the other half of tuition and offer your pastor a full scholarship for a graduate degree. More information on this benefit for ordained ministers can be found at www.agspe.org/trinityscholarship.pdf.
 4. **Optimize your pastor's financial package.** Pastors are entitled to unique opportunities to maximize the value of the salary and benefits package provided by the church. Skilled financial planners may be able to help the church structure the compensation package that increases the value of the compensation to your pastor without increasing the cost to the church. Learn more by listening to this podcast with minister's tax specialist Richard Varnell at <https://soundcloud.com/rmdstudios/c73>