

WAYS TO APPRECIATE PASTORAL STAFF

Appreciation of a congregation's ministerial staff enhances congregation-clergy relationships. At a meeting in April 1999 Millie Myren, now retired as Executive Minister of ABC of Metro Chicago, led the Midwest Ministerial Leadership Commission in designing a resource to support congregational efforts to express such appreciation. The uncompleted document was recovered in May of 2008 and deemed worthy to complete and circulate as a resource and discussion starter for pastoral relations committees and other congregational bodies.

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May 2008*

INTRODUCTION

The need for the care of the ministerial staff in the church, in a rapidly changing society was the main focus for the spring 1999 Midwest Ministerial Leadership Commission. The Commission was presented with a variety of areas affecting continuing productivity of American Baptist Churches clergy. Some concerns were:

- Clergy Burnout
- Support for the clergy family
- Recognition for important events in the life of clergy
- Encouraging continuing education
- Communication with Regional Staff
- Flexibility in allowing clergy Spiritual Renewal

With these and other concerns in mind, the commission met and developed the process for congregational support for their spiritual leaders.

It is the prayer of the Commission that these suggestions will help congregations develop plans in caring for the pastor that cares for them.

April 1999

ANNIVERSARIES AND MILESTONES IN THE CONGREGATION

"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

Special moments are important in everyone's life. We can all remember how much it meant to have one of those special moments recognized and appreciated by others, such as birthdays, graduations, wedding anniversaries and job promotions. For our pastoral leaders and their families, the local church needs to create a tradition of appreciation.

As pastoral leadership is integral in the ongoing ministry of the local congregation, so are the events and milestones in the life of the local pastor. In an effort to honor and celebrate these occasions you can employ the following ideas, in combination with your own.

Definition:

Anniversaries:

- o Anniversary of the call to the church, annually;
- o Five year anniversary and each fifth year thereafter;
- o Five year anniversary of ordination and each fifth year thereafter.

Anniversaries and Milestones are interchangeable.

Milestones:

- o Five, ten, fifteen years or more at one church;
- o Five year plan that has been completed, like youth group, or new ministry growth;
- o Completing of degrees for pastors' families, and the pastors themselves;
- o Recognize leadership of pastors in areas outside of local church, such as service organizations, community and national leadership;
- o Completion of Building Campaign

Celebration ideas are:

1. Sabbaticals for the pastors (guidelines available in regional offices);
2. Annual celebration and recognition of being called to a church;
3. Celebrate annually the contributions made by the pastor's mate – with flowers, cook book, kitchen utensils, tools, fishing gear, etc.;
4. Pastor and spouse birthdays and anniversaries;
5. Encouraging surprise occasions of appreciation and accomplishments, by acknowledging event in print such as newsletter and press releases, etc., highlighting pastor's milestone as special celebrations, with speakers, musical groups, flying in special person in the pastors' life like mother, father, church father/mother, from their past, etc.;
6. Encourage churches to honor anniversaries and accomplishments with a tax-deferred gift to The Annuity Supplement - http://www.mmbb.org/benefits_tas.cfm
7. When anniversaries and milestones are celebrated, the spouses are to be recognized for the significant contributions they make.
8. At least one anniversary where the pastor and spouse are sent together for a get-a-way weekend to be pampered (paid for by the church).
9. Gift of a trip to the Holy Land, paid for by the church, for the pastor and spouse. This can be given in recognition for years of service.
10. Include the local community in some of the celebrations considering the fact that the pastor is involved in the life of the community as well.

CLERGY FAMILY CARE

The role of the congregation in encouraging and supporting a healthy family life.

Committed to reflecting the love of Christ for all people, including the pastor and pastor's family and knowing that pastors are most effective when family life is strong and wholesome, your congregation will be eager to encourage and support a healthy family life for the pastor. The following is offered in the hope that awareness and sensitivity to clergy family issues will be enhanced and that you will prayerfully seek ways to support your pastor as she or he attends to life at home.

"As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness and patience...Above all, clothe yourselves with love which binds everything together in perfect harmony...Whatever you do, in work or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the father through him." Colossians 3:12, 14, 17

"Contribute to the needs of the saints..." Romans 12:13a

- Encourage your pastor to plan and take vacation time as well as weekly days off.
- Provide occasional three-day mid-week "weekends."
- Look at a flexible "Paid-Time Off" plan (consult with your MMBB representative).
- Establish a trained Pastoral Relations Committee that meets regularly to encourage good communication about compensation and fringe benefits.
- Be sensitive to the dynamics of parsonage living (establish mutually agreed-upon responsibilities and boundaries).
- Respect the privacy of the pastor's family and home.
- Provide time and possibly money for the pastor for special outings or retreats for family times.
- Recognize birthdays and anniversaries and allow your pastor to miss meetings for these occasions.
- Pay attention and show hospitality to family members from out of town.
- Pay expenses for spouse to attend region events and attend to the needs of children.
- Provide family membership in a health club.
- Give a certificate for 12 family movies per year.
- Look carefully at expectations placed on the family.
- Encourage individuals to express appreciation to the family.
- Write cards and notes.
- Keep scrapbook of activities of pastor and family's tenure.
- Provide meals and necessities in times of grief, sickness and special need.
- Show respect for pastor's family time.
- Be aware of the grief experienced by the pastor and family in times of death of close church member (the church grieves and so does the pastor, but the pastor is often busy counseling others in times of grief).
- Be aware of the family dynamics and needs of single pastors, blended families, pastors caring for family members with special needs, such as elder parents, mentally/physically challenged children.

No two families are alike. Your pastor's family is unique and your sensitivity will both reflect the love of Christ for all and enhance his or her ability to serve our Lord through your congregation.

CLERGY APPRECIATION AND ENCOURAGING COLLEGIAL SUPPORT

Jesus sent the disciples out two by two. Paul traveled with Barnabas and Mark. Priscilla and Aquila ministered together. From the very beginning, the Church has thrived when its leaders have engaged in and been supported by collegial relationships. Congregations today are likewise encouraged to advocate for and even require collegial relationship opportunities for their ministerial leaders.

Why would a congregation care? Collegial relationships lead to healthy ministerial leaders, which is a key component in healthy churches. The demanding work of ministry, full of worship and preaching preparation, home and hospital visitation, weddings, and funerals, church administration and committee meetings, is fraught with tension because of conflicting expectations. Collegial relationships replenish and renew the soul.

Collegial relationships contribute to the well-being of ministerial leaders in various ways. Interaction with colleagues provides a broader vision of what ministry can become and expands the horizon of the congregation's ministry. The companionship of others who have experienced the realities of ministry lightens the burdens and multiplies the joys.

The congregation plays a vital role in encouraging collegial relationships. Even before the moment of call, the congregation begins to establish the expectations through the search committee's negotiation with the candidate. After the call, the congregation offers its encouragement through the ongoing work of the pastoral relations committee, which reports to the appropriate congregational leadership.

Opportunities for collegial support include:

1. Regular participation in local community ministerial, denominational and/or ecumenical associations.
2. Special interest clergy groups; such as Bible study/lectionary, prayer, book, support, community action.
3. ABCUSA Ministers Council
4. Regional and national ecumenical groups; such as the Council of Churches and the Academy of Parish Clergy.
5. Online access, such as email, Internet, ABNET (especially for geographically isolated situations).
6. Theological circles among colleagues in the community or at a seminary.
7. Individual and small group relationships for fellowship.

Some mechanisms of support for these activities might be:

1. Payment of association dues and related expenses;
2. Hospitality for clergy gatherings;
3. Recognition that such activities constitute part of regular ministerial duties;
4. Provision of computer hardware, software, and online services;
5. Prayer support.

**REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP:
ATTAINABLE MEANS FOR BUILDING UP AND RECOGNIZING A PASTOR**

The Regions exist to help do your ministry more effectively and meaningfully. Your Region Staff wishes to join you in supporting your pastor and other professional church leaders. As your partner in this endeavor, the Region will offer specific resources and broker (act as agents for referrals to) others. There are certain things you ought to be able to expect from your Region. The Region will be able to point you to appropriate resources offered by other organizations and services. Even when your pastoral circumstances are unique, such as with a bivocational minister or interim minister, the Region will be able to offer assistance. Suggestions are included that your Region may not be able to provide and are offered to stimulate more ideas. You will also want to remember to show your appreciation to other professional church leaders in your congregation, such as interim ministers, chaplains and retired pastors and missionaries.

Since this is a partnership, there are also expectations the Region has of your congregation and pastor in this matter of appreciation. The Region will be able to serve you much better when they are fully informed regarding significant events in the life of your pastor.

Feel free to call on your Region Staff at any time for suggestions and help in showing love, care and appreciation for your full pastoral family.

“As we so receive love, let mutual brotherly love continue.” Hebrews 13:1

What can be expected of local churches:

1. Encourage your congregation to seek resources from Region, invite regional and national staff for preaching opportunities.
2. Publicly affirm effective ministry in a variety of settings.
3. Provide a weekend for pastor and spouse, room paid, child care paid; program of spiritual direction.
4. Include Chaplains in appreciation and recognition.
5. New pastors' packets should include Regional resources for pastors, such as scholarships, Center on Ministry, Ministers Council as well as neighborhood and church information.

What can you realistically expect from your Region:

1. Phone to check in with pastors regularly. Ask key questions.
2. Publicly affirm effective ministry in a variety of settings.
3. Database for anniversaries (including retirees). Notify churches with suggestion.
4. Provide family retreat centers.
5. Area Minister visit pastor and family and take out to dinner, annually meet with church board for update and discussion.
6. Offer quality region in-service or fellowship for clergy and spouse; emphasize marriage and boundary issues.
7. Provide and/or identify scholarship aid to attend retreat, seminars, national continuing education courses, etc.
8. Area Minister to give ongoing encouragement, and model appreciation of pastoral staff.
9. Clergy prayer, spiritual retreats.
10. Provide crisis pastoral care without linkage to search and replacement.
11. Use retired pastors to be mentors and friends to pastors.
12. Training of Pastoral Relations Committee.
13. Installation service as teaching opportunity.
14. Using other “visit” other opportunities to affirm the pastor and ministry publicly.
15. Send reminder of anniversaries with suggestions.

16. Include Chaplains in appreciation and recognition.
17. Advocacy during search negotiations; salary, boundaries, continuing ed., letters of agreement.
18. Advocacy during the continuing of ministry in salary and benefits package.
19. Advocacy during separation negotiations for justice.
20. Referrals for skilled pastoral care and counseling.
21. Lists of other free or reasonable places for pastors and families.
22. Regional staff to advocate/facilitate with churches over financial issues with the pastor, i.e. raises, continuing ed., sabbaticals, etc.
23. Information about IRS implications of gifts.
24. Area Minister to be the minister in times of grief situations for pastors and their families.

SPIRITUAL NURTURE AND EDUCATION

Spiritual nurture and life-long education for effective pastoral leadership present a challenge to both the pastor and the congregation. Spiritual formation is never finished; neither is it fixed in time or place. Christian ministry is a journey of continuing growth and learning.

A commitment to spiritual nurture and education does not lead to simple solutions or quick fix efforts. It is not self-evident, though it should be, that the health of the minister is linked to the health of the congregation. Healthy congregations are led by healthy ministers.

Effective congregations are usually served by pastors who enjoy longer pastorates. Successful ministry is achieved through time. To reduce burnout, to empower pastoral leadership, to strengthen local congregations, adequate renewal is essential. Renewal breaks the destructive cycle of work without rest. Healthy churches learn how to bless those who labor and serve.

Regardless of the means of renewal, the local church will want to keep in mind that the church of Jesus Christ needs both to call the best and to retain the best. The church deserves no less and the needs of the world require no less.

Scripture overflows with scenes of renewal and commands us to rest, pray, and experience Sabbath joy. The Bible also encourages us to be prepared for spiritual conflict and the demand of discipleship. The following Scriptures are suggested for reflection:

Isaiah 43:2
Luke 10:38-41
Galatians 5:22-26

Luke 9:22-27
I Corinthians 2:14-16

Pastoral leadership looks to the example of Jesus as the model for renewal. A theology of permission to be renewed and grow on the part of the pastor should also be balanced by a theology of blessing by the congregation which gives encouragement and exhibits sensitivity to the needs for pastoral renewal.

The pastor is ultimately accountable for God and the Lord Jesus Christ for the stewardship of ministry. Spiritual nurture is a response to the call of God to be faithful to a life of ongoing Sabbath renewal.

The congregation will seek to provide the minister with sufficient time and adequate funds for spiritual nurture and continuing education.

The following suggestions are meant to begin the conversation as to how a congregation might invest in pastoral renewal:

- *Underwrite funds for reading and developing a personal library with books, journals and other educational resources. Designate funds for retreats, mission trips and other events regularly built into the cycle of the church year.*
- *In addition to providing financial support, adequate time should be allowed for: care of family, participation in fellowship groups, periodic times away during the church year for renewal, such as an occasional non-vacation weekend free from congregational duties.*
- *The time and money dedicated to spiritual nurture and education for pastoral leadership need to be shaped according to the individual and focused on learning (head), spiritual growth (heart), or ministry skills (hands).*
- *The congregation may play a role in helping the pastor to identify areas of growth but the final shape of renewal rests in the goals and identified renewal needs of the pastoral leader.*

What outcome might be expected from an intentional emphasis on spiritual nurture and education? The congregation benefits from healthy pastoral leadership. The quality of work increases as demands are balanced by the rhythm of work and rest. Preaching and teaching ministries are enriched for

congregational renewal. Moreover, a growing pastor who is empowered by spiritual nurture and continuing education will often serve longer pastorates, helping congregations avoid the costly process of frequent ministry moves. Time and money available for pastoral renewal is an investment against short pastorates which are, in the long run, more costly in lost ministry opportunities as well as more costly financially.

Spiritual renewal and education for the pastor are the congregation's way of exercising preventative maintenance for the ministry that God has given to the church. A pro-active policy of renewal and growth for pastoral leaders builds strong pastors and strong churches. Like a house built on a rock (Luke 6:47-49), the winds and storms will not prevail against a strong foundation which spiritual nurture and continuing education provide for God's servant leaders.