



Clergy Appreciation Month is a special time that congregations set aside each year to honor their pastors and pastoral families for the hard work, sacrificial dedication and multiple blessings provided by these special people. It is typically scheduled in October, but can be held at any time that is convenient for the church and the community. It is also important to remember that appreciation, affirmation and prayer support of our spiritual leaders is appropriate throughout the entire year.

The nature of the service provided by pastors and their families is unique. God has entrusted to them one of the most precious of assignments — the spiritual well-being of His flock. When a pastor becomes ineffective, the very souls of his or her parishioners are endangered. When eternity is in the balance, we should all be concerned.

Pastors and their families live under incredible pressures. Their lives are played out in a fishbowl, with the entire congregation and community watching their every move. They are expected to have ideal families, to be perfect people, to always be available, to never be down and to have all the answers we need to keep our own lives stable and moving forward. Those are unrealistic expectations to place on anyone, yet most of us are disappointed when a pastor becomes overwhelmed, seems depressed, lets us down or completely burns out.

That's why God has instructed us to recognize His servants.

“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).

The good news is that we can make a difference! Clergy Appreciation Month is one way we can counter the negative erosion in the lives of our spiritual leaders with the positive affirmation they need.

Don't your pastors and their families deserve this kind of recognition? Do something about it today!

HELP YOUR PASTORS AND THEIR FAMILIES FEEL APPRECIATED

1. Figure out what you can do personally to recognize and honor these leaders. A simple card, an invitation to lunch, a promise to pray for them or an offer to babysit, wash a car or mow a lawn make wonderful statements.

2. Share the concept of CAM with others in your congregation and challenge them to join you in some kind of formal planning. You might consider a special service of affirmation, a potluck event or planting a tree in their honor. The sky is the limit!

GUIDE TO CLERGY APPRECIATION MONTH

Our Clergy Appreciation Month Planning Guide is available online with complete step-by-step instructions and pages of exciting celebration suggestions. It also includes long-term ideas for the proper care of your pastors and their families. This complimentary guide can be reviewed, downloaded or printed immediately.

There is also a Spanish version of the planning guide for Spanish-speaking congregations and individuals. (También hay disponible una versión gratis de la guía de planificación para iglesias y personas de habla hispana.)

A BRIEF HISTORY OF CLERGY APPRECIATION MONTH

We believe that the concept of clergy appreciation started with the Apostle Paul as he was establishing the first Christian churches. In 1 Timothy, he wrote, “The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching” (1 Tim. 5:17). And, in 1 Thessalonians, he said, “Respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work” (1 Thess. 5:12-13).

Accordingly, over the centuries, decades and years, pastors have been recognized and honored, either formally or informally, by many denominations and local churches at various times of the year. It has been a long-standing practice.

Focus on the Family named and began emphasizing Clergy Appreciation Month in 1994, reminding congregations that it was biblical and proper to honor their pastoral staffs and pastoral families throughout the year, but suggesting that they set aside the month of October for a special tangible tribute. For those churches that preferred a single weekend, we recommended the second weekend of the month. However, honoring a church’s entire pastoral staff and their families can be done at any time — and, in fact, should become a

normal part of a church's ongoing care of these special families throughout the entire year.

Our goal is that every pastor (including staff ministers) and his or her family would feel appreciated by those they serve. To assist congregations in this process, we have developed a planning guide (in both English and Spanish) intended to facilitate and publicize a CAM celebration. We also attempt to promote the concept ourselves each year through radio, newspapers, magazines and any other means at our disposal.

Over the years, we have been privileged to work in partnership with many publishers, bookstore chains, radio networks, news syndicates, musicians, denominations and other church groups, and have made many friends. Many of these fine organizations promote some form of clergy appreciation on their own. We think this is great! We feel that the fact that no one "owns" the idea of honoring pastors gives the campaign special inertia of its own — or from God.