



*Celebrate!*

**Clergy Appreciation Month  
Planning Guide**

# Clergy Appreciation Month Guide



Making A Memorable Celebration

## “Every Moses Needs an Aaron”

**T**hank you for expressing an interest in the annual celebration of Clergy Appreciation Month in October. Focus on the Family believes in the significant role that pastors and their families play in the local church and community.

As former pastors ourselves, we want to come alongside them and be their faithful “Aaron” in this generation. We want to encourage and support them, help shoulder their burdens, strengthen their families, ignite their faith and applaud their efforts.

We exist to serve pastors as he serves His Bride, the church. We sincerely appreciate your desire to do something special for your pastors and their families. It’s a great opportunity to say “thank you”. We know they will be grateful. We were!



*Every Moses Needs an Aaron*

**"When Moses' hands grew tired...Aaron and Hur held his hands up - one on one side, one on the other - so that his hands remained steady" (Exodus**

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# Clergy Appreciation Month Guide



October 2011

Clergy appreciation emphasis is in October but we also want to encourage you to celebrate, honor and affirm your pastor all year long. Often pastors and their families feel isolated and burnt out and often wonder if what they are doing is making a difference. Take time to appreciate the pastors in your congregation. In this guide you will find lots of tips and ideas on how to do just that.

Focus on the Family is joining with radio stations and church groups to encourage people of faith around the globe to say to those in ministry, “You are appreciated and loved!” We would encourage you to join us and select a weekend service in October that is best for your congregation to honor your entire pastoral staff and their families.

In this Clergy Appreciation guide you will find material that is designed to help you to promote and implement an observance. We urge you to begin your plans early since some ideas can require a substantial amount of time to develop.

Focus on the Family will be lending its support in the form of public service announcements airing on your local Christian radio stations and through general new releases to the printed media.



FOCUS ON THE FAMILY  
PASTORAL MINISTRIES

Thank you for honoring your pastoral staff.





## Why Should We Honor Pastors?



Why is it appropriate to set aside a special time each year to give recognition and affirmation to our clergy and their families? How are their needs and circumstances different from those of carpenters, grocers or dentists, etc.?

One distinction lies in the nature of the service these leaders provide. 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.

Another problem lies in the expectations placed on pastors. Numerous surveys have found that a very high percentage of pastors feel pressure to be the ideal role model of a Christian family—which is impossible, of course. As a result, four out of five pastors feel their families are negatively impacted by unrealistic expectations—whether self-imposed or congregation-imposed—and that ministry is an outright hazard to the health of their families. Indeed, the “pedestal” is not all it’s cracked up to be.

As pastors and their families try to please the God who called them to ministry while also trying to meet the expectations of their congregations, one result is dangerous stress. In fact, 75 percent of those surveyed reported experiencing a significant stress-related crisis at least once in their ministry.

Then, of course, there is the “fishbowl” aspect of ministry, whereby the entire lives of pastoral families seem to be on public display. Every private family situation quickly seems to become a congregational or community issue. This anxiety can only be heightened when financial pressures also come to

bear, which is common since pastors typically make substantially less each year than their own board members and deacons. Nearly 70 percent of pastoral spouses work outside the home, most often due to financial need.

No one would choose to live life under these conditions unless they felt obliged to a higher, divine directive. Unfortunately, all too often, these are exactly the conditions under which pastoral families serve.

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



## Planning Guidelines



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

- **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.
- **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.
- **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 honor a youth pastor.
- **Communicate.** Communicate your plans to those in your congregation and community.
- **Promote your Activities.** Carefully determine the best means to promote your activities and encourage participation.
- **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.
- **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.

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“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, NIV)

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## 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. 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.

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*Now we ask you, brothers, to 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. Live in peace with each other.*

*(1 Thess. 5:12-13)*

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## Think about these ideas:

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.

- 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 to be used for expressing appreciation. Encourage those participating in these types of events to be as specific as possible in their praise, revisiting favorite 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 parlor to last throughout the year.
- Schedule a "Thank you flash mob." Have various groups of people stand up during the service and shout out "We love you pastor!" or "Thank you pastor you are great!"
- Team with your local Christian bookstore(s) or radio station(s) to recognize and honor your pastoral families through activities appropriate to your
- Submit an open letter to your local newspaper to announce to the community your genuine appreciation for your pastoral staff and their families.
- 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.

## Think about these ideas:

- 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.
- Plan a special banquet in honor 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).)
  - 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; 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 for pastors).
- 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 honor 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.
- Plan a church picnic, circus or other festive event to celebrate the day.
- Invite the extended family of your pastor to visit and assist them by underwriting the cost. Schedule a family portrait sitting or other similar activities.



## Think about these ideas:

- Play taped audio or video greetings from special friends, children, fellow ministers and district officials of your pastoral staff at a special service.
- Invite a guest speaker to conduct worship and give your pastor(s) an extra paid day off.
- Schedule special prayer sessions to pray specifically for your pastors and their families. Make this a yearlong commitment, and assign special categories to each month, such as good health for the pastor's family, financial stability, courage and freedom to dream, and the pastor's marriage.
- Have super text event. Choose a day and have people text the pastor hourly with a heartfelt message of how he has touched their lives.
- Throughout the year you may want to choose the pastor's anniversary date with the church to have a special celebration. Or create a celebration based on the birthdays of the pastoral staff and their families.
- Spend some time getting to know your pastor and help the entire congregation to get to know the pastoral family. Set up a time where you highlight each person's favorite activities and foods. In a different room for each person set up a tasting table so everyone can join in and see what the favored foods taste like and then post pictures and display items focused on their activities with that member of the family's name so as people walk the tour they get to know something special about each member of the pastoral family.

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***Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task. Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well, so that his children obey him with proper respect (if anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's Church?) He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap. (1 Timothy 3:1-7 NIV)***

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## Sample News Release

Use the following format to create a news release for publication in your local newspaper to let your community know how much you appreciate your pastoral staff and their families.

### SAMPLE NEWS RELEASE

*[Contact person's name and phone number]*

*[Church Name] Pays Tribute to Pastor(s)!*

*[Your city, your state]*

— October is Clergy Appreciation Month, and on *[celebration date]*, *[church name]* will honor *[pastor(s) name(s)]* for *[his, her or their]* tireless commitment to *[his, her or their]* congregation and community.

*[Provide a picture of the pastor and a link to your website]*

*[Provide paragraph(s) detailing years of service, outstanding accomplishments and family members for each pastor.]*

We invite you to attend this special Clergy Appreciation Month celebration on *[date]* at *[time(s)]* and join us in thanking *[pastor(s) name(s)]* for *[his, her or their]* sacrificial dedication, spiritual teaching and wise counsel. Clergy Appreciation Month is an annual effort that seeks to acknowledge the tremendous contribution of—and pressures facing—religious leaders around the world.



## Tangible Expression of Appreciation

**S**ome tangible expression of appreciation (meals, handcrafts, small gifts, bouquets of flowers or balloons, personal poetry). This will assure that your pastoral family feels affirmed throughout the entire month.

inserts, posters, invitation letters and other promotional material customized for your church and its pastoral staff.

- Design a memorial scrapbook. Insert photos and other souvenirs of the previous 12 months of your pastoral staff's ministry. Be sure to include lots of pictures of congregation members. You might hire a photographer to capture your Clergy Appreciation Month activities as the fitting conclusion of your scrapbook.
- Participate in renovating part of the pastor's home. There are almost always home improvements that pastors need, but cannot afford or do not have the skill or time to accomplish.
- Present each of your pastors with a packet of personal service coupons. Have members of the congregation pledge to provide services for your pastoral families, such as lawn service, child care, car repairs or catered dinners. You might even pledge to assist with projects around the church campus, such as fixing a sign, repainting the parking lot stripes or teaching the pastor's class one Sunday. And don't forget spiritual tasks, such as a commitment to pray each day for every member of your pastoral families.
- Ask business members throughout your community to use a portion of their advertising marquees to extend

your congregation's message of appreciation. A discount for your pastor's family might also be offered by that business during the month of October.

- Distribute individual quilt squares to congregation members and encourage each contributing family to personalize its square. The finished quilt would become a long-lasting reminder of appreciation.
- Print bumper stickers with the message, "We love our pastor(s)!—from the congregation of [Your Church]."



## Tangible Expression of Appreciation

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.
- 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 colored 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 favorite Scripture verses and/or encouragement to be read anytime a boost is needed.
- Always look for new ways to honor and recognize your full pastoral staff and their families throughout the entire year. And don't forget to continually support them through your prayers.



## Invest in Your PASTOR

**I**t is virtuous, invigorating and biblical to set aside time each year to honor 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 improve himself/herself by underwriting his/her participation in spiritual retreats, conferences, denominational functions and continuing education each year.

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.

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



## Invest in YOUR PASTOR

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 armor 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 Christ-like character as a priceless asset for your church. Avoid grumbling, poisonous humor 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 massive 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.



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*Helping Pastors Thrive*

