

Double Honor

A Guide to
Appreciating
Your Pastor



By Mark Opseth
Ministry Outfitters

It was the spring of 1993 and I sat in the worship service at St. John's Lutheran Church. I didn't normally attend this early service, but something (or Someone) got me up and moving on this particular day. I had been on the staff of St. John's for about 8 months, having been called to serve as Youth Pastor. St. John's was a church in conflict and little did I know that on this day the battle would be taken to a very ugly level.



The church organist asked one of the pastors if she could make an announcement during the service. Her announcement turned into a 20 minute bashing of the senior pastor. When she was finally done, she went back to the organ, closed the cover, locked it and walked out of the service. The majority of those in attendance walked out behind her, while the rest of us sat stunned.

How do you follow up something like this? The pastor invited us to continue on in the service with the Hymn, **Holy, Holy, Holy**. I couldn't hold back the tears having just witnessed such an unholy situation. It was at this moment that I knew the Lord had called me to St. John's Lutheran Church not just to work with young people, but to be a support and encouragement to the senior pastor.

Stories like this are becoming more and more prevalent in the Church today. The office of the pastor is losing respect and more and more church members are looking less like sheep and more like wolves seeking to devour the shepherd. As a result, it doesn't take long to find a pastor who was driven out of the church or who left prematurely because of such hostility.

It's time to bring this trend to a screeching halt! Scripture is clear: we are called to build up, not tear down; we are called to encourage others, not eat them alive. The Head of the Church commands His followers to respect, esteem, pray for and honor the ones who are called to lead.

Let's get back to the story of St. John's and fast forward from 1993 to 2003. The new senior pastor sat at his desk with tears streaming down his face as he read these words from one of the congregational members, "Thanks for coming aboard a sinking ship."

Oh what a difference it makes when we seek to build up and appreciate our pastors rather than tear them apart. No doubt, St. John's would have been spared years of turmoil if the church members had banded together to show appreciation for their leader's sacrifice and service rather than nitpick over style and personal preferences.

You are in a position to transform the atmosphere of your church. You may never know what impact your involvement in pastor appreciation will make in the life of your pastor and his family! You just may spare the life of a kingdom worker!

The Biblical mandate for honoring our pastors



“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)

Honor your pastors by praying for them.

“I urge you, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone - for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.” (1 Timothy 2:1-4)

Honor your pastors by respecting them and their positions.

“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.” (1 Thessalonians 5:13)

Honor your pastors by sharing with them.

“Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor.” (Galatians 6:6)

Honor your pastors by providing for their needs.

“Don’t you know that those who work in the temple get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in what is offered on the altar? In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel.” (1 Corinthians 9:3-14)

Honor your pastors by remembering them and imitating their faith.

“Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.” (Hebrews 13:7)

What pastors want their congregations to know



The following comments are from real pastors:

Being a pastor is not just a job for me, it's a call from God.

I am excited to serve my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ by serving His Church. He has put a burden on my heart for the spiritual well-being of the flock and has given me a love for the sheep.

For the good of the flock, I sometimes need to make difficult decisions. Don't think it doesn't weight heavy upon my heart.

Congregational members have a choice on whether to attend an event or not, I am "expected" to be there. When there is an event that is optional for me, allow me the choice of NOT attending.

I sometimes feel inadequate to lead, ineffective in my ministry, afraid to fail. Remember that I am human.

Allow me to give priority to my family; they are my primary ministry.

Know that I spend a great deal of my waking hours thinking about and praying for the church.

I live in a fishbowl; it comes with the territory. But my family didn't necessarily ask for this kind of life – especially my children. Please respect their privacy.

My kids are normal. Like yours, they don't always act Christ-like. Whatever their behavior, I want to love them unconditionally. Don't you do the same for your children?

I love it when you care for me enough to make sure I'm taking days off and using my vacation time.

The burden of being a pastor is sometimes very difficult to bear. Your pain becomes mine. I try to give it all to Jesus, but it's hard to let go.

I appreciate comments like "nice sermon", but I'm thrilled when people share specific ways the message has impacted their lives.

Will you stand with me during the good times as well as the difficult times?

We won't always agree, but we should always forgive.

It means a lot to me when you put a great deal of thought into your gestures of appreciation.

Creative ways to honor and appreciate your pastor



1. Honor your pastor by providing a generous salary. In order to accomplish this in your church, encourage members to tithe!
2. Designate a special Sunday in October to appreciate the pastors. Shower them with gifts and cards and a potluck dinner.
3. Cards are always encouraging especially when the notes contain specific ways the pastor has helped or blessed them.
4. It means a great deal when congregations acknowledge the spouse and children along with the pastor. After all, they are a team!
5. Arrange for congregational members to mail a card (with a restaurant gift card) to the pastor each day during the month of October (if the pastor has little kids, be sure to include gift cards for children's restaurants too).
6. Create a treasure hunt for the pastor and his family to do together. They can end up in the church fellowship hall where the congregation is waiting with food and gifts.
7. Arrange for people to watch the pastor's children once a month so he and his wife can go out on a date (and use the gift cards you've given them).
8. Put together a video/DVD of congregational members sharing their love and appreciation for the pastor and his family. Show it on Sunday morning followed by a gift presentation.
9. Serve a huge Thanksgiving dinner in the spring for the entire church. Throughout the meal, have people share why they are thankful for their pastor.
10. Don't just resort to giving money or gift cards. Be creative.
11. How about giving your pastor an extra week of vacation this year?
12. Make note of the favorite places your pastor and his wife have stayed (hotels, bed and break fasts, etc). Surprise them with a one or two night stay so they can relive the memories.
13. During the months that have 5 Sundays, give the pastor one of those Sundays off (4 extra days off a year). Fill the pulpit with a person within your church or seek pulpit supply from outside sources.
14. Be sure to know and acknowledge the birthdays of your pastor, spouse and children.
15. Respect your pastor and the position of pastor.
16. Acknowledge length of service/faithfulness, especially the milestones.
17. Make sure your pastor is paid an adequate salary. A raise tells a pastor he is appreciated.
18. Make sure your pastor has what he needs to do the job (updated computer and software, books, resources, bookshelves and storage space, etc.).

Creative ways to appreciate your pastor (continued)



19. Give your pastor and his family a bouquet of home-grown flowers.
20. Invite your friends to church. This act will show your pastor how much you are excited about the ministry.
21. Pray for your pastor and let him know you are doing so.
22. Be specific in how your pastor has impacted your life and write it in a card. Don't just resort to "Nice sermon Pastor."
23. Extend no-strings attached friendship to your pastor.
24. Get out of the stands and get in the game. Use your spiritual gifts to help the pastor build up the body of Christ. Give your best to the church, not your leftovers.
25. Plant a tree in honor of your pastor. Set an engraved rock at the base with the pastor's name and the years of service.
26. Learn the love language of your pastor so you can communicate your love to him in a way that rings loud and clear.
27. Keep social situations social – no church business.
28. Encourage your pastor to take all of his vacation each year.
29. This is Your Life event: have the pastor and his family sit up front. Throughout the event, they hear the voices of people who have been blessed by their ministry and try to guess who that person is. The person then comes out from backstage to be reunited with the pastor. Bringing in people from past churches would be extra surprising and special!
30. Let's Make a Deal: give the pastor opportunity to trade smaller gifts for "what's behind door number 2!" Adding gag gifts in the mix makes it entertaining. End with a special grand prize.
31. Assign each small group in your church a specific month of the year to serve as the pastor appreciation team. Let them come up with creative ways to appreciate their pastor that month.
32. Every fall, purchase an athletic pass from the local school district for your pastor and his family.
33. Each year, give your pastor a local coupon book (i.e. Entertainment ® Book).
34. If your pastor is a part of a pastor's prayer group or ministerial association, work with the other churches involved and put on a combined appreciation event for all the pastors.
35. Enlist congregational members with gardens to deliver fresh produce during harvest season.
36. Create a photo album of church events and members, as well as notes of appreciation.

Creative ways to appreciate your pastor (continued)



37. Plan a church bonfire. Have people share church memories, especially identifying the role your pastor and his family have played.
38. Contact a local trophy company and order a small plaque for your pastor.
39. Write a letter of appreciation for your pastor and have it printed in the local paper.
40. Plan a special banquet to honor your pastor.
41. Make banners of appreciation and display them throughout the church.
42. Enlist the Sunday School classes and other children's groups to make appreciation cards and posters.
43. Provide a testimony time during a worship service, giving people the opportunity to share how the pastor has impacted their lives.
44. Plan a church picnic, circus or other festive event to celebrate your pastors.
45. Invite the extended family of your pastor to visit and assist them by underwriting the cost. Schedule a family portrait.
46. Participate in renovating part of the pastor's home or helping with maintenance projects.
47. Have congregational members pledge to provide services for your pastor - lawn service, child care, car repairs or catered dinners. Put all the pledges into a coupon booklet.
48. Distribute individual quilt squares to congregational members and encourage each family to personalize its square. Have a quilting group put all the squares together for a long-lasting reminder of appreciation.
49. 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. As the puzzle is gradually assembled, it will surely be a blessing.
50. Prepare an "encouragement jar" for your pastor. Fill a large decorative jar with notes containing favorite Bible verses and/or encouragement to be read anytime a boost is needed.
51. Does anyone in your church own a cabin or a timeshare? Let your pastor and his family use it for a week, free of charge.
52. Take time to think about what would be fun for the pastor and his family and provide that activity for them.

Creative ways to appreciate your pastor (continued)



53. Have a pastor appreciation celebration around Valentine's Day. Take up a special "love" offering for your pastor.
54. Set up a scholarship in your pastor's name for Bible college or seminary students.
55. Set up a college scholarship fund for your pastor's kids.
56. Investigate the needs of your pastor. If he is having financial difficulties, perhaps cash would be more appreciated than a bed and breakfast gift certificate.
57. Call a local radio station to request a song be played in honor of your pastor.
58. Print bumper stickers that say, "*Faith Church* loves their pastor!"
59. Take your pastor to work day: invite your pastor to your place of work to give him a taste of your world. As you introduce him around the office, be sure to share with your co-workers the qualities that you admire in your pastor. End your time by taking him out for lunch.
60. If your pastor lives in the church parsonage, establish a home equity fund to which people can contribute. When your pastor is called to a different ministry, he will have money available for the down payment for a house.
61. Hold a pie auction and use the proceeds to send the pastor on a trip.
62. Establish a Pastor Appreciation Team who will be looking for ways to honor your pastor throughout the year.
63. Allow the Spirit of God to lead you to specific ways to appreciate and honor your pastor. Remember...the Lord knows your pastor inside and out!
64. Hire a cleaning service for 2-3 hours.
65. Get a crew together to do projects around the house (lawn and garden, painting, organizing).
66. Make meals for their freezer (ask for preferences and be aware of allergies).
67. Give \$5 gift cards for coffee or fast food for pastor's busy counseling days.
68. Honor birthdays and holidays by NOT calling them.
69. Find a stylist to donate haircuts or hair colors for the family.
70. Take pictures of the family at church events and make them a nice photo album.
71. Provide the pastor with web services.
72. Encourage your pastors in how you've grown under their leadership.

Creative ways to appreciate your pastor (continued)

73. Offer to set up a gift closet for times when the pastor needs to visit someone in the hospital. Make sure it's stocked with nice cards and gifts.
74. Set up a team of people to pray weekly for the pastors and their families.
75. Give them time away in someone's vacation home/timeshare.
76. Pay for a conference of your pastor's choice.
77. Create a volunteer list based on people's gifts, so your pastor knows who to call for what.
78. Don't expect pastors to be what they aren't!



Implementing a Pastor Appreciation Plan



Recruit a Pastor Appreciation Team (PAT).

1. PAT Leader(s)
2. PAT Members

Determine to which elder or council member your team will be accountable.

This will give the ministry credibility as well as ensure that the task of pastor appreciation will continue over the years, even when PAT members come and go.

Gather information about your pastor and his family.

1. Birthdays
2. Interests and hobbies
3. Favorite restaurants
4. Favorite hotels or bed & breakfasts
5. Love languages
6. Favorite sports and sports teams
7. Favorite treats and snacks
8. Past ministry positions and locations

Create and implement an annual master plan for pastor appreciation.

Don't limit your appreciation to the month of October (Clergy Appreciation Month). Creating a plan will ensure that your pastor feels appreciated year-round. The plan will also force you to think beyond just giving money or gift cards (too much of this can put a burden on your church members), and implement creative and inexpensive expressions of appreciation.

Keep the ideas flowing and the momentum going.

Would you like to add to our growing list of creative ways to appreciate pastors? Or do you need other ideas and resources for your ministry? Email your suggestions to Pastor Mark Opseth at mark@ministryoutfitters.org or visit www.ministryoutfitters.org.



About Ministry Outfitters

Ministry Outfitters was established to offer support and encouragement to pastors and other ministry leaders, assisting them in preparing God's people for works of service so that the body of Christ may be built up (Ephesians 4:12).

Ministry Outfitters is a 501(c)(3) corporation and operates under the authority and supervision of a Board of Directors. To learn more about this non-profit ministry, please visit: www.ministryoutfitters.org.

About Mark Opseth

Mark began full-time ministry in 1986 as a youth pastor in Albert Lea, MN. Since then, he has served in a variety of roles (Senior Pastor, Associate Pastor, Executive Pastor, Camp Director, trainer, and consultant) and in a variety of settings (established churches, church plants, camps, parachurch ministries, and training organizations). Mark is currently serving as Senior Pastor of Hope Church in Apple Valley, as well as Executive Director of Ministry Outfitters. Mark's desire is to help prepare God's people for works of service so that the body of Christ may be built up (Ephesians 4:12).

Mark and Michelle and their six children reside in Apple Valley, MN.

Other Resources

Christianity Today: www.christianitytoday.com/holidays/clergy

Focus on the Family: www.parsonage.org

Contact your denominational office for resources and ideas.

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