

# *A* Clergy Appreciation Month



PLANNING  
GUIDE



Colorado Springs  
CO 80995

PC036

ISBN 1-56179-521-6



clergy  
appreciation  
month



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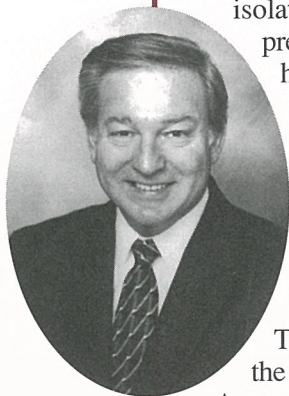
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Exception of no more than five celebration suggestions is authorized without permission for  
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## Introduction

We are thrilled that you have expressed an interest in the annual Clergy Appreciation Month celebration, scheduled for each October. In our ministry to pastors and their families, we have found that most members of the clergy feel isolated, insecure and only rarely affirmed. This event presents a great opportunity to say "thank you" to the servant(s) of God who has made a difference in your life.



Focus on the Family is joining with several other pastoral care organizations, denominations, publishers, bookstores and church groups to encourage people of faith throughout North America to say to those in ministry, "You are national treasures."

The following material is designed to help you with the promotion and implementation of your Clergy Appreciation Month observance. If possible, we would encourage you to join many of us by designating your day of worship during the second weekend of October as Clergy Appreciation Day. If that day doesn't work for your congregation, please select another service to honor your entire pastoral staff and their families.

We urge you to begin your plans early since many steps may require substantial lead time. We have listed a number of suggestions to make your event festive and dynamic. The possibilities are endless!

Our broadcasting division will be lending you its support in the form of public service announcements airing on local radio stations that carry the "Focus on the Family" radio program. Many of our publications will also encourage congregational participation in Clergy Appreciation Month.

Thank you for caring for your pastoral staff.

A handwritten signature in red ink, appearing to read "H.B. London Jr.".

H.B. London Jr.  
Vice President  
Ministry Outreach/Pastoral Ministries

## The Condition of Pastors

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

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. A 1992 survey by *Leadership Journal* found that 94 percent of pastors felt pressure to have an "ideal family." Seventy-seven percent of their spouses felt pressure to be an ideal role model of a Christian family. Another survey by the Fuller Institute of Church Growth in 1991 discovered that 80 percent of our pastors feel pastoral ministry affects their families negatively, and that 33 percent consider ministry to be an outright hazard to their families. Indeed, the "pedestal" is not all it's cracked up to be.

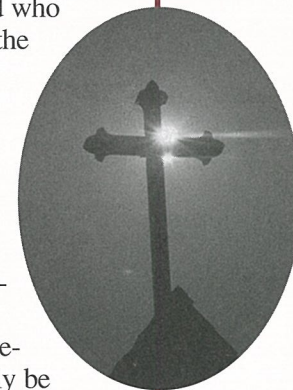
As pastors and their families try to please the God who called them to ministry while also trying to meet the expectations of their congregations, one result is dangerous stress. In fact, 75 percent of those surveyed reported experiencing a significant stress-related crisis at least once in their ministry. Ninety percent work more than 46 hours a week.

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 20 to 30 percent less each year than their own church 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. And yet, all too often, these are exactly the conditions under which pastoral families serve.

*So many times  
as pastors, we  
wonder if any-  
one really  
cares.*

—A pastor in  
California





## The Challenge to Congregations

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

As 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.

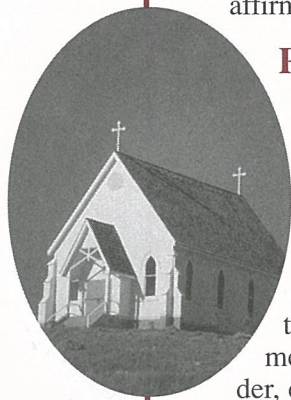
❖ **Delegate the responsibilities.** Assign the responsibility for each activity on your list to one person. This person may need to enlist the assistance of others in the congregation, but making one person accountable will improve your results. Also, be sure to involve those under the direct ministry of staff pastors, such as calling on youth group members to help honor a youth pastor.

❖ **Communicate your plans to those in your congregation and community.** Carefully determine the best means to promote your activities and to encourage participation.

❖ **Measure 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.

*Hours get long and other benefits come few and far between, but when something like this takes place, it makes it all worthwhile.*  
—A pastor in California



## 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 (1 Thess. 5:12-13) to recognize and encourage those whom God has called to proclaim His message and lead His people.

**Determine an appropriate level of involvement for your church.** 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 shower at which members and friends present either purchased or homemade greeting cards to each pastor's family.** Or, distribute blank "Thank You" notes among the congregation 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.

**Contact a local trophy company and order a small plaque for your pastor(s).** A simple inscription might read:

In Deepest Appreciation of  
[Pastor's Name] and [His or Her] Family  
for Unselfish Commitment  
to the Body of Jesus Christ at  
[Church Name]  
Clergy Appreciation Month,  
October [Year]

**Plan a special appreciation service during your normal worship time(s) on the second weekend of the month.** During this service, use a variety of means to honor your pastor(s). Work closely with your worship leader to make the celebration a very special one. Sing songs of commitment, read Scriptures of dedication and exhortation, and include a time of tribute for your pastor(s) that includes representatives of your denomination, your community, your church leadership and others in the congregation. (See the sample order of worship that

*I had no clue that God was being glorified to the extent that was expressed in notes of appreciation.*  
—A pastor in California





*follows.)* This would also be a wonderful opportunity to call those in attendance to a renewed commitment to the church mission and vision. Then ask the pastor(s) to share his or their dreams and vision for the future of the church, concluding with a laying-on of hands ceremony or other time of personal dedication.



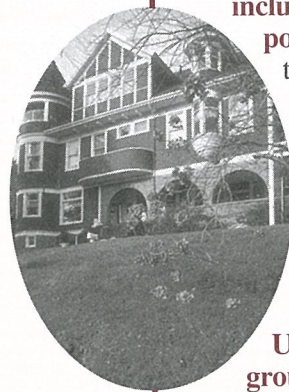
**Submit an open letter to your local newspaper** to announce to the community your genuine appreciation for your pastoral staff and their families.

**Plan a special banquet in honor of your pastor(s).** Have guest speakers and an entertaining program that highlights the accomplishments of the church under his or her leadership. Prepare a “This Is Your Life” show or a 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.

**Depending on the size and nature of your community, 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 or restaurant, a magazine subscription), personal gifts (a new pair of shoes, a new suit or dress, a new set of tires), extravagant gifts (an all-expense-paid trip to a resort or hotel) or even practical gifts (a conference or seminar for pastors).

**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.



*Brought great encouragement. Also brought about a great healing in our church.*  
— A church member in Tennessee

**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 for your pastor(s),** such as a favorite treat (chocolate chip cookies, candy), hobby items (fishing flies), small envelopes with gift certificates (clothing stores, restaurants, bookstores, etc.) or money.

**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.

**Plan a church picnic, circus or other festive event** to celebrate the day.

**Play taped audio or video greetings** from your pastor(s), special friends, children, fellow ministers and district officials at a special service.

**Make banners of appreciation, such as, “Pastor, We Love You,” and display them throughout the church property.** Distribute appreciation buttons or stickers to every member of the congregation and wear them proudly throughout the month.

**Invite a guest speaker to conduct worship** and give your pastor(s) an extra day off that isn’t part of his or their vacation time.

**Schedule special prayer sessions** to pray specifically for your pastors and their families. Make this a year-long commitment.

**Have various congregation members sign up for each day of the month** when they would assume responsibility for providing some 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.



*My heart was overwhelmed with the tenderness shown.*  
— A minister of music



Use the enclosed logo art to design special bulletin 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 pastor(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.

**Create a scroll of appreciation on butcher paper.** Have as many members of the congregation as possible write greetings and notes of gratitude with colorful markers on a long paper roll.

**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 pastor(s)' families.

Finally, always be looking 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.

*We are not living our days waiting for recognition or to be placed on a high pedestal, but it is nice and comforting to have a congregation saying "thank you."*  
—A pastor in Florida

## A Sample Order of Worship

Call to Worship

Greetings and Welcome to Clergy Appreciation Month Service

Congregational Hymn or Worship Chorus

Responsive Reading

Inspirational Singing and Praise

Scripture Reading

Prayer for Unity of the Church

Introduction of Pastors and Their Families

Tribute #1 (from a young person)

Tribute #2 (from a single adult)

Special Song or Choir Selection

Tribute #3 (from a married couple with a family)

Tribute #4 (from a senior citizen)

Special Music

Sermon (a 10-minute challenge from a layman to the congregation to fulfill the church's mission)

Pastoral Responses

Prayer for Pastors and Their Families

Presentations to Pastors

Benediction

Closing Hymn

*(This suggested order of worship can be altered to fit your congregation's worship style and format.)*

*Please remind people that they may not have another chance to honor their pastor. I thought "I'll do it next year." Next year never came for our pastor. He died the day before Thanksgiving in a car accident. I deeply regret that I did not even send a card.*  
—A church member in Michigan

## Sample News Release

Use the following format to create a news release for publication in your local newspaper.

### NEWS RELEASE

Contact

Church's contact name

Church's name

Church's address

Church's 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 or their]** tireless commitment to **[his or their]** congregation and community.

*[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 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—North American religious leaders in the 1990s.

*Thank you for promoting Clergy Appreciation Month, for explaining its necessity and for providing ideas on how to pull it off. All I had to do was manipulate the ideas from your planning guide into a form that would suit us.*  
— A church member in New Jersey



## Clergy Appreciation Celebration Testimony

We want to hear your stories of how you celebrated Clergy Appreciation Month.

Write us at:

Pastoral Ministries  
Focus on the Family  
Colorado Springs, CO 80995-7001

or fax us at: (719) 531-3347



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To order another Clergy Appreciation Month Planning Guide call 1-800-232-6459 and request item code PC036.



## Logo Art

The Clergy Appreciation Month logo on the following page may be used for bulletin covers and inserts, flyers or any other items you create to promote your activities. It has been designed for both print and photo duplication.



clergy  
appreciation  
month

*We've been  
spurred on to  
love and good  
deeds.*  
—A pastor in  
Kansas

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## Notes

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



## Notes

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