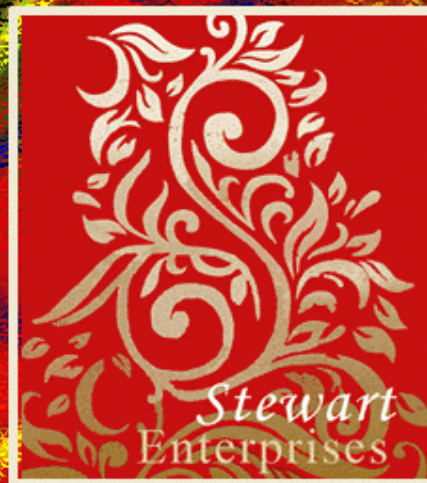


*16 Ways to Show  
Pastor Appreciation*

*Teena M. Stewart*



## **16 WAYS TO SHOW PASTOR APPRECIATION**

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## **Sixteen Ways to Show Pastor Appreciation**

by

**Teena M. Stewart**

Pastoral ministry can be rewarding and exciting. It can also be frustrating and discouraging. The constant demands of the job, its multiple responsibilities, the barrage of criticisms and low pay all contribute to pastoral discouragement. Many churches have recognized the need to encourage their ministers and do so by celebrating Pastor Appreciation Month often designating a specific Sunday for recognition.

One church I served in made an enormous effort each October, assigning each small group a specific day to show the pastors they care. One year groups bombarded pastors with cards, dinners, gifts, videotaped thank yous, personalized fortune cookies and getaway weekends. A church member who knew of the senior pastor's for weakness Carmello bars anonymously left a candy bar on the pastor's stoop each day. She even arranged to have another party deliver them when she had to go out-of-town. By the end of the month, the church pastors had no doubt they were loved and cared for.

Gestures, like these serve as a badly needed pat on the back, but sometimes, to a pastor who is truly hurting, they can seem superficial. To truly support the pastor we need to go deeper.

### **Show Appreciation by Showing Maturity**

**1. Treat Your Pastor the Way You Wish to Be Treated.** A friend told the following story. "My brother-in-law is a minister. A few years ago he and his wife spent a weekend with us. After their departure we found that one of their children had accidentally left a glove behind. We called and asked if we should mail it back. My sister-in-law laughed and said, 'No,

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that's ok, we have a large box of gloves that don't match.' She went on to explain that a woman in their congregation had a box of mismatched gloves, and rather than throw them away, she had given them to pastor's family!" It is a funny story but it sadly reflects the attitude that some parishioners take towards their pastor and family.

Luke 16:13 (NIV) says, "No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money." Clergy families should not be obsessed with material possessions, but expecting clergy to live below the standards of parishioners because they have committed to Christian service is belittling. If parishioners don't want their cast offs, they shouldn't assume their pastor will.

**2. Attend Church Regularly.** One of the best ways to show pastor appreciation is to show up at church. There is nothing more discouraging to a pastor than a congregation that comes and goes without any kind of commitment to anything beyond receiving. Regular attendance shows sincere concern for the church's ministry.

**3. Be a Friend.** Pastors are often seen as inapproachable and self-sufficient but in reality many feel isolated and lonely. They move frequently, sometimes leaving behind friends and family. It is difficult to breach the invisible barrier that separates them from being regular congregational members. Don't be timid. Take the pastor out for coffee. Have the family over for dinner. Adopt a PK (Pastor's Kid).

**4. Be Open to Change.** Nothing makes a pastor cringe more than the words, "But we've never done it that way before!" Members who say they want to grow and reach out but balk when it involves change, place their pastor in a no-win situation. Change is scary because it pushes us out of our comfort zones but it can also be an opportunity to learn and grow. Instead of resisting new ideas, support and enable the pastor to make them happen.

**5. Value the Spiritual, not the Material.** Don't sweat the small stuff. Details can be important, but those who continually focus on petty issues, i.e.— why the pastor isn't wearing a tie or where the refreshment table should be placed on Friendship Sunday — overlook the real ministry of the church. Remember to keep the main thing the main thing.

Congregational members who worry their pastors over small matters can wear their leaders down.

**6. Forgive Your Pastor.** Pastors serve a high calling and are expected to be examples to those they shepherd. But they shouldn't be expected to be perfect. Before passing judgment, stop and review your own life, confessing your wrong doings. You'll be better able to forgive your pastor's short-comings and will lower your expectations.

**7. Make Sure Your Pastor's Salary is Adequate.** Annually review regional costs of living/housing and compare them to the pastor's salary and living expenses. Adjust your pastor's salary to meet the rising expenses of food and housing. Consider merit raises as well.

**8. Provide for Higher Education.** Just like teachers, pastors need to participate in on-going education and training. Churches that fund these opportunities are actually investing in their church's ministry.

**9. Pray for Your Pastor and Church's Ministry.** Satan likes to look for weak spots in a ministry and sabotage those that threaten him. Prayer deficiency evidences many problems—criticism, disunity, stunted growth...Covering the pastor and church he serves with prayers helps protect the ministry and promote harmony.

**10. Co-labor with Your Pastor.** Pastors aren't hired hands. Yes, they are shepherds, but they should never be expected to shoulder the load of ministry alone. Healthy churches understand that pastors are the administrators and the members are the ministers. No matter how small a member feels his/her talents are, if he/she isn't serving, then the body is missing a vital piece. By pitching in, we lighten the pastor's load and enable the church to do the work of Christ.

These ten foundational principles for showing appreciation are guaranteed to make your pastor feel valued, but if it's more outward, tangible ways to appreciation you are looking for, you might try some of the following.

## Acts of Kindness Can Lift Your Pastor's Spirits

On a good day, pastoral ministry can be very fulfilling, but on a bad day it can be enough to make pastors leave ministry entirely. My husband and I have served in church ministry for years. Often, just when we were feeling the most discouraged, church members reached out with small gestures of compassion and care, lifting our spirits. More heartfelt than fancy, these simple acts of kindness blessed us deeply. Maybe they will give you ideas for how you can show your own pastor and family appreciation.

**1. Share Your Passion/Gift.** One older woman who loved crafts frequently gave us handmade items that she had carefully made--two ceramic duck figurines for our yard, personalized dolls for my girls, handmade mittens and gloves at Christmas.

**2. Make Vacation Enjoyable.** A few days before we were to drive to Florida on vacation, our minivan's air conditioner broke. We didn't have the money to get it fixed. When an older couple in our church learned about our situation, they paid for the repair. Another woman in our church always handed me an envelope with spending money for our children whenever she knew we were leaving on vacation. Just recently, as we were preparing to go out of town for my oldest daughter's graduation someone handed me a card which contained money to help us with travel expenses.

**3. Share Your Resources.** Church members have frequently shared resources. One couple allowed us to borrow their cottage at Cape Cod. Another loaned us camping equipment. After we moved to the bay area several church members who loved sailing collaborated. One took us out on his 24-foot sailboat while another helped crew. It was a wonderful for our entire family.

**4. Offer Your Skills.** One man, who loved tinkering with cars, helped my husband rebuild our clunker's ailing transmission. Another woman offered my family free haircuts at her beauty shop. Still another did our taxes for free.

**5. Share Hospitality/Home Resources.** One family extended an open door policy to visit their small farm anytime. Not only did our kids enjoy fishing in their pond and riding the horses, we picked fresh corn and tomatoes for our table. When we moved to a new church and our house

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wasn't available for several weeks, certain church members learned of our plight and invited us to move out of the motel and into their homes until our own house was ready. One lady knew we were new in town so she slipped a card under our windshield that included a generous check and an offer to give us a tour of the town.

**6. Avoid Giving Cliché Gifts.** As a clergy family we have received praying hands from the Holy Land, a porcelain plate with the holy family on it, a portrait of Jesus, and most recently a Bible Pictionary Game. The thought was greatly appreciated but it frustrates me a bit as well. It appears that some church members think clergy family members have halos around their heads and that they never enjoy normal things. In addition to gift certificates to Christian bookstores, clergy families might also enjoy gift certificates to regular bookstores, typical family board games, and platters, pictures and collectibles that most other people enjoy. When in doubt, you can hardly ever go wrong with a gift certificate, cash gift or tickets to an event.

It's not my intent to make pastors appear ungrateful, but sometimes they do long to be seen for who they are rather than what they are. Those who take the time to learn about a clergy family's interests, likes and dislikes are sure to lift their spirits and make them feel valued.

Pastor appreciation needs to occur on a regular basis, not just one month a year. Supporting the emotional, physical and spiritual well being of those who shepherd our churches, empowers their ministries and the ministry of Jesus Christ.

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The following resources are available through Stewart Enterprises  
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- Q001. Spiritual Gifts Questionnaire
- M001. Made for Purpose, Discover Your G.A.P.P. **for Individual Study, Small Group Leaders, Sunday School Teachers**
- M004. Putting Ministry in Motion, How to Develop an Equipping Ministry
- M005. The Ministry Consultant Training Manual
- M006. Discovering My Ministry, Filling the G.A.P.P Seminar Teacher Manual **for teaching seminars about spiritual gifts and ministry discovery**
- M007. Discovering My Ministry, Filling the G.A.P.P Student Manual **for students to use** as they take our seminar course
- Successful Small Groups from Concept to Practice (Beacon Hill)
- Care and Compassion with Common Sense (Due out in Spring 2011)