

**Thankful for Ministers!**

October is Minister Appreciation month – what are you doing to show your senior pastor and ministerial staff appreciation? The year 2020 represents a remarkable season of service from church staff members, and senior pastors in particular. Minister Appreciation month provides the perfect time to express your thankfulness.

1 Thessalonians 5:12 says, “*Now we ask you, brothers and sisters, to acknowledge those who work hard among you, who care for you in the Lord and who admonish you*.” [NIV]

How are CMBA churches “acknowledging” these servant leaders? During quarantine CMBA pastors shared about discovering surprise gifts left at their doorsteps and receiving kind notes and messages expressing thanks. Others appreciated being offered days at members’ vacation homes or the gift of time away from the responsibilities of church operations. It isn’t so much the gift itself as it is being remembered and noticed for all that ministers do to serve those in the church and community.

According to [Barna](https://www.barna.com/research/pastors-as-friends/)’s most recent research on how Christians quantify their relationships and interactions with their pastor, one in five Christian adults say they interact or meet with their pastor regularly outside of weekly worship services and, among the more committed church attenders responding to the survey, 43% say they regularly interact with their pastor outside of church. Barna imagines this could be affected by how active respondents are in church activities, but also how present pastors are out in the community.

Half of respondents who socialize with their pastor call them a “friend,” as opposed to other labels like “mentor,” “counselor” or “teacher.” Of these findings, former pastor and current Director of Strategic Partnerships & Church Engagement at Barna Group Joe Jensen says “your pastor is more than your church leader. He or she is also your brother or sister, a fallible human being in need of the same mercy, compassion, companionship and encouragement as you.”

These findings are a great reminder for church members to take a step beyond just showing appreciation to their ministerial staff during the month of October. Churches should recommit to joining pastors – and other ministerial staff members - in their walk, supporting and praying for them without expectations in return. As another [Barna](https://www.barna.com/research/whats_on_mind_americas_pastors/) study reflects, 40 percent of responding pastors cite “church leader burnout/exhaustion” as one of the major concerns facing the Christian church today.

Galatians 6:6 says, “*Nevertheless, the one who receives instruction in the word should share all good things with their instructor*.” [NIV]

How can CMBA churches share “all good things” with their ministerial leadership? Showing appreciation can happen individually and corporately. The website [tithe.ly](https://get.tithe.ly/) shares some great ideas that ministers universally appreciate. Some individual ideas include: hand-written cards of appreciation (include children in this!); learn the minister’s favorite restaurants and give a gift card or ask when you can have that restaurant deliver a meal to their home; and, pay for services they might otherwise not obtain for themselves, such as a lawn service or house cleaning.

Corporate or group gifts could reflect the opportunity to pool resources for something larger, like gifting a weekend away or purchasing a fancy coffee maker instead of separate coffee shop gift cards. Likewise, tithe.ly suggests avoiding gifts such as discounts that require a purchase, services from businesses within the church, items with Bible verses on them and a lengthy email expressing appreciation.

Visit [www.blessyourpastor.org](http://www.blessyourpastor.org) to learn more about a three-step resource funded by a grant initiative of the National Association of Evangelicals that encourages churches to creatively celebrate the senior pastor, collect an offering to bless them and then provides a $250 e-gift card directly to the senior pastor.

As your church considers how to show appreciation and celebrate the senior pastor and other ministerial staff, be sure to reflect on them as individuals by asking, “what would make them feel appreciated? How could we make them feel truly blessed?” Minister Appreciation month provides the opportunity to tangibly show your church’s gratitude through words, gifts and other sources of affirmation. How lovely for ministers to become reenergized and encouraged by their flock.