



What is Your Congregation's Plan for the Care of Your Pastor and Staff?

It has been almost 15 months since congregations abruptly shut down due to the pandemic. The immediate and radical changes impacted everyone. Congregational participants scattered, sheltered in their homes, and connected remotely with their churches on Sundays and at other times.

Congregations scrambled to move from serving in a physically present way to connecting virtually. Pastors exclaimed that suddenly they became "Internet preachers." Skills not taught to pastors and staff persons in seminary or other ministry preparation systems became the norm. Not every congregation had laity who understood how to produce or how to receive and connect with the virtual technology. Challenges were great both at the church and in the homes of members.

One aspect of the pandemic response was that pastors and church staff ran faster, harder, and longer to keep their congregations engaged in worship, discipleship, fellowship, and missional engagement. We would not suggest their situation was harder than that of others, but it was difficult as congregations experienced spiritual and emotional needs – even grief.

Funerals, weddings, baptisms, child dedications, the Lord's Supper, and many other Christian rites of passage were delayed, modified or missed. These special experiences negatively impacted the ministry spirit of pastors and staff persons. Plus, pastors enjoy preaching to people and not just to cameras.

Amidst the pandemic we saw pastors and staff grow weary in well-doing. They tried to hold their congregations together. They dealt with competing – even contentious – views of how church ought to function. Something as simple as "mask or no mask" created levels of conflict not seen in congregations for years.

So, what is our point?

Our point is a message for lay leaders. What are you doing to help – even insist – that your pastor and staff take the days off and the vacation time they missed over the last 15 months? They need and deserve the respite, and your congregation will worship and serve with greater joy if you provide an opportunity to them for some time away and then insist they accept it.

If you are concerned about who will preach, contact David Waganer at waganerd@gmail.com or 803.931.6302, and he will help you find a suitable person to preach while your pastor is away. If your church finances lagged during the pandemic and you cannot pay an honorarium for your guest preacher, CMBA will pay for up to two weeks of pulpit supply for your congregation. (We know many congregations have done well financially during the pandemic, but we do not know the details of all our churches.)