



Pastor Appreciation Sunday

A Local Church Planning Guide

The New Testament honors vocational ministry as one of God's highest callings. First Thessalonians 5:13-14 asks church members "*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.*" Ephesians 4:11-12 says God gave the Church pastors and other ministry leaders "*to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.*" Pastors are God's gifts to His people and are worthy of recognition for their willing and faithful service.

Pastor Appreciation Sunday is an opportunity for local congregations to give thanks to God for their pastors. It is a time to demonstrate to their pastor's genuine appreciation for their service. It is a time to esteem the role of the vocational Christian ministers who provide churches with spiritual direction. It is a time to stress the need for others to answer God's call to full-time ministry.

When the Apostle Paul remembered with joy the people in the church at Philippi, he spoke of their "*partnership in the gospel* (Philippians 1:5)." Ministry is a partnership of ministers and lay people—each helping the other to be effective in witness and work for Christ. The church cannot function effectively unless both do their part to build up each other. When churches honor their pastor, they strengthen the team God has put together to serve Him in their community. By showing appreciation they return some of the love, concern and ministry their pastor has given to them.

Planning a Pastor Appreciation Sunday should be a joy. Form a committee, divide the work, and you'll have a great day.

Included in this planning guide are suggestions and ideas for arranging an impressive and inspiring program. You will not find a rigid outline here. The purpose of this planning guide is simply to start your own creative juices flowing. Adapt what you read and tailor it to your local situation. Use your imagination and do things that will genuinely honor those God has called to lead ministry in your church.

PLANNING POINTERS

Choose a committee

Planning is the key to a successful Pastor Appreciation Sunday. Select a planning committee to oversee preparations for the event. With a little effort and organization, the day will be an inspiring and memorable occasion for those honored as well as for all

those who take part in the celebration.

The number of persons serving on the planning committee should be determined by the size of the congregation and the type of appreciation event to be observed.

Agree on your purpose

There are several things you should hope to accomplish by sponsoring a pastor appreciation event. Your purpose might include:

- To **inform** the church about the pastor's scriptural role and to increase its support for him or her in fulfilling those responsibilities.
- To **honor** unselfish service modeled by the pastor.
- To **provide** an opportunity for church members to tangibly express their love and appreciation for the pastor.
- To **offer** individuals in the community an opportunity to convey their respect and appreciation for the pastor's community contributions.
- To **inspire** youth and adults to obey God if they sense His call to the ministry as their life's vocation.
- To **recruit** prayer support for the continuing ministry of the pastor.
- To **strengthen** the unity of the church and the mutual love between its members and its leaders.

Plan a program

Choose a theme and plan a program that supports it. You may like a theme such as "Celebrating the Call Sunday"; "Pastor's Anniversary Sunday" (if the appreciation day is also the near date your pastor began serving your congregation); "Shepherd's Sunday"; or "Partners in Ministry Day." Of course, simply calling it "Pastor Appreciation Sunday" is a worthwhile idea, too.

The section entitled "Program Pointers" offers several suggestions for activities and services. Follow the outline given; adapt it to your local situation; or develop your own ideas. But by all means, plan to make this special day a memorable event in your church's life.

Delegate the duties

Many elements combine to make an inspiring and enjoyable Pastor Appreciation Day. Someone must be responsible for each one. For instance, who will be responsible for publicity? Who will order materials? Who will coordinate the service? Who will speak Sunday morning? All these questions, and more, must be answered.

Soon after its formation, the planning committee should use the planning outline to designate persons who will be responsible for each element of the observance. Every church may not use all of the activities listed. Some churches will add others. The planning outline is intended only as a starting point and may be adapted for the type of program your church will have.

Meet with each appointed person individually and thoroughly discuss the task—what is expected, required deadlines, and the results desired. It may be helpful to put everyone's duties in writing for future reference.

Prepare a list of assignments and responsibilities and circulate a copy to everyone involved. This will reduce the possibility of misunderstandings, overlapping responsibilities, or omissions.

Plot the progress

Responsibility for organizing a successful Pastor Appreciation Sunday rests ultimately with the planning committee. Establish a checklist to ensure that all assignments will be ready at the designated time.

Plot the progress being made by checking periodically with the persons who are assigned responsibility for various elements of the event. Contact individuals and groups at regular intervals to discuss special needs and to offer encouragement and assistance.

Advertise in advance

Inform the people of the local church and the community about all the activities associated with your pastor appreciation event. Use the church bulletin, posters, media releases, newspaper ads, and personal contacts as elements of the promotional strategy. Of course, you will need to save a few surprises for the celebration. But don't let who, what, when, and where be one or more of those surprises.

Practice the program

A practice session with all of the persons involved should be held before the actual event. This will ensure that everyone understands his or her role in the total program, eliminate uncertainties and relieve nervousness and tension.

Stress the value of everyone enjoying themselves, and each other, while honoring the pastor. Create a "ministry mood" toward the program, so everyone can participate with a relaxed spirit and a positive attitude.

Praise the participants

After the event, thank each one who made the program successful. Commend individuals who participated by sending a "Thank You" card or by placing a personal telephone call. Also, include an appreciation announcement in the church bulletin. Commending participants helps spread the spirit and purpose of Pastor Appreciation Sunday.

PLANNING OUTLINE

The following outline will assist you in recruiting, assigning, delegating, and supervising volunteers. It will be helpful to copy this information and distribute it to all your planning committee members.

Planning Committee

Chairperson _____

Members _____

Important Dates _____

Publicity

Person Responsible _____

Action Planned _____

Important Dates

Sunday Worship Coordinator

Person Responsible _____

Action Planned

Important Dates _____

Sunday Morning Speaker

Person to Make Contact

Honoraria, Travel, Lodging

Important Dates

Appreciation Week Events

Person Responsible _____

Action Planned

Important Dates _____

Special Sunday Bulletin

Person Responsible _____

Action Planned

Important Dates _____

Appreciation Certificate or Plaque

Person Responsible _____

Action Planned

Important Dates _____

Gifts for Ministers and Spouses

Person Responsible _____

Action Planned

Important Dates _____

Love Offering for the Pastor

Person Responsible _____

Action Planned

Important Dates _____

Flowers for the Pastor and Spouse

Person Responsible _____

Action Planned

Important Dates _____

Sunday Meal Functions

Person Responsible _____

Action Planned

Important Dates _____

PUBLICITY POINTERS

A publicity chairperson should be appointed to promote interest and attendance for Pastor Appreciation Sunday. The pointers given in this section offer ways to advertise the special day.

Posters

Design posters to place in the church building and other appropriate community locations to announce the Pastor Appreciation Sunday. Be sure to designate the time and place for the activities.

Special church bulletin

A special church bulletin should be prepared for Pastor Appreciation Sunday. A worship outline with a responsive reading is suggested below for your consideration.

Church bulletin insert/handout

A bulletin insert with your pastor's photo and some personal background information will add an extra touch to the occasion. List academic achievements, special awards and honors, ministry experiences, family facts, and other biographical highlights.

Church sign

If your church has an outdoor sign with a message center, the Pastor Appreciation Sunday announcement should be displayed a couple of weeks before the event to promote community awareness and to provide a reminder of the day for the congregation.

Newspaper advertising

A newspaper advertisement promoting Pastor Appreciation Sunday will inform the community of the special day and add prestige to the event. Most newspapers provide special church or non-profit rates for such advertising.

Talk with an advertising representative at least two weeks before you want the advertisement in the newspaper. This will ensure that the ad will be scheduled on the day you want it to appear, and that you can see a "proof copy" for final approval before publication.

PROGRAM POINTERS

Special events

Although the Sunday morning service is the main focus of the celebration, many churches will want to add other opportunities for people to express appreciation to their pastor.

Appreciation Week. To build excitement, plan a special event every day of the week leading up to the celebration Sunday. Each day during the week a special expression of appreciation could be presented to the pastor and his/her family.

Monday—deliver a complete meal to those honored.

Tuesday—present a gift to the spouse.

Wednesday—prepare homemade candy for the family.

Thursday—deliver a fruit basket or a giant bag of specialty popcorn for the entire

family to enjoy.

Friday—phone in an order for delivered pizza and soft drinks for the family (and be sure to prepay the bill!).

Saturday—drop off cookies, cakes, and cards throughout the day.

Youth Appreciation Pizza Party. Arrange for a pizza party at the church fellowship hall or at a local pizza parlor. This will be a fun time for the youth of the church and will provide a time for them to tell their spiritual leaders they are loved and appreciated.

Ladies' Appreciation Tea. Appoint someone to arrange for a tea and to create a lovely setting to convey appreciation to women in vocational ministry. Present a gift to each of these ladies that will be a reminder of the affection others have toward them. Invite younger women to hear testimonies of women in ministry.

Men's Appreciation Steak Dinner. A steak dinner can be planned as a cookout or as a meal at a local restaurant. Teenage boys should be invited also. During a devotional time, challenge attendees to consider God's call for them to vocational ministry.

Family Festival Night. Instead of separate meal functions, it might work best for your church to hold a single meal and appreciation night for ministry personnel. Following the meal, different age groups could "roast the pastor," telling humorous remembrances as well as expressing appreciation through poems, skits, and testimonies.

Family Prayer for the Pastor. Each family in the church can be asked to set aside a time to pray for their ministers during the week leading up to Pastor Appreciation Sunday. This is a good time to explain to children the important role of Christian ministry. Talk about the responsibilities, the privileges, the schedule, and the pressure that is placed on ministry families. This will increase understanding and respect for the church's spiritual leaders. Provide each family in your church with a prayer request calendar or list.

Eight Ways to Honor Ministers and Their Families

1. Give the minister's family a list of homes to which they are invited for a meal each month throughout the year.
2. Plan a surprise paid weekend vacation for the minister's family.
3. Provide a free hairdresser appointment for the pastor's wife.
4. Present a gift certificate from a clothier to the pastor.
5. Arrange for a meal at a nice local restaurant for the minister's family and have it billed to the church.
6. Give appropriate gifts or gift certificates to the minister's children.
7. Purchase a decorator item for the minister's home.
8. If the pastor has out-of-town children, arrange for them to be present to participate in the celebration.

Sunday school

Introduce Pastor Appreciation Sunday in the classroom. Write the theme on the board. Discuss reasons for observing the day. Pray for the pastor and his/her family. Pray for those who are preparing for ministry. Pray for those who have retired from the ministry. Pray for God to call more people from your church into vocational Christian service.

Have the children draw a picture of their pastor engaged in an act of service to the church. Have them write a note of thanks to the pastor. These may be presented to the pastor during the special recognition service.

Sunday evening reception

Some churches may not be able to sponsor all of the events that are suggested. Some may simply find it best to plan a reception after the Sunday evening service to express appreciation and to enjoy refreshments and fellowship. The event will probably be informal and may or may not involve a detailed program and entertainment. This might be a great time to premiere a video of church members telling a favorite story about the pastor or saying thanks for his/her ministry.

Sunday fellowship meal

Following the morning service, consider an appreciation dinner for the pastor and family in the church fellowship hall or some other appropriate location. Ask each family to bring food to share.

WORSHIP SERVICE RESOURCES

Sunday morning service format

Pastor Appreciation Sunday is a time to show those called to vocational ministry that the congregation loves them and esteems them for their position as spiritual leaders. The focus of all our worship should be first and foremost on Jesus Christ, the Lord of the Church. He is the one who has called servants to follow in His steps as preachers and teachers. It is only in this context of praise to God that praising individual Christians is appropriate.

The suggested service format offered below can be modified to fit the goals and worship style of your church. Be sure to emphasize the theme selected by the committee. With proper planning and prayer, this celebration Sunday can have a great spiritual impact on all attendees.

Suggested Sunday morning order of worship

Pin an appropriate flower on honorees and their spouses

Welcome the worshipers and introduce the theme of the day

Congregational singing and special music

Responsive reading

Presentation of Certificates of Appreciation

Prayer by a man, woman, and youth from the congregation

Love offering

Morning message by lay person, guest speaker, or pastor

Presentation of love offering and/or special gifts

Response by pastor and benediction

Introduction

The following opening address could be read by the worship leader to introduce Pastor Appreciation Sunday.

According to Ephesians 4:11, God calls people to various roles of Christian ministry. Through this divine act, God established the human means for the spiritual care of His people.

Today we celebrate the call of those involved in vocational Christian ministry within our congregation. As we do, we not only want to honor them, but also challenge others to be receptive to a call from the Lord to Christian service as their life's work. While all believers are spiritually gifted to share in the Church's mission, the called are God's specially chosen leaders for our endeavors.

Today, as we celebrate the call and ministry of our pastor, we worship God our Savior, and we commit ourselves to hold in high esteem those He has charged with our spiritual nurture and care. We also pledge to be ministers to others with Christian love, and we renew our willingness to do God's will as He reveals it to us and to our church.

Music

Because of the day's special events, the music portion of the worship service may not be as lengthy as in a regular service. Choose music and songs that support the selected theme. Aim for excellence in the selection and presentation of special music.

Responsive reading

An appropriate responsive reading offers the entire congregation an opportunity to express appreciation with one voice to those called into vocational Christian service.

Pastor Appreciation Sunday

Responsive Reading

Reader: In answering God's call to the ministry, you have obeyed His will for

	your life.
Congregation:	<i>We celebrate your call and thank God for you.</i>
Reader:	Your call has come in answer to the prayers of God's people that He would "send forth laborers" into the harvest fields of our world.
Congregation:	<i>We celebrate your call and will pray for you.</i>
Reader:	Your call comes through your love for lost souls.
Congregation:	<i>We celebrate your call and commit ourselves to be witnesses for Christ.</i>
Reader:	Your call is evident in your concern for God's people and your spiritual service to us.
Congregation:	<i>We celebrate your call and according to your example we promise to love and serve one another in Christ, too.</i>
Reader:	And all the people said,
Congregation:	<i>Amen!</i>

Certificate of appreciation

An attractive certificate or display plaque is an appropriate way to honor your pastoral staff members for their service to your church and community. Certificates should be prepared by a calligrapher or someone with stylish handwriting. Plaques should be professionally engraved. Either may be purchased locally or from your denominational publishing house.

Prayer

Select two or three persons to lead the congregation in prayer. One could offer a prayer of adoration to God, the second a prayer of confession and thanksgiving, and another a prayer for specific requests concerning the pastor, church, and the ministry of the Gospel.

Message

Have a lay person present a 15-minute devotional message concerning the way ministers have touched his/her life. The message should be warm, friendly, and expressive of the congregation's appreciation for its ministers. Or invite a guest speaker to address the need for God-called spiritual leaders; the characteristics of a spiritual leader; or ways to build up a pastor for more effective ministry.

Prayer of blessing

At the conclusion of the message, have those who are being honored stand before the congregation. The Church Board, representing all the people, may lay hands on them in a special prayer for God's blessings on their lives and service.

Gifts

If the church has received a love offering and encouraged the giving of special gifts to the pastoral staff, present them at the close of the service or at the fellowship activities which follow. Allow time for those honored to extend their thanks to the congregation. If the gifts are presented as part of the worship service, the worship leader should dismiss the congregation afterwards with a happy, positive benediction.

This planning guide has been adapted for use by the Church of the Nazarene from the Wesleyan Church's resource, *Pastor Appreciation Sunday, A Local Church Planning Guide* . Used by permission. Let us know how you have shown your appreciation to your pastor. Email us at pastor@nazarene.org.