

A Word from our General Presbyter Ed Thompson

Did you know that October is Adopt a Dog Month, Church Library Month, Emotional Intelligence Awareness Month, Feral Hog Month (I don't think Hallmark makes a card for that one), Learn to Bowl Month, and National Go on a Field Trip Month? This was all news to me. One website I visited listed 123 such celebrations for this month, including Squirrel Awareness Month. (I could be wrong, but I don't think we really need that one. I think everyone who lives in West Virginia is aware of squirrels.)

To my surprise, that list did not include Pastor Appreciation Month, although it did include Photographer Appreciation Month. If you want to do something special for your favorite photographer, that's up to you. I would encourage you, though, to show some appreciation to your pastor. Even if you can't quite sneak it in before Halloween, it's still a good thing.

Being a pastor is hard work. It involves more than writing sermons and takes far more than one hour a week. There are meetings for church committees, presbytery committees, civic groups, and local ministerial associations. There are hospital, nursing home and home visits. Pastors often do pre-marital and marriage counseling. Some pastors teach Sunday school classes and lead Bible studies, book studies, and prayer meetings. Other lead youth groups or take part in activities for senior citizens. Some do both. Pastors need to have computer skills and some financial knowledge. Plus, they may be asked to fix the copier, furnace, and air conditioner. (I wish I was kidding, but I have been asked to do all three.)

What can you do for your pastor? You can look them in the eye and say, "Thank you." While it counts if you do that in the greeting line after worship, it will make more of an impression if you stop by their office or say it when you encounter them outside the church. You can send them a thank you card (I'm pretty sure Hallmark does make cards for Pastor Appreciation Month) and include a short note expressing your personal thanks for their ministry. You could include a gift card for a local restaurant, Starbucks or Amazon.

You could ask your pastor how you can help in the church. You could volunteer to do yard work around the building, be a greeter, polish the pews or pick up trash around the parking lot. I suspect every pastor sees some things that need done but nobody ever gets around to doing them.

I realize pastors are not perfect and some pastors are better than others. Nevertheless, I think every pastor I know is working hard and doing the best they can. With perhaps a few, rare exceptions, pastors are overworked and underpaid. Most could be earn a higher salary if they took a secular job. They work for the church because they love the Lord and feel God has called them into the ministry.

While you may be excited that it's National Caramel Month, National Chili Month, or National Cookbook Month, I encourage you to take the time to do something for your pastor during Pastor Appreciation Month. Showing your pastor that you care about them and appreciate what they're doing will encourage them and affirm their call. You can do this any time of the year, of course, but having a special month set aside for this purpose is a good reminder for us all. (And I'm not just saying that because it's National Sarcastic Awareness Month.)