

WAYS TO SUPPORT

A Pastoral Letter for Clergy Appreciation Month from Rev. Darrell Goodwin, Executive Conference Minister and President of the Southern New England Conference, United Church of Christ

Beloved in Christ,

Grace and peace to you in this holy season. Each October, the wider church recognizes Clergy Appreciation Month, a time to pause and celebrate the faithful leaders who guide our communities with prayer, preaching, presence, and care.

The apostle Paul writes, “Now we ask you, [siblings], to acknowledge those who work hard among you, who care for you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other” (1 Thessalonians 5:12–13, NIV). This reminder calls us not only to gratitude but also to practices that sustain those who shepherd us.

Our clergy carry profound responsibilities. They stand with us in moments of joy and in seasons of grief, offering words of hope and gestures of grace. This month offers us a holy invitation to acknowledge their ministry and to encourage practices that keep them renewed.

To the Members and Friends of Our Churches:

The greatest gift you can offer your clergy is not material, but space and support for their rest and renewal. Here are a few ways you might celebrate them this month:

- **HONOR SABBATH:** Support clergy in taking a full day of rest and protect it by minimizing calls, texts, or last-minute requests.
- **ENCOURAGE RENEWAL:** Create space for clergy to attend retreats, continuing education, or spiritual direction without guilt or hesitation.
- **SHARE LEADERSHIP:** Step in to lead a meeting, read scripture, or organize fellowship so that clergy aren’t carrying every detail.
- **LIFT THEM IN PRAYER:** Dedicate time in worship or meetings to pray for their strength, wisdom, and well-being.
- **SPEAK GRATITUDE ALOUD:** Offer a word of thanks publicly in worship or privately in conversation. Hearing appreciation matters.
- **RESPECT BOUNDARIES:** Recognize clergy as whole people with families and lives beyond church and give them permission to step away.
- **CELEBRATE THEIR CALLING:** Mark milestones, an ordination anniversary, years of service, or personal achievements with joy and acknowledgment.