



Dear SPRC chairs,

October is “Pastor Appreciation Month,” a month where we can celebrate and say thank you for the work your pastor does for your congregation and the larger United Methodist Church. In this time of pandemic, pastors have been working extra hours to adapt to needs of the church, learn new forms of technology, and provide pastoral care support in innovative ways, all while navigating their own anxiety, grief, family logistics, and other life changes resulting from COVID.

Traditionally, churches have offered some sort of acknowledgement or act of appreciation for pastors during this month. Often these forms of appreciation come in the form of gift cards, baked goods, and love offerings. While we recognize that we are nearing the end of the official “Pastor Appreciation Month,” we wanted to offer you some creative ways to continue to say thank you to your pastor in the months ahead until we are able to gather together again:

- Offer to make pastoral care visits and calls for the pastor for a week.
- Build into the pastor’s work schedule time to go to medical and mental health appointments to care for one’s self (as personal physical and mental health care often falls low on the list of priorities when caring for others).
- Encourage pastoral growth by engagement in continuing education and professional development.
- Ensure clergy get adequate rest and renewal by giving the pastor(s) a few additional days off to recharge, reminding your pastor(s) that you expect them to take advantage of (and schedule) the vacation time they’ve earned and deserve, and asking them to model weekly Sabbath away from the physical office as well as away from email and phone calls.
- Affirm pastor’s leadership and ministry through kind words and notes of encouragement.
- Encourage pastor to establish regular gatherings with a supportive peer covenant community.
- Support your pastor(s) by directly addressing anyone you are aware of that is generating unwarranted conflict through unfounded, unfair criticism at your pastor(s). This will send the message to your pastor(s) that you support them and you are also willing to have some of those hard conversations on behalf of your pastor(s), especially in these increasingly challenging times.
- Ensure pastors have the financial resources they need by evaluating the salary and housing package being offered to pastors to make sure it is a livable wage in your community.
- Encourage clergy to explore ways to schedule renewal leave each year (and each quadrennium) as referenced in ¶350 in the Book of Discipline.

These recommendations can greatly impact a pastor’s wellbeing. By advocating pastors care for themselves, you are increasing the likelihood for sustained ministry by the pastor to continue to serve your church and the larger United Methodist Church. Thank you for all the ways you support the congregation and your pastor throughout the year. We are grateful for your leadership of the church body and your support of your pastor.

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