



M I C H I G A N  
M I N I S T R Y  
N E T W O R K

SPECIAL ANNIVERSARY &  
CELEBRATION DAYS FOR  
BOARDS OF LOCAL  
CHURCHES

(PLAYBOOK)

Welcome,

I like to provide help for churches in any way possible. One question that I am often asked is “What do we do for pastor appreciation, Lead Pastor tenure anniversary dates, and church anniversary dates? This guide is designed to answer as many of those questions as possible. Please use what is usable and discard what is discardable!

May God bless your every step,

Aaron Hlavin  
Assemblies of God  
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Superintendent

# CREATING A CULTURE OF HONOR AND CELEBRATION

HOW TO TRULY CELEBRATE DAYS WORTHY OF CELEBRATING

## Let's get started

Honor is a lost practice in our current culture. We used to willingly honor people who demonstrated exemplary character, actions, and sacrificial service. Additionally, we used to possess a more pronounced honor for individuals who serve in leadership positions.

Today we tend to offer honor primarily for what a person does for us as individuals, and it is usually temporary. We have a natural distrust for others and their reasons/motives for what they do. This has led to a culture that has become increasingly inward-focused and honor-deficient. **Let that not be true in your church!**

As Christians, we are people of hope. We are people who have been rescued from our sins, set free to live for Jesus and to receive a reward of heaven someday.

*Romans 15:1-6,13*

*"We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves.<sup>2</sup> Each of us should please our neighbors for their good, to build them up. <sup>3</sup> For even Christ did not please himself but, as it is written: "The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me."<sup>4</sup> For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope. <sup>5</sup> May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, <sup>6</sup> so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>13</sup> May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." (NIV)*

Because God has done so much, we should live in appreciation for the blessings He has given us through our leaders in our churches.

To honor someone is to treat them with regard and respect. We should do this in our daily lives, but especially with those in our church. There are several ways we can accomplish this:

- Through living lives Godly lives
- Through regular encouragement
- Through faithfulness
- Through using our God-given gifts to advance His kingdom.
- Through celebration!

Let's talk **celebration** for a moment!

How does a church become a celebrating church? Why do celebration moments? What is the impact of these moments?

First, a church becomes a celebrating church...by celebrating. What should we celebrate...everything that is healthy! Celebrating healthy and God moments and honorable people is part of what God wants us to do. The more we celebrate, the more we act like our creator.

In the creation story found in Genesis, God pauses at the end of the day to pounce that what He created was "Good". This was more than a statement of the accomplishment of creation, but one to pause and celebrate what was created. God essentially created a world that can create more new things. People, plants, and animals can all create beyond the initial moment of creation. Part of what we are to create beyond the physical is the spirit demonstrated by God or looking around and saying: "it is good". This results in us following the pattern of God, taking a moment, and celebrating as well.

The Bible adds to this idea of celebration.

Psalm 118:24

"This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. (ESV)

Exodus 23:14

"Three times a year you are to celebrate a festival to me." (ESV)

Ecclesiastes 3:4

"A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance" (ESV)

We learn several things from these verses:

1. **Every celebration should lead to honoring God.** When we celebrate people and churches, ultimately, we are celebrating the God who created them both.
2. **Regular, rejoicing and gladness are a part of God's plan.** When we worship, we are celebrating the majesty and grandness of who God is. Celebrating God and His creative accomplishments through humanity is part of this.
3. **There is a time for celebration** (laughter and dancing). Life is supposed to be lived, not survived. Celebrating reminds us of what is right in the world and connects us to gratitude, joy, and peace that we need to face in times of grief, pain, and sorrow.

**Summary:** Celebration is an essential part of our lives, designed by God!

#### **Celebration essentials to remember:**

1. **The leader of the church sets the culture for celebration.** A church will not naturally celebrate beyond the leader's desire to do so.
2. **Parties and celebrations are fun.** Many churches have lost the practice of FUN. Most of the fun that happens in individual lives happens outside of the church. We need to make room for the deep spiritual moments of the Spirit, but also make room for simple, intentional, pure fun full of laughter.
3. **Celebrating others creates an outward focus for your church.** Telling the stories of people gives us a glimpse of the creative nature of God. It helps us to know God more fully by experiencing other aspects of God through His human creation made in His image.
4. **A church that celebrates well, gains momentum, and are exciting places to be at.** People want to attend churches that are positive and exciting places to be at. Celebrating healthy things creates a culture of joy.

# PASTOR APPRECIATION

HOW TO HONOR ALL OF YOUR PASTORS EACH YEAR

## **Christmas/Pastor Appreciation Gift**

October is the recognized pastor appreciation month, however, most churches either celebrate one specific Sunday in October or do so during the Christmas season. No matter when this occurs in your church structure, it is a small way to make a BIG impact on the hearts of your pastoral family. They deserve to be celebrated, as the Apostle Paul said:

1 Timothy 5:17-18

*“The elders who are good leaders should be considered worthy of an ample honorarium, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, ‘Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain and, the worker is worthy of his wages’” (HCSB).*

1 Timothy 5:17

“The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.” (NIV)

A Pastor is a Shepherd who holds the responsibility for caring, feeding and rescuing the sheep that have wandered from the fold, leading the sheep in green pastures, correcting them when they get off the path, and protecting the flock.

They teach, train, motivate, and inspire us to love God with our whole being, be His fully devoted followers, and reach our world with the Gospel.

This is a high calling – to be taken seriously

2 Timothy 4:2

“Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction.” (NIV)

1 Peter 5:2

“Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve;” (NIV)

Shepherds not only watch because they must, but because they are willing to. Out of an attitude of service and for the sake of God's call. Not for selfish gain, but for **SELFLESS SERVING!**

A pastor doesn't seek honor but is worthy of receiving it. We do not have to celebrate our pastor, but rather we GET TO! The Bible says:

Proverbs 27:2

"Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; someone else, and not your own lips." (NIV)

Proverbs 11:25

"<sup>25</sup>A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed." (NIV)

That is one trait of a Godly Christian, which is to not be focused on our own needs and miss the celebration of those around us. Days like pastor appreciation refresh the heart of a pastor and their spouse.

Whatever you do to honor your pastor, it should include two main elements; a gift that encourages the heart and a financial gift that blesses. Here are some thoughts to consider for appreciating your pastoral team:

- Take initiative as a board. Do not make the pastor ask for, plan or initiate pastor appreciation. That is awkward and usually results in it not occurring at all.
- Be prepared, planned, and purposeful
- Involve as many people as possible (involve the whole church)
- Be encouraging (cards of encouragement from members)
- Do presentations of gifts/cards with excellence (honor spouses as well)
- Make sure any gifts are what they would want
- Make sure the gift does not create obligations of their time with you or others.
- Ask the church members to give a card to the pastor (through the offering or a designated box). Encourage them to write some nice, encouraging, and personal words to each pastor.
- Ask the church members to give a monetary gift to the pastors. Either in the card or through contributing a designated amount through the offering.
- Instead of asking the church members to give monetarily, a board could give an agreed-upon monetary amount from the general fund.
- The church could host a party after service with food, fun, fellowship, and some nice words of encouragement for the pastor(s).

# CELEBRATING THE LEAD PASTOR'S ANNIVERSARIES/RETIREMENT

## HOW TO CELEBRATE YOUR PASTOR WITH EXCELLENCE

Longevity is a diminishing experience within a local church. When a church can find this gift within the life of a Lead Pastor, this should be celebrated. The average stay for a pastor has been greatly declining for years. The reasons why are vast and significant, however, the reasons to stay for the long haul are equally vast and significant. If your pastor has been leading the church for 10-40 years, they are worthy of celebrating.

What are some common celebration milestones that are celebrated? Usually, the anniversaries churches celebrate are for the 10, 20, 30, or 40 years of serving. Additionally, pastors do retire as well. Many of the same ideas would be appropriate for a retirement celebration as well.

So, what are some normal suggestions for celebrating? Glad you asked! These are just a list of possibilities to consider. The financial amount of gifts given should increase as the decades of service increase as well. **NOTE:** a church can only do what it can afford to do, so do not feel under any pressure. Anything you do with excellence is a blessing to your pastors.

1. **Give your pastor a Sunday off.** Invite the Assemblies of God Network Leadership to come and preach that Sunday. We will preach a message of encouragement to the church and the pastor's heart. The Network Leadership will bring a commemorative plaque to honor the day.
2. **Give your pastor a display piece.** The church may want to get a presentation piece that is not a plaque. The Network Office can guide you to companies that can produce this.
3. **Give your pastor and his/her family a weekend getaway or give them a monetary gift from the general fund.** Give them the gift to choose a vacation for themselves. Give them visa gift cards with enough for them to go on a nice weekend vacation. Consider food, travel, overnight accommodations, and fun money expenses. **NOTE:** if your church's general fund does not have enough money to do this, consider asking the church members to contribute (keep it a secret from the pastor) to raise funds for this.



4. **Provide gifts for his wife and children.** Way too often the pastor's family is left out of the celebration. Do something for the spouse and kids as well.
5. **Get the whole church engaged.** The church should host a party after service with food, fun, fellowship, and some nice words of encouragement for the pastor(s).
6. **Ask the church members to give a card to the pastor** (through the offering or a designated box). Encourage them to write some nice, encouraging, and personal words to each pastor.
7. **Involve video greetings from former staff.** Ask former staff, that are in good standing, to send a 1 min video celebrating the pastors' years of ministry. Give them specific instructions on the camera angle (horizontal, vertical) and what you are hoping they will focus on.
8. **Update and upgrade his office.** Give a budget for an office upgrade of new paint, carpet, lighting, and furniture. This would be a gift that the pastor may never ask for but may desire to have completed.
9. **Provide a framed quote.** Every pastor has phrases that become endearing to a church. Frame that in a nice, graphically modern image, and present it to them.
10. **Do a church-wide thank you video from your church families.** Take a few minutes, record a short video greeting and "thank you," and upload it to a designated location.
11. **Invest in your pastor's hobby.** If your pastor has a known hobby, encourage that in a way that they would need and want.
12. **Do some practical small things.** Ideas could include:
  - Detailing the pastor's vehicle (Including cleaning, filling the gas tank, and oil changed)
  - Gas cards
  - Give restaurant Gift cards
13. **Give an extra week of vacation.** Just a little thing that can be very meaningful.

# CELEBRATING THE CHURCH'S ANNIVERSARY

## HOW TO CELEBRATE YOUR CHURCH HISTORY WITH EXCELLENCE

Every church has a starting point. Your church began with a dream in the heart of a pastor and heroic people who joined to begin a new work, in a new location, to reach people who needed a relationship with Jesus.

What these people began has progressed to who they are today. You may not know the names who started the church, nor the people who have faithfully supported the church over the decades of your church's existence, but you are experiencing the result of their commitment.

Celebrating the history of your church honors the people in your church's history, but most importantly it honors the faithfulness of God through time. Celebrating your church's longevity is celebrating the goodness of God.

What are some common celebration milestones that are celebrated?

Usually, the anniversaries a church celebrates are for the following:

- 5 years in existence – This is usually a milestone marker of when a church plant sort of arrives as a more established church. You made it.
- 25 years in existence –
- 50 years in existence –
- 75 years in existence –
- 100 years in existence -

Some thoughts on Anniversary Celebrations

1. The number of the year anniversary determines the significance of the celebration.
2. Promote these days well.
3. Make these moments a big deal.
  - Share history – share all pertinent information about how, when, and with whom the church was started with.
  - Show History (pictures/video) – Show pictures and historical content with the church.
  - Tell stories of life change – Make sure there are some stories of real people and how God has changed their life through your church.

4. Start planning 6-7 months out.
  - What is the vision for the day/night?
  - Start by asking what are we wanting to focus on celebrating?
  - Who needs to be on the planning team?
5. Host your celebration in your church building. This brings the past into your present and allows you to save resources that can be used for the ceremony.
6. Get the whole church engaged. Do something that involves the church such as: giving a small gift or hosting an after-service party with cake and or food.
7. Invite those who used to pastor, attend to come.
8. Reach out as far in advance to invite a Network Official to come and share or be a part of the service should you desire that. You can do so, by calling 810-220-8700. **NOTE:** The Network Superintendent and Secretary-Treasurers schedule their services very far out. The earlier you can reach out the better. Even if you do not desire to have a Network Official attend, we would still love to send a letter and plaque commemorating this milestone.
9. Use this as an opportunity to celebrate history as well as cast a vision for what lies ahead. Connecting the past with the present can assist the leadership in moving toward the future with excitement and confidence.