



Dr. Bob Lee, Senior Pastor
October 14, 2020

Dear Church Family,

In the October 12th issue of *Advance Notice*, the online newsletter of the Baptist General Association of Virginia (BGAV), Dr. Ken Kessler, BGAV Coaching Network Director, wrote an insightful article entitled, “Celebrate Your Pastors This Fall During Pastor Appreciation Month.” I am grateful for this word of encouragement and I thought that it would be a guide for our prayers as we uplift women and men who serve in ministry at HRBC and beyond. The following is a copy of the article:

In 2019, the Barna Research organization along with Pepperdine University introduced a new study called “The State of Pastors.” In this resource, they provide us a research consistency across denominations about how pastors and associate pastors are navigating life and leadership in this new decade. I cannot go into all the details of the report in a writing like this one, but there were a few alarming statistics:

- Pastors are getting older. The median age of pastors has increased from 44 to 54 over the last 25 years.
- Nearly 43% of pastors are at high or medium relational risk, whether they are experiencing challenges in their marriage, family, friendships, or other close relationships.
- Only one in five pastors has much influence in their community, and around 21% believe pastors are not a credible sense of wisdom.

And then in 2020, a pandemic hit that has shaken our confidence and traditions to the core. Your pastors’ belief in God has not changed, but the awareness of how to assist church members in this “new normal” has created some self-doubt for anyone in vocational ministry.

So, October is a great opportunity to assist your pastor and associates to a new level of appreciation. Pastor Appreciation Month is here. Scripture reminds us that one of the key things we do as a community of faith is honor,

respect, and build up the spiritual leadership of our congregation. (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13, Hebrews 13:17, 1 Timothy 5:17, Ephesians 4:11-12)

So here are some simple ways you could lead the cheers for your pastors and/or associates:

A – Allow them a few extra days away from the church field during this fall or winter. This pandemic has been hard on all of us. Give them a few extra days beyond their vacation time to say thank you.

P – Pause at a designated time each week as a congregation to say a prayer of thanks and a prayer for energy and sustenance for each pastor and/or associate.

P – Plan a drive-by celebration during this pandemic time where people of the church can deliver a card and gifts to the pastor and family at their home. Create a planned time for this drive-by so they can stand outside only for a short period of time.

R – Remember special family events in their life like birthdays and anniversaries. Give them reasons to celebrate through note cards and messages on these special days. You like to be pampered on your special day! Pamper them on theirs!

E – Elevate the respect for them by honoring their commitment to you. Find ways to be positive and encouraging rather than negative and defeating. Our politicians only showcase the negative right now, and unfortunately, that model has created a negative spirit in many of us. Stop it! Realize it takes anywhere from three to five positive messages to overcome one negative one.

C – Create a thriving environment for the pastor by providing a leadership coach for her or him for six months. Twelve conversations with a trained leadership coach (two times a month) can provide a great thinking environment for new possibilities and God's blessings.

I – Invest in a learning plan for the pastors to upgrade their skills and competencies in this new world. None of us have been prepared through educational experiences for this type of cultural environment. Expect them to share their learning with you. Be patient as they learn and share their insights with you. Be open yourself to the new adaptive learning this world brings.

A – Affirm their gifts and strengths for the mission and ministry of your congregation. Even Jesus would have a hard time making everyone happy in our congregations today. Instead of faulting all the things your pastor or associates cannot do, have a Celebration Sunday and affirm the gifts God has given to lead you! One church I know provided a “type of candy bar or piece of fruit” to each pastor or associate for each gift they affirmed. For example, for an associate in a church on their Celebration Day, the church members brought an “apple” for their teaching gifts, a “Baby Ruth” for their constant “home runs” in pastoral care, etc. Be creative in your celebration.

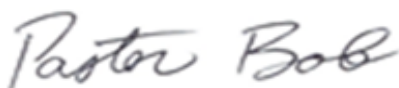
T – Take the time to say thank you even for the simplest things – thank you for your call last week, thank you for your teaching last month, thank you for the resource you gave me to assist me, thank you for talking to my son. You do not have to wait until October to say thank you! Do it all year instead of those horrible messages that talk about what they did not do!

E – Elevate your commitment to our Lord and His church. One of your greatest ways to express your appreciation is to take seriously your call to serve as a disciple of our Lord. In many churches, people only want to hire people to solve their problems or want to hand a need off to the pastor or associate. If you see a need, pray how God may be asking you to fulfill that need or pray that God will raise up someone to take care of that ministry need. Do not put your expectation onto your pastor or associate. That extra burden does not show appreciation. It brings an unrealistic expectation. Remember 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4 and Romans 12 – we have been given the gifts for the task of ministry. God has given their leadership to equip you to do it, not do it for you!

I know you can find other creative ways to show appreciation. These days of pandemic turmoil and political unrest have created a great need for positive affirmation. Find ways to share it during this month of October and all through the year!

Thank you for the ways in which you appreciate and encourage us!

God’s blessings,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Pastor Bob".

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