

Three simple ways to appreciate your associate pastor

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Associate pastors, youth ministers, and other staff ministers often do the unglamorous jobs of ministry without much recognition. Associates have a calling and a title, but they often do not preach, must attend church meetings, and juggle several responsibilities which may be unrelated to their job description. It can be a thankless job.

Senior pastors and church leadership need to recognize the special nature and challenges of associates. They spend many hours doing unappreciated jobs that senior pastors would rather not do: long retreat weekends, spending time with youth, and responding to congregant complaints when the senior pastor is not around. Churches will be better served if they appreciate and recognize their associate minister's work.

Since associates are often undercompensated to begin with, senior pastors and church leadership can show appreciation through simple actions. Recognizing their standing and place in the church will enable an associate's longevity and self-esteem. Here's how you can show your appreciation:

Appreciation through pulpit time. Many senior pastors guard their pulpit as if they were guarding Fort Knox. Let go! Give your associate an opportunity to preach. Some senior pastors worry that handing over the pulpit may lead to parishioners liking the associate more. Nelson Mandela once said, "It is better to lead from behind and to put others in front, especially when you celebrate victory when nice things occur. You take the front line when there is danger. Then people will appreciate your leadership." Congregations will see a senior pastor's strong leadership by allowing associates to take center stage. It shows that the senior has good skills in developing talented leaders by letting the associate take center stage for a short while.

Appreciation through quality time with the senior pastor. It's easy for the senior pastor to go through their week and forget to meet or spend time with the

associate. Senior pastors have to worry about budgets, administration, church meetings, pastoral calls, and sermon preparation. However, they should be sure to carve out quality time with associates. Taking associates to lunch, going to conferences together, or any time that can be spent together away from church will lead to greater trust and mutual appreciation.

Appreciation through loyalty. Church folk may think loyalty goes up the chain of command but it also goes down. If an associate makes a mistake, defend the associate. Then, in private, talk to the associate about what happened and provide encouragement. Being loyal to an associate pastor means publicly thanking and backing up the associate's work in ministry. Duffy Robbins, youth ministry guru, once said, "If you are not making mistakes in ministry you are not trying hard enough." Loyalty is about preserving relationship over failures and celebrating successes.

Aside from the obvious pay raise, these three simple acts of appreciation will go a long way in the eye of your associate and will bless your church's ministry. Building confidence through appreciation will make for healthy church staff dynamics and will aid an associate's work as a fellow minister.

Originally posted at [Rudnick's blog](#)