

How to Care for Your New Senior Pastor

*Being a partner in his flourishing by blessing,
edifying, and encouraging*

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1. Introduce yourself

“Hi pastor, we are Mike and Janice Sharrett and we’ve been at Wallace for about three years. We look forward to getting to know you better in the months to come. And oh, by the way, we noticed you spent time in Atlanta. Our daughter lives there.” Use your spouse’s name in that conversation so he hears it again.

As you continue to interact with him and his wife, use your name, assuming he hasn’t learned it yet. Identify yourself on texts and email (if your address doesn’t clearly identify you).

As you interact with him, use his name. If you aren’t sure what to call him, ask him what he prefers to be called. (In Romans 16, Paul names 27 different individuals.)

You may need to go out of your way to introduce yourself to his wife. Give her a chance to settle in and choose where she wants to engage in the church’s ministries.

2. Respect constraints of circumstances

After a corporate gathering, be sensitive to other’s desire to greet him. Resist engaging in long conversations; keep it brief. Pastors typically want to greet as many people as possible on a Sunday morning. If you need a lengthier interaction, ask for an appointment to see him: “I will email you to set it up.”

If you give him a book (put your name on it), have reasonable expectations about him reading it.

3. Prayer

Spiritual, physical, emotional, relational, financial, familial, and mental well-being.

Colossians 4:2-Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. ³ At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison— ⁴ that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak.

2 Thessalonians 3:1-Finally, brothers, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored, as happened among you, ² and that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men. For not all have faith.

Romans 15:30-I appeal to you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf, ³¹ that I may be delivered from the unbelievers in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, ³² so that by God's will I may come to you with joy and be refreshed (used four other times by Paul) in your company. ³³ May the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

(Lord, let me be a source of refreshment to him and his family.)

4. Share

A note of encouragement, specifically what is helpful in his teaching. A token of appreciation (material things). (Don't forget others who teach!)

Galatians 6:6~Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches.

All good things includes what you are learning in your personal reading of God's Word. The pastor is not your sole source of spiritual enrichment; he helps you nourish yourself.

5. Submit

Do self-assessment: Am I a source of groaning or joy? Where might I be resistant to their oversight?

1 Peter 5:5~Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders.

Hebrews 13:17~Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

Engage them with humility and self-scrutiny (your log, their speck) if you find yourself critical of their oversight. Distinguish between clarifications or questions specially for him versus those better directed to the session or deacons.

6. Respect and Esteem

Respect is grounded in their office; don't revere or put on a pedestal. They are your servant not your superior.

1 Thessalonians 5:12~We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, ¹³ and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work...

Esteem them for their work. Their work should be evident, though not all of it is. Know that they are a fellow-struggler against indwelling sin (Hebrews 5:2 He (the priest) can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness).

NOTE: Here we transition from specific ways you bless your pastor directly to more general ways you bless him indirectly, by being a healthy member of the congregation.

7. One-anothering

Every pastor wants a flock which practices and excels at one-anothering.

1 Thessalonians 5:13b-Be at peace among yourselves. ¹⁴ And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the faint-hearted, help the weak, be patient with them all. ¹⁵ See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone.

John 15:12-“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³ Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.”

8. Love the truth and live it out

Don't be satisfied with just getting good teaching; aim to put that teaching into practice. Love the truth and live it. Receive correction: *...those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you...*

3 John 4-I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.

Acts 2:42-And they devoted themselves to the Apostle's teaching...

9. Model godliness

1 Thessalonians 5:16-*Rejoice always,*¹⁷ *pray without ceasing,*¹⁸ *give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*¹⁹ *Do not quench the Spirit.*²⁰ *Do not despise prophecies,*²¹ *but test everything; hold fast what is good.*²² *Abstain from every form of evil.*

10. Model faithful stewardship

2 Corinthians 8:3-*For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord,*⁴ *begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints—*⁵ *and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us.*

1 Timothy 5:18-*For the Scripture says, “You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain,” and, “The laborer deserves his wages.”*

11. Use your gifts

Their specific calling as shepherds and teachers, (is) ... ¹² *to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ...* (Ephesians 4:11b–12)

Ephesians 4:7-But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. ⁸ Therefore it says, "When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men."

Romans 12:6-Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; ⁷ if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; ⁸ the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

12. Model personal evangelism

1 Thessalonians 1:8-For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything.

13. Humble yourselves

Attitude: I exist to serve (clothed with servant's apron) others with relational grace.

1 Peter 5:5~Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”⁶ Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you...

14. Relish the gospel

Ephesians 4:1~I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ² with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love...

15. Pursue disagreements with charity

Galatians 5:13-For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. ¹⁴ For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” ¹⁵ But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another... ²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

Philippians 4:2-I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord. ³ Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women, who have labored side by side with me in the gospel...

16. Preserve unity

Ephesians 4:3-...eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

17. Speak the truth

Ephesians 4:15-Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ...

18. Build up others in love

Ephesians 4:16~...from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

19. Speak very judiciously about others in the body

1 Timothy 5:13-Besides that, they learn to be idlers, going about from house to house, and not only idlers, but also gossips and busybodies, saying what they should not.

20. Practicalities

- a) Show interest in his welfare “How are you encouraged?”
- b) Except for emergencies, let him disengage on his day off.
- c) Don’t criticize via email. Ask to speak with him, preferably in person. Lead with questions not accusations. Assume you don’t know everything. Don’t leave anonymous notes of complaint/criticism.
- d) Let him make mistakes. Don’t expect perfection. Take him meals instead!