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A Word of Appreciation

I do not know how October came to be “Pastor Appreciation Month,” but I am happy for it.

First, let me reveal my bias towards pastors. My father was a pastor. My mother’s father was a pastor. I entered pastoral ministry as a seminary student in 1969 and retired from that role in 2008 — 39 years. From 2008 through 2012, I served the American Baptist Ministers Council where my role focused almost entirely on ministerial leaders. From 2012 until now, I have worked with Interim Pastors and the churches they serve; and since January of this year, I have served as your Interim Executive Minister. In short, pastoral ministry has been my life, and I pretend no lack of bias in my appreciation for the call.

Allow me a few observations. Through the years, I have met a handful of persons in pastoral ministry who I wished would find other jobs. Either because of aptitudes that do not fit the call or because of a skewered set of ethics or morality, I sincerely wish that they had searched other arenas to earn their living.

On the other hand, I have met a few genuine stars, men and women whose skill set and commitment to ministry have led them to make enormous contributions to the life of the church and the work of God’s Kingdom. I admire and appreciate them, but there have only been a few real “Stars.”

Mostly I have served with thousands of faithful men and women who have been extraordinarily faithful and fruitful in the places where God has called them to serve. Every day they have gotten up to do the work set before them; and they have done so with integrity and faithfulness, sometimes in very difficult circumstances. While I deeply appreciate the “Stars,” it is also these men and women, who serve without significant fanfare, whom I wish to celebrate in this article.

To this cadre of faithful pastoral leaders, though you do not hear it often enough, I want to anticipate the words that you will certainly hear from our Master some day, “Well done, good and faithful servants.”

For sermons carefully prepared and well delivered, well done.
For prayers offered that open souls to the presence of God, well done.
For teaching the scriptures in all of their depth and complexity, well done.
For hours spent in hospital rooms reminding patients of the love of God, well done.
For preparing kind and caring funeral services, well done.
For shepherding men and women into new seasons of marital life, well done.
For loving your spouse and raising children amidst sometimes unreal expectations, well done.
For leading congregations into new seasons of faithful service, well done.
For preaching the gospel, by word and deed, faithfully in every season, well done.
Mostly, for being the person God created you to become, well done.
Well done good and faithful servants.
May God bless you and keep you and make His face to shine upon you.