

# QuietWaters

C O M P A S S

October 2009, Volume 14, Number 2



## The Spirit's Tracks Through Human Hearts

Guilt and Shame

The Year of the Clergy 2010

Clergy Appreciation Month

R E N E W I N G C H R I S T I A N L E A D E R S



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## 4 | The Spirit's Tracks Through Human Hearts

*by Ron Nydam*

## 10 | The Year of the Clergy 2010— Celebration Suggestions

*by Focus on the Family*

## 14 | Should We Promote Clergy Appreciation Month

*by Jim Schlottman*

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# GUILT and SHAME

from the Director *Jim Schlottman*



As I listened to Dr. Ron Nydam speak to the crowd that assembled

for the twenty-fifth celebration of Pastoral Counseling for Denver, I was struck by how his comments related to my experiences. He said, "Guilt and shame for sin are no longer a problem, even if they should be." It is what I've been sensing in my conversations with pastors and spouses who are considering coming to Quiet Waters Ministries for our Leadership Counseling Intensives.

Because of its relevance to our ministry, I knew that we needed Dr. Nydam's presentation to become an article in our *Compass* magazine.

In his presentation, and now in his article in this issue, Dr. Nydam states, "Today's spiritual problem is about separation, disconnection, isolation, or what I call 'compromised attachment'." Many with whom I speak don't feel like they matter to God. An often-repeated phrase is: "I'm not sure I'm called to ministry anymore." Even if they have failed in some way, it is not the guilt that causes the most pain, but the disconnection from God that they are feeling most.

If you're feeling disconnected from God today, don't try on your own to get reconnected. Get help from a

friend, visit a retreat center that provides spiritual retreats, or let Quiet Water help.

That feeling of disconnection is the result, in a small part, of pastors' feeling that they don't matter to their congregations. I want to help with reconnection by helping congregations remember the words in 1 Timothy 5:17—"The elders (pastors) who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching."

So in this issue I'm encouraging you to not only celebrate October as Clergy Appreciation Month, but to also consider celebrating your pastor throughout 2010. I have taken it upon myself to declare 2010 at "The Year of the Clergy. I'm praying that many will take my suggestions and put it into action.

Most of you who are reading this *Compass* magazine are pastors. However, I'm trusting that you will see to it that this issue gets into the hands of the leaders of your churches. Maybe just have it lying around during elder meetings and the like. If you are a lay leader, please take action today to encourage your pastor. ■



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# The Spirit's Tracks Through Human Hearts

by Ron Nydam

*This article is taken from a presentation given to those attending the 25th anniversary celebration for Pastoral Counseling for Denver which was founded by Dr. Nydam.*

Caring conversations between counselors and counselees, where both have given witness, we will call “Spirit tracks” in the very human hearts of people. This is one way to think about the ministry of pastoral counseling and has to do with the ways we may notice how the Holy Spirit has moved in human hearts to create faith, to ruffle the waters, to change attitudes, to question opinions, to give up biases, to let go of judgmentalness, to confront condemnations of self and others, to sometimes rewrite our understandings of God and our Christian faith, and, yes, perhaps most important, to facilitate forgiveness.

Looking back over the years of counseling I’ve done, I’ve come to believe that most of our counseling ministries are about forgiveness. What’s the truth? We are broken people in a broken world, often wounded by life’s many tragedies,

Looking back over the years of counseling I’ve done, I’ve come to believe that most of our counseling ministries are about forgiveness. What’s the truth? We are broken people in a broken world, often wounded by life’s many tragedies, and we mend best by forgiving, by removing our boots off the throats of those who have hurt us. Then we are free! There are so many ways in which the Holy Spirit makes tracks. So, there is a lot to thank God for tonight.

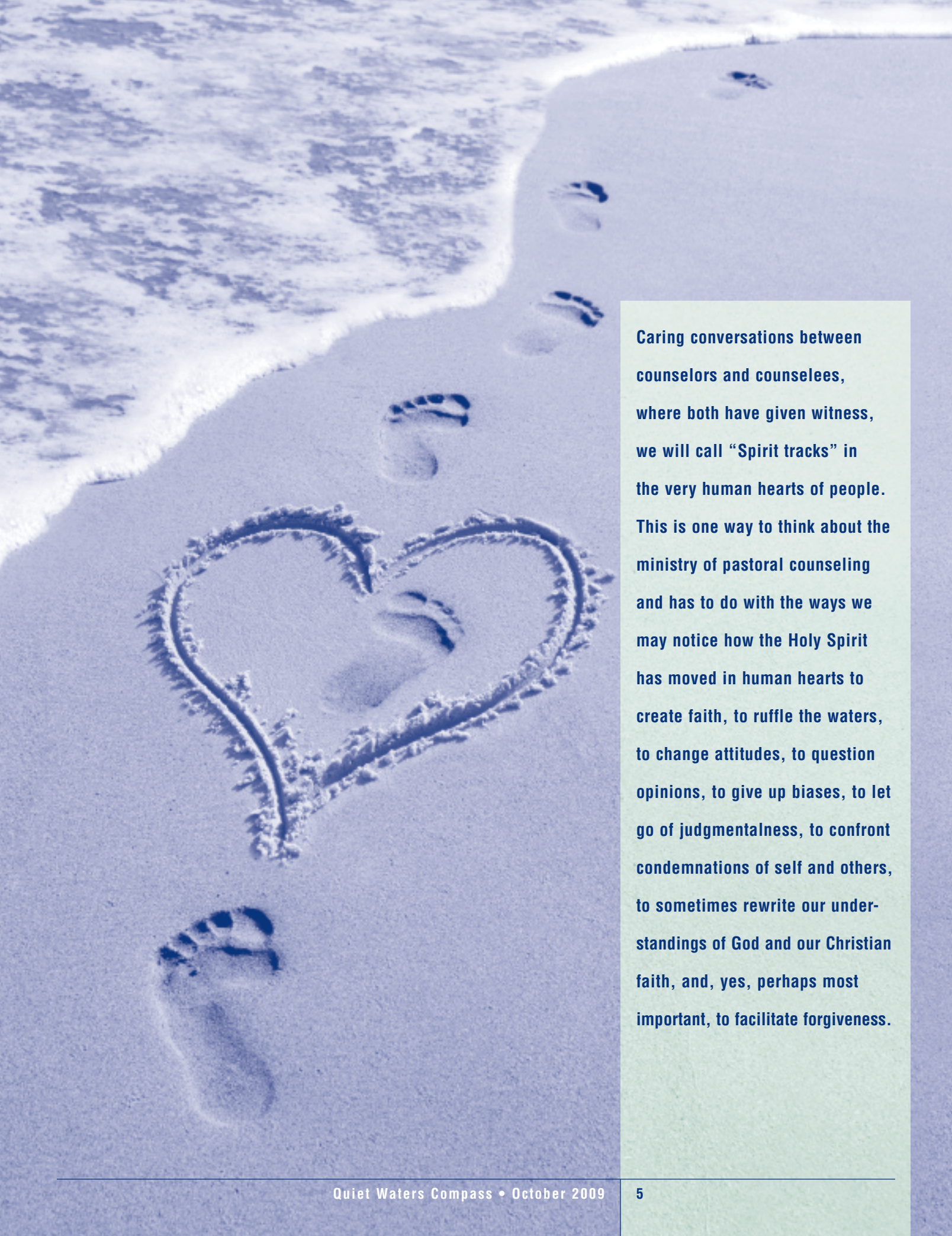
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Let me say, at the outset, that Spirit tracks today are different from what they were twenty-five years ago. Let me explain. Two weeks ago I participated in the installation of Rev. Ken Vander Horst at New Life Church in Grand Junction. Well, I got to know his parents who were there for the occasion. They were post World War II immigrants to Canada. Neither his mother nor his father ever partook of Holy Communion, never, not once in their lifetimes. Neither felt worthy to take the bread and the wine, the body and the blood of Christ. And Ken remembered hearing an awful thing from the pulpit, that we are all but “snot in the nostrils of God.” Ouch! I do remember years ago counselees reporting how poorly they saw themselves, how unworthy they felt, self-esteem pretty much shot, yes, even suicidal because maybe they did

*(Continued on page 6)*





Caring conversations between counselors and counselees, where both have given witness, we will call “Spirit tracks” in the very human hearts of people. This is one way to think about the ministry of pastoral counseling and has to do with the ways we may notice how the Holy Spirit has moved in human hearts to create faith, to ruffle the waters, to change attitudes, to question opinions, to give up biases, to let go of judgmentalness, to confront condemnations of self and others, to sometimes rewrite our understandings of God and our Christian faith, and, yes, perhaps most important, to facilitate forgiveness.

not deserve to live. Guilt for sin and corresponding shame for being a sinner were primary spiritual problems. And then of course Christian faith was the antidote in terms of a clear but narrow understanding of atonement—that Jesus died so that we don't have to, “by his stripes we are healed,” that his shed blood saves ours, that his death paid the price, that our value was redeemed. We would be called to repentance and confession and know forgiveness. Oh to be free of guilt and shame! That was the great benefit of Christian faith for hundreds of years!

Back in 1936 Richard Cabot wrote one of the first modern texts for the ministry of pastoral care and counsel in which he made plain that the primary pastoral task was to get people right with God by looking at what they had done wrong. Confession was good for the soul. There are those who follow that tradition of thought today with a brand of so-called nouthetic counseling.

Then in the eighties we still heard the Ten Commandments every Sunday morning as part of our worship of God. We were called to awareness of sin so it could be forgiven. With confession came a cleansing of the soul. The Spirit's tracks were there in places where the stain of sin was washed away. But, today, the commandments have fallen off of

**Today the tracks of the Spirit look different because we are moving away from offering help with inner neurotic conflict about guilt and shame and instead are now seeking to heal what are really disorders of character, a much more difficult pastoral therapeutic task. Unless the Spirit moves, sorrow for sin is missing today. People don't feel guilty; they feel empty.**

our liturgical radar. We seldom hear the Ten Commandments in our services of worship (not a complaint, simply an observation). Why? I believe it's because today the spiritual challenges are different. Guilt and shame for sin are no longer a problem, even if they should be. For the last several years I have been suggesting that guilt is an achievement more than a problem, a spiritual step forward. Hardly “snot in the nostrils of God,” today many youth see themselves as the “apples of God's eye” but, for some, in rather troublesome, highly entitled, self-centered ways. Let me explain.

Recently I was consulted about incidents of sinful behavior on the part of some Christian college students. They knew the rules of the road for their outdoor summer ministry, but nonetheless some were caught several times drinking and then lying about it to save face. In one instance this involved a car accident; in another a student was arrested and sent home. Now these students would be in a Bible study one night and then be drinking illegally the next night . . . as if they had multiple selves to employ, depending on whom they were with. In conversations about their behavior, there was no guilt for sin or real shame for being a sinner, only a sense of embarrassment. One young lady who was sent home because she was arrested stated that, no, she did not feel bad about what she did; she felt bad that other people judged her. It was about image, not about sin. Her father called and complained about her dismissal: “If you kick her out, you might affect her scholarship chances for the coming year.” It was about money, not about sin.

Today the tracks of the Spirit look different because we are moving away from offering help with inner neurotic conflict about guilt and shame and instead are now seeking to heal what are really disorders of character, a much more difficult pastoral therapeutic task. Unless the Spirit moves, sorrow for sin is missing today. People don't feel guilty; they feel empty.



The Ten Commandments don't matter if you don't feel like you matter to God. When people do not feel important, young or older, understandably they create their own bubbles of connection and meaning, even if these bubbles are just on the Internet. They need to know they are significant to people before they will feel bad or guilty about disappointing them.

This is not simply about immaturity, something young people will outgrow. Then the spiritual prognosis would be better. This is about character flaw. Today's spiritual problem is about separation, disconnection, isolation, or what I call "compromised attachment." The Ten Commandments don't matter if you don't feel like you matter to God. When people do not feel important, young or older, understandably they create their own bubbles of connection and meaning,

even if these bubbles are just on the Internet. They need to know they are significant to people before they will feel bad or guilty about disappointing them. No wonder a seminary student said some years ago to Professor John Stek (who just died this past June), "I don't know if I can learn Hebrew from you unless I know that you love me." Well he meant it. Parents, pastors, teachers, and, yes, counselors are no longer authority figures in this culture of narcissistic self-interest.

We are all optional unless we stretch a long ways creating relationships. The insult to our own narcissism is that we have to prove ourselves almost every day. So the Spirit's tracks look different now. They are much less about relief from guilt and sins washed away and much more about closeness and connection, relief from loneliness, places in the heart that are warmed by two sitting together. Here are the Spirit's deeper impressions in hearts not so much in search of atonement for sin, but looking more for abundance in life.

Another comment about these Spirit tracks. I've wondered for years why so many people are so fearful of counseling. I have observed much more suspicion of psychology than I've ever seen of biology or maybe sociology or else economics, other areas of endeavor where we pursue our learning. And, yes, I've heard as you have that psychology is a poor

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substitute for healthy faith. If you believe in God and love God . . . you have what you need (which is by the way especially difficult when God seems to be the monster). I do remember that some early approaches to psychotherapy were pretty wild and frightening, unguided and primal, what one of my supervisors in Chicago called "walking around in another's unconscious in hobnail boots." Certainly we must take care to do no harm, to closely guard the preciousness of the human heart.

*(Continued on page 8)*

I think that the Spirit's tracks are hard to see if you are afraid to be human. I really believe that this is the greatest reason for the great resistance to both closeness to God and closeness to a therapist, the fear of being human.

Yes, but still why the fear of counseling? I think that the Spirit's tracks are hard to see if you are afraid to be human. I really believe that this is the greatest reason for the great resistance to both closeness to God and closeness to a therapist, the fear of being human. Reinhold Niebuhr is credited with saying that the greatest sin of human beings is wanting to be God, so clearly portrayed in the Genesis 3 narrative. Well, the other part of wanting to be God may be not wanting to be human. This is so spiritually dangerous. The Lord cannot redeem what we cannot admit. That's the way real salvation works.

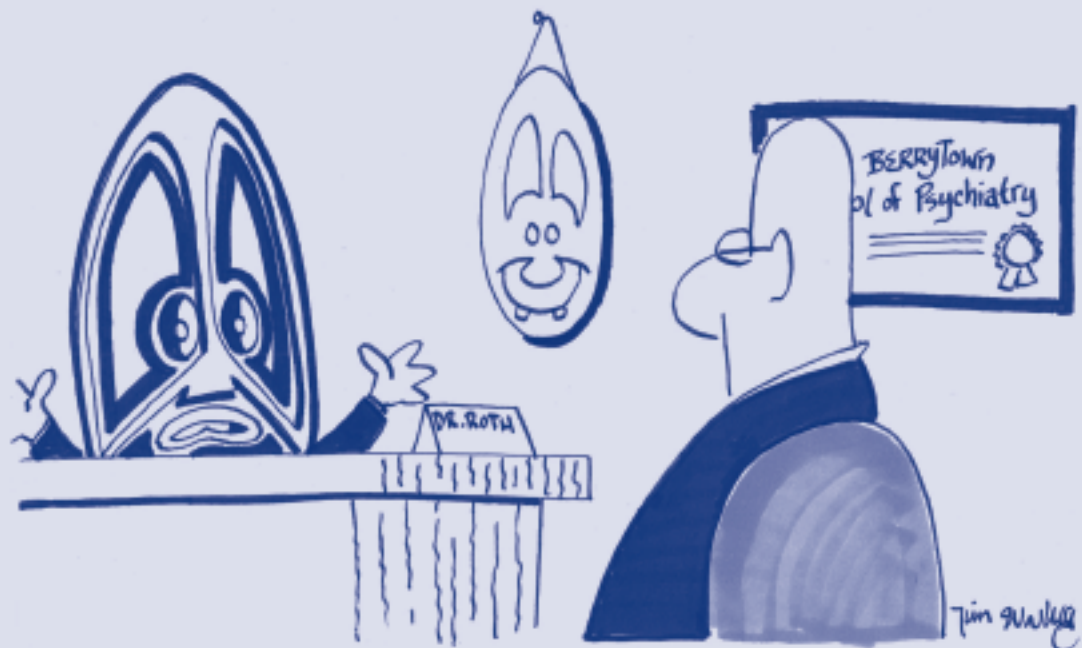
I've experienced this firsthand. I was afraid of being human . . . and so I couldn't see God's tracks in the sand next to mine. Fear is just one of many human struggles, but it makes the point. As many of you know, a year or so ago I was in a life-and-death battle with acute leukemia. It took

seven months for my low white-cell count to get diagnosed. At that time my chances of living were 50/50. There was one night when I was so far down that it was work to open my eyes. Leave them closed, I said to myself, *it's easier . . . just keep breathing*. That night they used eleven bags of ice all around me to keep me from cooking from fever. It still frightens me today to think about it. *I don't know how long I am going to live*. Now I know that none of us does; that's God's call whenever death happens. But in a different way I think about it every day . . . that I might die. I seldom verbalize it, but I think about it. If remission fails, if recurrence of this evil blood cancer kicks in, I will once again be in a fight for my life. This past February I attended the funeral of a man some of you knew named Odee Lenderink. Odee and I were both diagnosed at the same time. He is in heaven; I am here with you.

So . . . I went to see someone! I had to face my fears. My oncologist took serious the report of my new startle reflex, my new fears and anxieties, and wisely he referred me to a psychologist who specializes in oncology and anxiety. This young man, just out of grad school, could barely fill his blue shirt. His tie was as thin as he was. I wonder what he thought of the whole deal . . . as we were on opposite ends of counseling careers. He was clearly trained in cognitive-behavioral methods—not my style, but certainly what managed-care protocol demands.

It is human to be scared to death; it is human to be totally crushed by the loss of a child; it is human to get addicted to nicotine or alcohol; it is human to screw up relationships and end up in divorce; it is human to make idols of our images and reputations, especially when we grow up empty; it is human to worship our money or our bodies or our degrees; it is human to fight with parents or with children or with neighbors or fellow workers; it is human; sometimes it is sinful, but it is human. When we face our real and broken humanity, God redeems it. And we sense the footsteps of the Holy Spirit in our hearts.





"If you expect me to help you you're going to have to be more open with me!"

For me these were matters of the heart, a more dynamic kind of distress. Yet, over the course of our conversations, he had enough empathy to help me be more human, to name my monsters, to face the frightening possibilities that come with cancer. He listened in a way that soothed my troubled soul. Please know that I felt the Holy Spirit walking in my heart.

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A small part of God's big plan is to bring redemption to hurting people as Psalm 34:18 tells us: "The Lord is close to the brokenhearted." So must we be. God's wonderful counselor, the Prince of Peace, by his Spirit, has more tracks to lay, more hearts to visit, more tears to wash away.

What a good thing that we can be part of God's good effort. ■



**Ronald J. Nydam**

*Ronald J. Nydam is Professor of Pastoral Care, Calvin Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, Michigan.*

# THE YEAR OF THE CLERGY 2010

## Clergy Appreciation Month October 2009

### CELEBRATION SUGGESTIONS

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- A **church family reunion** of present and former members, gifts, plaques, flowers or an open letter of appreciation in the local newspaper.
- A more casual approach might simply involve a **moment of recognition during a morning service**.
- **Host a card shower** at which members and friends present either purchased or homemade greeting cards to each pastor's family. Or, distribute blank thank-you notes among the congregation to be used for expressing appreciation. Encourage those participating in these types of events to be as specific as possible in their praise, revisiting favorite sermons or moments when the pastor's ministry made a difference.
- **Hold a people-pleasin' pizza party.** Plan an informal time of sharing and caring around lots and lots of pizza and pop. If your pastoral families love pizza, give them certificates to a local pizza parlor to last throughout the year.
- **Contact a local trophy company and order a small plaque for your pastor(s).** A simple inscription might read:

In Deepest Appreciation of  
[Pastor's Name] and [His or Her] Family  
for Unselfish Commitment to the Body of Jesus Christ at  
[Church Name]  
Clergy Appreciation Month  
October [Year]
- **Plan a special appreciation service during your normal worship time(s).** During this service, use a variety of means to honor your pastor(s). Work closely with your worship leader to make the celebration a very special one. Sing songs of commitment, read Scriptures of dedication and exhortation and include a time of tribute for your pastor(s) that includes representatives of your denomination, your community, your church leadership and others in the congregation. This would also be a wonderful opportunity to call those in attendance to a renewed commitment to the church mission and vision. Then ask the pastor(s) to share their dreams and vision for the future of the church, concluding with a laying-on-of-hands ceremony or other time of personal dedication.
- **Plan an evening bonfire celebration** with the theme of church unity. Share the joys and sorrows you have experienced together, especially identifying the role your pastor and his family have played. Make it a time of recommitment and bonding for your entire church family.





- **Provide a testimony time during a worship service** for those involved in the church's various ministries to share the joy they experience in serving the church. Have them emphasize the satisfaction one receives in using God-given gifts for the benefit of the body. Subsequently, offer training courses on identifying and using spiritual gifts, then encourage members to sign up for the various ministries and service needs that currently exist and that match their gifts, abilities and interests.
- **Submit an open letter to your local newspaper** to announce to the community your genuine appreciation for your pastoral staff and their families.
- **Plan a special banquet in honor of your pastor(s).** Have guest speakers and an entertaining program that highlight the accomplishments of the church under the pastor(s)' leadership. Prepare a "This Is Your Life" show or celebrity roast. If such an event is not possible, arrange for several members of the congregation to take the pastoral staff and their families to lunch or dinner.
- **Invite local dignitaries to participate in the various appreciation events.** Ask them to say a word of gratitude for your pastor and the influence of your church in the community. Invite denominational leaders who oversee your area or district to attend and participate. (You may impress them with the high regard in which you hold your pastor(s).)
- **Present your pastoral family with a significant gift,** including a card signed by as many people as possible. The cost of such a gift may be covered through your church budget or by asking for special donations. Consider simple gifts (a gift certificate to a local bookstore, restaurant or car wash; a magazine subscription), personal gifts (a new pair of shoes, a new suit or dress, a new set of tires), generous gifts (an all-expense-paid trip to a resort, bed and breakfast or overnight railway trip) or even practical gifts (a personal digital assistant (PDA), a conference or seminar for pastors).
- **Make banners of appreciation and display them throughout the church property.** Distribute appreciation ribbons, buttons, stickers or T-shirts to every member of the congregation and wear them proudly throughout the month.
- **Urge the Sunday school and other children's groups to make creative appreciation messages** for the staff using construction paper and bright colors. Have the pastor(s) visit them for their own ceremonies of gratitude. Then decorate staff offices with the children's artwork.
- **Plant a tree or some shrubs in honor of your pastoral staff.** These can make long-lasting tributes to your clergy, past and present, and can form the basis for future conversations as you talk to your children and grandchildren about the value of their spiritual leaders.
- **Send a letter to members of the congregation** explaining Clergy Appreciation Month and include offering envelopes for a special love offering.
- **Set up a "leafless" tree** that can be decorated with a variety of small gifts for your pastor(s), such as a favorite treat (chocolate chip cookies, candy), hobby items (fishing flies), small envelopes with gift certificates (clothing stores, restaurants, bookstores, haircuts, dry cleaning, etc.) or money.

*(Continued on page 12)*



- **Plan a church picnic, circus or other festive event** to celebrate the day.
- **Invite the extended family of your pastor to visit** and assist them by underwriting the cost. Schedule a family portrait sitting or other similar activities.
- **Play taped audio or video greetings** from special friends, children, fellow ministers and district officials of your pastoral staff at a special service.
- **Invite a guest speaker to conduct worship** and give your pastor(s) an extra paid day off.
- **Schedule special prayer sessions** to pray specifically for your pastors and their families. Make this a yearlong commitment, and assign special categories to each month, such as good health for the pastor's family, financial stability, courage and freedom to dream, and the pastor's marriage.
- **Have various congregation members sign up for each day of the month** on which they would assume responsibility for providing some tangible expression of appreciation (meals, handcrafts, small gifts, bouquets of flowers or balloons, personal poetry). This will assure that your pastoral family feels affirmed throughout the entire month.
- **Design a memorial scrapbook.** Insert photos and other souvenirs of the previous 12 months of your pastoral staff's ministry. Be sure to include lots of pictures of congregation members. You might hire a photographer to capture your Clergy Appreciation Month activities as the fitting conclusion of your scrapbook.
- **Participate in renovating part of the pastor's home.** There are almost always home improvements that pastors need, but cannot afford or do not have the skill or time to accomplish.
- **Present each of your pastors with a packet of personal service coupons.** Have members of the congregation pledge to provide services for your pastoral families, such as lawn service, child care, car repairs or catered dinners. You might even pledge to assist with projects around the church campus, such as fixing a sign, repainting the parking lot stripes or teaching the pastor's class one Sunday. And don't forget spiritual tasks, such as a commitment to pray each day for every member of your pastoral families.

These suggestions are courtesy of Focus on the Family Pastoral Ministries. For addition suggestions go to <http://www.parsonage.org/cam/index.cfm>. ■



# Should We Promote Clergy Appreciation Month?

by Jim Schlottman

As you see in this month's issue, we have a banner announcing Clergy Appreciation Month.

Focus on the Family's Pastoral Ministries is one of those credited with initiating and promoting Clergy Appreciation Month. However, on their website, [www.parsonage.org](http://www.parsonage.org), Focus gives the credit for the concept to the apostle Paul.

They refer to Paul's words in 1 Timothy, where he wrote, "The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching" (5:17, NIV), and in 1 Thessalonians: "Respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work" (5:12-13, NIV).

Focus does take credit for naming and beginning to emphasize Clergy Appreciation Month in 1994. For that I thank them.

At Quiet Waters Ministries we join the apostle Paul in believing that clergy do deserve double honor and should be held in the highest regard in love.

"The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching"

1 Timothy 5:17, NIV

"Respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work"

1 Thessalonians 5:12-13, NIV

We have seen many churches holding their pastors in high regard. However, we have also seen the opposite. So we want to join in encouraging you to celebrate the hard work of your pastor during the month of October or any month of the year.

I've hesitated to promote Focus's Clergy Appreciation Month because of the reaction of some to such a month of recognition. Several years ago a pastor said to me, "My thought is, why should there be a special month for pastors when there is seldom one for farmers, mechanics, and for those in the many other occupations and professions?"

*(Continued on page 14)*



One of the reasons that I am promoting this month's celebration is that I believe the role of a pastor and his or her family is different from that of a farmer or mechanic.

To make my point I want to share a response I received to my invitation to you to share your stories of Great Expectations. I gave the invitation as a follow-up to Jackie Katz's article "Great Expectations" in our last issue of *Compass*. Rev. Richard Vander Schaaf shared his comments regarding the pastor's day off:

I can't tell you how often over the years (twenty) I've been asked which day is my day off. I find it interesting that 90 percent of the people asking that question have routinely gotten two days a week off all their working lives and would be outraged if their employer asked them to work six days a week. However, the pastor is expected to work six days and also two, three, even four nights per week. This is a given. Truth be known, I don't mind putting in the hours (most of the time), but it grates on me to be held to a standard that says I, for some reason, do not have the same need for rest and relaxation that other people have. What's up with that?

He went on to comment on the statement that pastors don't need to be fed spiritually:

Recently we had a member of the denominational staff preach at our church. I sat in the audience with

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my wife. What a blessing to sit in the pew again! How good it felt to be fed by someone else. Having been a layman until age forty, I remembered that wonderful feeling of leaving church inspired and informed, and it made me realize what we pastors are missing. Here again, why is it that everyone else needs spiritual nourishment, but somehow pastors don't? Aren't we prone to sin and discouragement like everyone else? One of our area churches wisely insists that one Sunday a month their pastor and wife attend worship at some other

church. That's a rarity. Usually, the expectation is that pastors have limitless spiritual energy and their batteries remain charged despite the fact that forty-eight out of fifty-two weeks in a year they neither simply attend worship nor hear a sermon, but instead produce them.

Pastor Vander Schaaf helps make my point that the pastor's role is different from that of a farmer or mechanic. I can sympathize with Pastor Vander Schaaf. However, there is a part of me that wants to say, "that's part of your role." I also would say that the church is the most unsafe place for a pastor, but it is the place to which God called you. And I can assure you He called you there because it was a dangerous place. The church is a dangerous place because it is filled with sinners.

When I hear from pastors like Rev. Vander Schaaf, I become a strong advocate for a Clergy Appreciation Month. Because, if you listen, he is not saying that he won't work long weeks and won't preach forty-eight Sundays. Listen closely enough and you will hear him just making a request for acknowledgment of that dedicated service. And it wouldn't hurt if he received a little appreciation.

I'm also encouraged to promote such a month of celebration when I hear about what some pastors have experienced during Clergy Appreciation Month. One wrote:

Last year at (our church), both pastors, myself included, received



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care from members every day of the month. People signed up for which day they wanted for which pastor. So yes, sixty-two people or teams of people stepped forward to give care to two pastors for thirty-one days. People stopped by to pray with us, we received meals, letters of affirmation, tickets to the zoo, meal certificates, babysitting offers so I could spend time with my wife, etc. It was awesome. Pastor Appreciation Month was truly a month of appreciation. We missed it when we got to November 1.

Every church should take on the suggestion that came from the pastor who wrote:

The congregation I serve . . . produces a list of members who sign up to be prayer partners for me as pastor for a week at a time. They have now almost completed the second year. Last year (my fifteenth year here) they also had a special coffee hour for me and my wife, but I truly appreciate the prayer list. Because of the October designation, a new list is begun each October. I am almost sure that by the middle of the month a new list will have been produced with people who signed up again!

If not, I will be asking for volunteers myself!!! One of the elders in the congregation is the reminder person—both for me and the volunteer prayer person. To me it's a BIG small thing!

So my prayer for pastors is that they will receive BIG small things throughout the month of October and throughout the year too. ■



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