

How to Support Your Pastor

Suggestions for supporting the ministry of your professional church staff

Ministry with women and girls works best when done in conjunction with the entire vision of the church. For this reason, it is crucial to build good relationships between the leadership of such ministries and the leadership of the church. Women's and girls' ministries often have resources and abilities to serve in ministry professional church staff and their families in loving and unique ways. Here is a list of ideas to help spur your own thinking about ways you can support pastors!

- Get to know the pastors' and/or church leaderships' vision for the church. Ask questions! Find out how the ministry with women and girls is a part of that vision. Take part in the envisioning process whenever possible, lifting up the needs of women and girls as the vision for ministry is being developed. Once a vision exists, check your ministry plans to see how they fit in with the vision as a whole. As you develop new plans, be sure to state publicly how these new plans promote the church's ministry vision.
- Make an appointment with the pastor(s) or other church staff to explain what your ministry with women and girls is all about. Be informative and enthusiastic—and while you're describing the structure and program elements, be sure to also describe how the Spirit moves you in your ministry and some of the results you've experienced! Express your gratitude to God for all that God has done in your ministry with women and girls!
- Communicate closely with your pastor(s) and other professional church staff. Clear communication is key to developing solid, trustful relationships. It will also enable a better sharing of resources and ideas, and will keep calendar conflicts to a minimum.
- Be available and willing to offer names of people who might be able to serve as resources to the pastor(s) and other professional church staff; perhaps you know of people who would be able to serve as speakers, clergy support, program developers, consultants, etc. While doing this, however, be sure you remember your suggestions are just that: suggestions. Make it clear that your feelings won't be hurt if your suggestions do not end up being used!
- Support the pastor/s and professional church staff publicly. It is all too common for ministry group meetings to end up being "moan sessions" to complain about church staff. This is rarely useful or productive. If someone has a complaint about a church staff member, that person should be encouraged to go directly to the church staff member themselves to discuss their concerns. If there is a larger issue afoot, be proactive and loving in how you approach it. Remember the saying, "Be a part of the solution, not part of the problem."
- Host occasional dinners for individual members of the church staff and their families to show your appreciation; or provide a meal for them to eat in their own homes once a year or so. Church staff are very busy, and may well appreciate this thoughtful gesture! (Be sure to check out food preferences or allergies ahead of time.)
- Check your expectations and assumptions at the door. Your former pastor's wife may have been very involved in the women's ministry; the new pastor's wife may have other priorities. If your pastor is a woman, she may especially appreciate the prayers and support of the women's ministry, but may not be able to be directly involved with all of the ministry program because of time restrictions. On the other hand, she may be pleased to have a special relationship with the ministry with women and girls. Each pastor and each pastor's spouse is an individual, with individual interests, gifts, and callings from God. Do not view it as a judgment on your ministry, or as a failing of the person herself, if she does not choose to be directly involved in your ministry with women and girls. God is simply moving her in other directions for God's reasons.
- If you have a female pastor who is married, encourage members of the men's ministry of the church to find ways to support her husband. Pastors' husbands are often a new concept to churches. Where there may have been definite roles for a pastor's wife to play (whether reasonable or not), pastor's husbands are often left adrift and, therefore, left alone in the congregation. The men of the congregation can be extremely helpful in assisting a pastor's husband to find friendship connections and ways to be in ministry.

- Be careful of your expectations of the children of the pastor(s) or other professional church staff. "PK's" (Pastor's kids) can sometimes struggle with their relationship with church (and, by extension, with God) because of unrealistic expectations that may be placed on them by members of the congregation. They are not necessarily Biblical whiz kids; they are not automatically well-behaved and respectful. They're kids. Love them, support them, and treat them like any other kid!
- Do not expect the pastor's spouse to be a messenger service. If you have information for the pastor, share it with the pastor. If the pastor is not immediately available, write her or him a note and leave it in the office. If you have a concern about the pastor, take it to the pastor.
- Be careful of boundary issues. If your pastor or pastor's spouse is involved with the women's ministry, do not expect special favors, special information, or to hear all the latest buzz about what's happening with individuals in the congregation. Pastors and pastors' spouses must maintain confidentiality and equal relationships with all members of the congregation. Help them maintain this confidentiality and equality by being careful what you ask for in the first place.
- Mostly and at all times, pray for the pastor(s) and other professional church staff. Send them notecards to let them know when they've been lifted up in prayer. Send them occasional cards of encouragement and support, or to say thank you for something specific. Like the nine lepers that didn't return to thank Jesus for healing, we often take pastors for granted, or simply forget to thank them directly even if we are speaking of them highly to others. Remember how much Jesus appreciated the one leper that did return! Don't forget regional professional staff. Include your area ministers, executive ministers, program ministers and administrative staff in your prayer times, and send them notes of support as well.