

# Editorial

## Lest We Forget . . . A call for the appreciation of Protestant Reformed ministers

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It has been said many times that in order to be a minister in the Protestant Reformed Churches, one must be willing into to do an immense amount of work. If possible, this could yet be considered an understatement. Consider for a moment what we expect this man to be and what we expect him to do. He must be “on call” 24 hours a day seven days a week (haven’t we all commiserated with the poor M.D. who has such rotten hours and such a horrible work schedule?). We expect him, furthermore, to be our psychologist, our confidant, and our friend. We expect him to be a junior accountant, a financier, at times a janitor, and at times an innkeeper. He must be a model in his walk, he must raise a model family. All eyes are upon him and his family and his decisions tend to have congregational impact. How many of us have not heard the familiar statement, “If the domine’s kids can do it, I guess you can, too.”

But, you say, this is the way it must be and maybe he himself wants it this way. Maybe, as a minister he does not want to give up any of the things that constitute his job. Perhaps.

I think that you will agree, however, that the life of a minister is most difficult. I am close enough to it to support that fact. What I wish to bring to you is that we, as his parishioners, had better not unnecessarily add to his difficult labor. We ought, rather, to seek to make him and his family just as comfortable and at ease as we possibly can.

A few suggestions as to how we might accomplish this might be in order.

We ought first to see that he does not have any financial worries. He and his family ought to be well-provided for. As someone once put it to me, “We ought not think that we can live in palaces and that the minister can live in a pig sty.” The minister should not have to sit in his study and worry about his family budget.

We ought to see further that he and his family are made to feel “at home” in our congregation. Socially at home. We ought to invite them to our homes and share our lives with them. We ought to take the initiative here. A minister’s life is lonely enough; he should not have to crack the social ice.

But, far more important that seeing that the minister is financially solvent and socially comfortable is our obligation to exhibit a genuine appreciation for the minister as a man, for his work, and for his office. He comes, after all, to serve us. He comes to us as a pastor, as a shepherd of us, the sheep. God has chosen him to feed us. He is it that brings us nourishment for our souls. We cannot do without him. Romans 10 testifies to that fact. His work is vital and necessary to our spiritual well-being. Appreciation and love ought to flow from us. We ought not let the fact that he is indeed a mere man detract from this appreciation. At times, we can be very

critical of the man, of his personality and demeanor. You have probably heard of the cook book entitled 1001 Ways to Fix Hamburger; I get the feeling sometimes that we are trying to write one of our own which might bear the title of 1001 Ways to Serve the Preacher. This should not be our attitude. Rather, we should thank God for what he does for us through this man, the preacher.

Appreciation, however, of the minister's office and his work is not enough. We must also respect him and his office. We ought not make light of him or of what he says. Why is this so? He comes to us by divine appointment and with the authority of Jesus Christ. Now, I am not advocating that we must bow humbly before the human presence of a minister. What I am saying, however, is that we ought to treat him with honor and respect. He comes to us as an ambassador of Jesus Christ. To make fun of a minister, to speak to him in a way that is in any bit disrespectful is serious. Too often, I am afraid, the commentary reads the other way. How about it? How do you talk to him? How do you talk about him? How do you behave for him? Do you receive him as one who has been divinely appointed and divinely vested with the authority of Christ?

The sum of the matter is this: God has graciously provided us with the hard-working, dedicated ministers of the gospel. They have been divinely called, divinely equipped, and divinely sent. Receive them as such. And, by all means, thank God for them.

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