

Essay Title: To Say Thank You

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THE PRESIDENT OF ONE OF THE CONGREGATIONS in my district is always saying, “It’s so important to be appreciative—to say, “thank you.”

She has a practice of having congregation members sign thank you notes she has left out in the foyer And she herself writes lots of thank you notes for seemingly everyday things—on odd-sized pieces of recycled paper!

Ann’s lessons in gratitude are a vital message for congregations who wish to have a healthy congregational life and who want to appreciate their valued members.

Her message reminds us that people who volunteer their time, who give many hours to the work of our congregations and our faith, will be willing to continue that work if they sense that their contributions—and they, themselves—are appreciated.

When this is missing – when no one says “thank you” or when there is no practice of gratitude, then people feel taken for granted and unappreciated, abused, even. When this happens, the “burn-out syndrome” is quickly evident: good people decline further involvement.

It is not hard to remember to thank folks who have served on committees in the congregation, who have been the overseers of projects, who have led youth activities and taught in the religious education programs, who have served on the board—or, maybe, who have just brought flowers from their yards for a morning service. It’s not hard to say thank you—but it is vitally important to do it! Small certificates or other tokens of gratitude (especially those which can be signed by a lot of folks!) are tangible reminders to folks that they and their gifts to a community have been valued. At appropriate moments in the year, publicly thank those who play key roles in the congregation.

Instill in your congregation a culture of appreciation and gratitude. Remember to say “THANK YOU!”

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