

# History Sharing Night

Early in the incoming pastor's tenure, schedule a History Sharing Night in which the congregation creates a timeline to share important dates and stories from their history.

The History Sharing Night:

- Gives the congregation a chance to tell the important stories of the church's life and ministry
- Gives the pastor a chance to hear the stories, explore the deeper meanings of the church's past, connect with the congregation
- Gives everyone a chance to move forward together from a common experience.

**Arrangements and Details:**

- Choose a time of year when most of the congregation can be present.
- Plan about 3 hours.
- Include a meal if at all possible.
- Provide Childcare!
- An outside facilitator allows pastor and laity to participate fully; the District Superintendent can suggest a facilitator.
- Set up the timeline.
  - Put 20 feet of newsprint on a wall
  - Provide markers.
  - Additional flipchart for making notes, if needed.

**Create the Timeline:**

- Describe the purpose of the experience, encouraging participation.
- Pray together.
- Encourage people to write significant dates, events, people on timeline. These can include significant events in the larger community/world, as well as in the church.

**Process the Timeline:**

- As a group, talk through the timeline, noting key stories and events.
  - As much as possible, have the person who wrote an event describe it to the group.
- Include both positive and negative events.
- Pay attention to managing emotions as needed, especially around difficult events/stories.
- Finally, ask some general questions:
  - Where have we seen God at work in the life of this church?
  - What have been/are our strengths?
  - What have been/are our challenges?
  - What can be our trajectory into the future? What is God's dream for this church?

**Close the History Sharing Night with prayer, song.**