

## Celebrating and Sharing Your Congregation's History

Written by Rebecca Imhauser

The book title *6 Women and a Jail* brings to mind a number of thoughts—but most likely not the history of a Southern Baptist congregation. However, the title aptly describes the founding of the First Southern Baptist Church of Buckeye, Arizona. A dramatic production on the church's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1975 depicted the church's six charter members, all women, who met in a building that included the city jail. "During services there were some disturbances from the jail along with an occasional 'amen,'" a re-enactor stated.<sup>1</sup> The congregation continued to recall its unusual founding long after moving to a traditional church building.

Your church probably didn't start in a jail—but your congregation has unique experiences that demonstrate how God has worked and continues to work through your local body of believers. And through Church Library Ministry, you might have the opportunity to help preserve and communicate your church's history.

Becky Imhauser, a doctoral student at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, is developing a new resource to help churches observe historical milestones and write their histories. It will include a manual and curriculum materials to engage all life stages in celebrating and sharing local church history by leading congregations to . . .

- Reflect on what the Bible says about the significance of local church history
- Recognize God's leadership through celebrations as well as challenges
- Realize today's church members are part of the history that is being made

The new resource will include "best practices" from congregations across the United States. Becky would love to hear from you—to include how your church has celebrated and shared its history. Will you consider emailing Becky at [rimhauser32561@student.mbts.edu](mailto:rimhauser32561@student.mbts.edu) by July 1, 2014?

Here are some thought starters:

- What is the most memorable way your congregation has celebrated a historical milestone, such as an anniversary, building dedication, note burning, or pastor anniversary or retirement?
- How has your church handled challenges or negative times during your history? This might include material loss, such as destruction of a building, tragedy within your church family, or church conflict or closure. Did you acknowledge these times through an event or in written history?
- How is technology being used to communicate your church's history?

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<sup>1</sup> *This Is Our Story*, by Yule, Dolpha, Lola Johnson, Marie Faver, and Verlyne Meck, directed by Verlyne Meck, First Southern Baptist Church, Buckeye, AZ, July 19, 1975, 2.

- If you could offer one piece of guidance to a church preparing to celebrate a milestone or write its history, what would it be?

Thank you for your role in your church's history!