

8. If there is a cemetery adjacent to the church, walk through it and record family names and dates. You may choose to photograph the headstones later. Cemeteries offer clues.
9. Call you county history or genealogy society. Often these groups have published county histories which include briefs on early churches. These books can also be found in your local library.
10. Seek the knowledge of any retired pastors of your church. They can provide you with interesting bits of history.

**READY TO BEGIN:**

- ◇ Remember your work does not have to mirror books done by others. You can be unique.
- ◇ If your finished product is only a 8' x11" piece of paper with a bulleted timeline, you have made progress. Add a few photos to the timeline and you have an interesting piece.
- ◇ If you want to add more, create a booklet and list the appointments and deeds.
- ◇ If you wish to continue, add interior and exterior photos of the church. Scan old photos and place them in the book. This will add interest. Make sure your photos are at least 300 dpi. The higher the resolution the better.
- ◇ Remember that many older people will look at and read your work. Be sure to use a font size 11 pts or higher.
- ◇ A nice history can be small. Most people do not want to wade through lots of descriptions. Give them the photos and the facts and you will have done an admirable job.
- ◇ Leave the long diatribes to the scholars as most likely only other scholars will read them.
- ◇ Think Success!!
- ◇ Donate a copy of your new church history to the NC Conference Archives!! 800-849-4433 archives-history@nccumc.org

# DISCOVERING AND PRESERVING YOUR CHURCH HISTORY

*STARTING YOUR RESEARCH FROM THE BEGINNING*

*RURAL AND SMALL CHURCHES*



NC CONFERENCE COMMISSION ON ARCHIVES AND HISTORY  
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
COMMISSION ON ARCHIVES AND HISTORY

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BEVERLY S. PIERPOINT

Preserving your church history does not have to be an overwhelming project. Most of the people who begin these projects are not great writers nor do they need to be. What they do need to have is a passion for the project, the cooperation of others and a degree of creativity. They need a focus and a time frame. If a time frame is not adhered to the project can get cumbersome and unwieldy, thus setting up the project to become “in progress” for much too long.

As the author and researcher of the project you must be the one who puts the final parts together, who writes the transitions and who inserts the photos at just the right place. You will however, need four editors. One to check for spelling and grammar, one to check for historical facts and dates, one who is not familiar at all with your research and one who will tell you the truth. That being said, let's proceed.

Here are several important rules with which to adhere.

1. Start small.
2. Create a folder for each group of information.
3. Sketch out or create on the computer a template of how you want your final work to look.
4. Create a Table of Contents.
5. State the facts first. You can add details later.
6. If you are worried about style, use a bulleted format.
7. Make your product attractive to the eyes.
8. Use photographs.
9. Cite and list your sources.
10. Acknowledge your assistants and editors.
11. Date your work.

Since this brochure is for the person trying to preserve the history of a rural or small church it is important for that person to not get discouraged.

The following strategies will help you get started.

1. Write a list of everything you know about the church. Insert as many dates or time periods as you know.
2. Find the oldest person in the church and interview them. Ask if they have any photographs, mementoes or articles of interest relating to the church.
3. Take exterior and interior photos of the church. Be sure to capture photos of the memorials made by family members. Stained glass windows, crosses, bells, organs, pianos, hymnals or any object which has been dedicated and bears a plaque or name card. Later look at your photos and record all the details of the gifts. Check to see if there is a cornerstone with the original date.
4. Call the Conference Archives and History Office to obtain copies of deed information. Deeds are available to see at your county courthouse. Visit the Register of Deeds office. The staff will let you research deeds and often help you. You may also check the State Archives office in Raleigh for deeds and records.
5. Visit the Conference Archives and History Archives. The room is open by appointment. Journal information as well as other files are available for you to browse through.
6. Once you establish key dates in the life of your church, go to the State Library in Raleigh or any university library and look at the newspaper collections. Many date back to the early 1800's.
7. Research the travels of early Methodists like Francis Asbury to see if his travels took him to your church. Look up the history of the Methodist Episcopal Church South or The Methodist Protestant Church. Look in the Library at Duke Divinity School or other universities.