

Job Description for the Local Church Historian

This brief guideline is designed to help you, the local church historian, in your ministry. For more in-depth information, refer to the list of resources at the end of the article.

Responsibilities of the local church historian are described in the *Book of Discipline* (§247.5a). Work with your pastor and church staff, members of the Committee on Records and History, and lay leaders to design procedures that will help you fulfill your duties. If you do not have a Committee on Records and History, you may want to set one up so that others can share in the responsibilities.

As historian you will want to accept the following responsibilities:

- Establish an archives if one does not exist.
- Serve as a knowledgeable consultant to your church staff and officers about what records to officially/legally keep.
- Provide for proper preservation and storage of records and historical artifacts that are to be kept but are not currently in use.
- Promote interest in the heritage of The United Methodist Church and of your own congregation.
- Ensure that your church has a written history and that it is kept current.
- Plan for and help organize special milestone celebrations in the church, such as anniversary dates.
- Assist the pastor and others in the annual observance of Heritage Sunday, which is observed on Aldersgate Day or the Sunday preceding that date. Congregations may choose another date suitable to their calendar.
- Serve on the church council and/or other committees on which the local church historian is needed/assigned.
- Help those who wish to do research in your church's records.
- Network with your church's district representative on the commission on Archives and History. Visit www.flumc.org/archivesandhistory for contact information.

These are the basic duties; however, don't be afraid to branch out! Work with your pastor and other church leaders to identify ways and areas of ministry in which you can use your God-given abilities and interest in history to serve the church. For instance, you may have special gifts in writing, drama, music, working with children, or public relations. Use them to celebrate special historical events in your church and make that history come alive.

Set annual goals that not only include your basic ministry of ministry responsibilities but also suit you and your abilities. Circulate it to the church leadership so that everyone knows that the church historian is an active, vital part of the church's ministry.