



## History Event

A well-planned History Event builds excitement and enthusiasm and gives every participant, from the newcomer to the longest-tenured elder, a chance to express his or her experience of the congregation and to be heard by others. The group celebrates its strengths, acknowledges its failings, recognizes its diversity, and recognizes continuity and change.

### Preparation

On a long wall, mount a strip of butcher paper long enough to allow 6–10 feet for every decade, back to the first that anyone actually remembers. (Some congregations add a segment for the whole previous history, and that's fine.)

Mark the butcher paper in decades, with a minimum of “benchmark” dates to jog people's memories. Many congregations find that indicating the beginning and end of each minister's tenure is enough. A horizontal line running through the middle of the strip is helpful. Try to restrain the historians in the group from providing too much information—this is event is for remembered history.

The ideal seating arrangement is round tables for 6–8 with room for movement around the edges of the room. The details of how to do this depend, of course, on the layout of your space, available tables and chairs, etc. If you don't have room for tables, chairs work fine alone—arrange them in one or more semicircles, and move them around as needed.

Scatter plenty of markers around. (Make sure they don't bleed through onto the wall!) Provide some pencils or pens and writing pads at the tables, and an easel and newsprint for the facilitator.

*Optional:* Provide a blank sticky note for every person (maybe 2"x2") to mark his or her point of entry into the congregation.

### Process

A skilled facilitator (preferably from outside the group) introduces the activity and gives people about 20 minutes to write on the butcher paper, then leads the group on a tour from first to last.

Then, at the tables, people either some “meanings” out of the exercise (Oswald & Friedrich) or compare the current era with a former, “golden” age” (Rendle & Mann).

The best history events incorporate unique features. One large congregation created “mood” rooms for each decade. Another had a potluck where all contributions had to be made of chocolate!