

## CHURCH CLERK IS KEY TO PRESERVING CHURCH HISTORY

Irma R. Cruse\*

As most authors of the preceding articles have pointed out, church records are important as the basis for your church history. They are necessary for the day-to-day operation and ministry of your church, but have added value when you begin to gather material for writing your church history.

We have found that the tips for record-keeping listed below have been praised by historians:

- Keep records in ink or type them. Be sure that all records show the date on which they were made. That date should include the day of the month, name of month, and the year.
- Keep church conference minutes in one notebook folder, or binder. Arrange the minutes in date order. Clip supporting reports or financial records to the minutes to which they relate.
- Appoint a history committee, if you have not done so already, and be sure the church clerk is on the committee.
- Provide space, file cabinets, file folders, etc. Begin collecting records at once. Don't give up just because you or your predecessor has not done that for past years. Do your part by beginning now.

What do you need to collect for your church history now, or in the future? Be sure to save church minutes. Get the names of the members of your church staff who serve at the present time. Get that same information about those who have served as far back as is possible. If you do not know, ask older members of the church but verify the dates and names with more than one person, if possible, for memory plays tricks on all of us.

If you can do it, get pictures of all those who have been a part of the church staff, officers in organizations, and members. Be sure to write names and dates on gummed labels and attach to the pictures. If you must write on the back of the picture itself, please write lightly so the indentation of pen or pencil will not deface the front of the photographs. If you do not have gummed labels, write on ordinary paper and attach to the photograph with masking tape not with cellophane tape. The reason for this admonition is obvious. If you have to remove the note, cellophane tape may tear or deface the photograph. Plain bond paper can be taken off easily, especially if applied with rubber cement instead of glue.

Your church clerk is the key to preserving your records. You are fortunate if you have someone who knows this already but any good clerk can be taught the preservation of church business records, of photographs, of lists of officers (including teachers, of course). Good luck with efforts to preserve your records.

\*Mrs. Cruse is editor of the HISTORIAN and chairman of the Oral History program for the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission.