

A History Sharing Experience   
Pastoral Transition Process

**A History Sharing Experience**

**An interesting experience in a congregation that has received an incoming** **pastor is a time for history sharing. It is a time for persons in the congregation to gather, to share stories of their life together, and to reflect on what it means for the congregation at this time. It makes a great fellowship activity. Such an experience can be helpful to the church and the incoming** **pastor in several ways:**

1. It assists the inclusion process. The pastor becomes one of us when he/she knows our stories.
2. Key events in the life of the church are shared.
3. Insights into past successes and failures are gained.
4. One learns who are the pastors of the past and who in particular is the one by whom the current pastor will be judged.
5. Assists the incoming pastor and leaders to assess what the meaning of all of this is for the congregation.

**Arrangements:**

1. About a three-hour block of time is desirable for discussion.

(It always goes well with a potluck supper.)

1. Have a listing of previous pastors and dates available.
2. Put up a 20-foot length of newsprint that can be used to create a time line. Have a newsprint pad in addition for recording reflections.

**Process:**

1. Enter the dates and pastors across the top, allowing enough room for writing information below their names.
2. Questions to ask the group include:

* What are the most important happenings when each pastor was here?
* What are the implications of the successes, e.g. a new worship service?
* How do the failures affect us today?
* Where are the high points in the congregation’s life? The low points?

1. When this has been done you want to probe for meaning statements. This can be done as a total group if it is small. Otherwise, have them break into groups of 6-8. Collect the following responses on newsprint.

* General observations
* What do you make of this?
* What concerns you?
* What tells you who you are?
* What are your key strengths?
* What should be a part of your future?

1. If the group has done “c” well, you may want them to try to prioritize the meaning statements. It becomes part of the process to come to terms with their history.
2. What does this say about our future?

* Develop goals to build on our strengths – stretch toward new ministry.
* Develop strategies to overcome weaknesses – let go of what doesn’t work.