

## Caring for Your Congregation's Archives

### Part 3: Organizing and Preserving Your Congregation's History

(For Part 1: Where to begin, and Part 2: Gathering the Records, consult the Summer & Fall 2022 issues of *Primary Source*)

You agreed to serve as the congregational historian or archivist, and you recruited several people to assist you. (See Part 1: Where to begin, Summer 2022 *Primary Source*.) You've located important records, gathering them together in a spare room at the church. (See Part 2: Gathering the Records, Fall 2022 *Primary Source*.) Now what?

A roomful of records and memorabilia presents a challenge to even the most intrepid church historian. The first step towards organizing the records is creating an inventory organized by type (legal, congregational, organizational, etc.). When the inventory is completed, the church historian or history committee should have a good idea of the scope and content of the church's records.

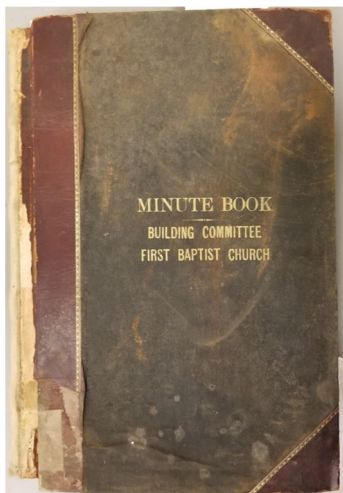
### Arranging & Describing (Organizing)

First, sort items into categories. Legal documents like deeds, mortgages, charters, constitution and by-laws, and contracts constitute one category. Zoning or code variances and records of meetings at which they were granted also belong to the "Legal Documents" category. Congregational records are another category, and include the Church Clerk's records,

including minutes of regular and special business sessions of the congregation, and membership rosters or reports of new and dismissed members; some very early clerk's records were recorded in ledger books. Pastoral service records and documentation of missionaries commissioned and ministers ordained also belong to the "Congregational Records" category.

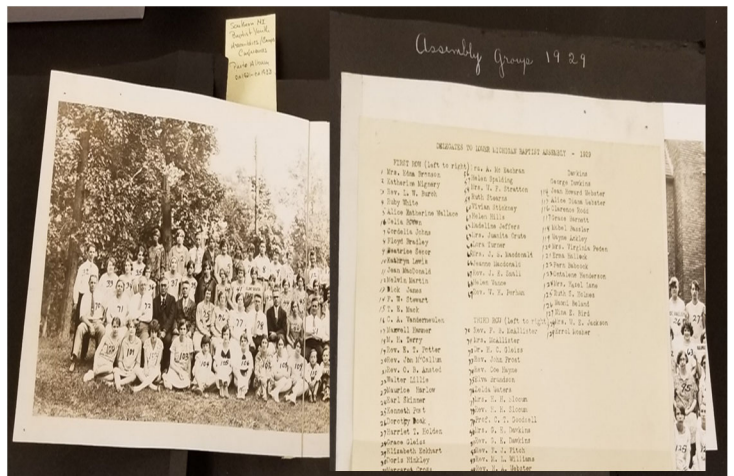
A third category is composed of records from auxiliary organizations, like the Sunday School, Women's and Men's groups, Youth groups, and the Music Ministry. Your church may have had other groups through the years whose records document the various ministries of your church.

Your search of records may also have turned up published materials like church histories, membership directories, or programs from special



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The 1929 Lower Michigan Baptist Assembly did a marvelous job of identifying people in the photo of delegates!

(Continued on page 6)

## Lake Avenue Memorial Baptist Church of Rochester Named Recipient of 2023 George D. Younger Award

This year's George Younger Award will be presented to Lake Avenue Memorial Baptist Church (LABC) of Rochester, New York, at the ABC Biennial Mission Summit in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Founded in 1871, LABC celebrated its 150th anniversary throughout 2021 and 2022.

Led by pastor Michael Ford and church historian Garth Brokaw, LABC's Anniversary Committee did extensive research into the historical context of their ministry, presenting the church's story visually and textually each week. Over the course of 18 months, 80 different displays were created and shared in the church narthex and online. Historical highlights were connected with all of their "regular" events throughout the year. The Committee also recommended an anniversary mission project: in keeping with their long-time support of public education, LABC decided to contribute 150 books to a local elementary school.

Congratulations to Lake Avenue Memorial Baptist Church, its pastor, Rev. Dr. Michael Ford, and its historian, Rev. Garth Brokaw!

## Primary Source

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## Church Anniversaries April – June

We celebrate the faithful ministry of American Baptist congregations and their pastors! The following churches notified ABHS that they are celebrating anniversaries this quarter:

### 185 Years

Falls Community Church, Sheboygan Falls, WI; Ron Zielinski, pastor

### 175 Years

First Baptist Church, Shelbyville, IN; Robert Haehl, pastor

### 165 Years

Pleasant Ridge Baptist Church, Leavenworth, IN; Rev. Mathew John Singleton, pastor

### 150 Years

United Baptist Church of Mapleton, Mapleton, ME; Rev. James Ackerson, pastor  
First Baptist Church, Beatrice, NE; Nolan Hayes, pastor  
First Baptist Church, Parsons, KS; Travis Ball, pastor

### 140 Years

First Baptist Church, Grand Junction, CO; Rev. Dr. David DeMott, pastor

### 100 Years

Immanuel Baptist Church, Rochester, NY; Rev. Jennifer Lessard, pastor

### 10 Years

Karen Baptist Fellowship, Indianapolis, IN; Hanavy Pee & Doris Mover, pastors

If your church is celebrating a significant anniversary, notify ABHS and request a certificate. We want to celebrate with you!



## Digital Assets Accessible Online

at YOUR FINGERTIPS

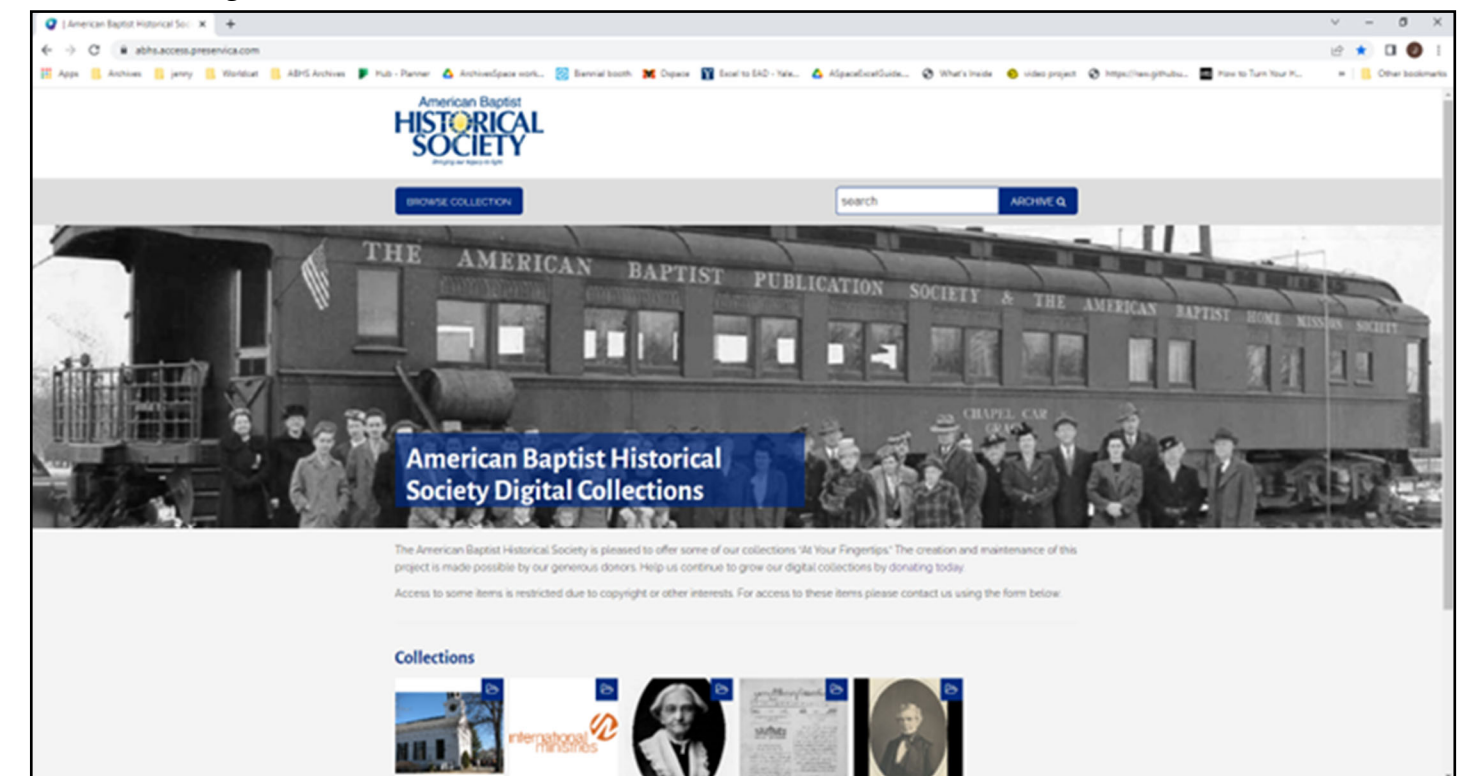
Jenny Manasco, Digital Collections Specialist

IT'S FINALLY HAPPENING!

The road to digital preservation has been long and bumpy with some detours, but we finally have our digital preservation platform up, running, and talking to the online catalogue. Hours of tutorials and webinars, an online course in coding, and many one-on-one conversations with the Preservica platform's help desk provided the information and training needed to configure the platform and prepare and upload various types of digital files. We appreciate the work done by the IT staff at Mercer University Libraries to configure our online catalogue platform to interface with the digital preservation platform.

This was a huge step in preparing to load digital assets that we have created in the past few years so *you* can have access to them with the click of a mouse. Photos, documents, and audio files will be accessible via the internet. However, what is accessible is but a infinitesimal proportion of what we hold in the archives. We calculate that it would take a full-time employee about 100 years of scanning to digitize what we have. Since we don't have anyone dedicated full-time to scanning the materials, it may take a little longer than that.

View the collections at <https://abhs.access.preservica.com/> and look for additional content to be added on a regular basis.



In the meantime, look for us at the ABHS booth at the ABCUSA Biennial Mission Summit in Puerto Rico. We will have a listening station where you can hear some of the audio recordings from past conventions. These include sermons or speeches by Martin Luther King, Jr., Markus Barth, Clarence Jordan, Ralph Bunche, Floyd Massey, Harold Stassen, Coretta King, Samuel McKinney, Gardner Taylor, and Jesse Jackson, among others. See you there!

Your "At Your Fingertips" donation \$\$\$ at work

## From the Archives: Baptists in Puerto Rico

Mariah Hamby, Head of Archives and Special Collections

After the Spanish-American War in 1898 the United States gained sovereignty over Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippine Islands. The U.S. military government took control of Puerto Rico on January 1, 1899, and the first missionary from the American Baptist Home Mission Society arrived on February 2, 1899.

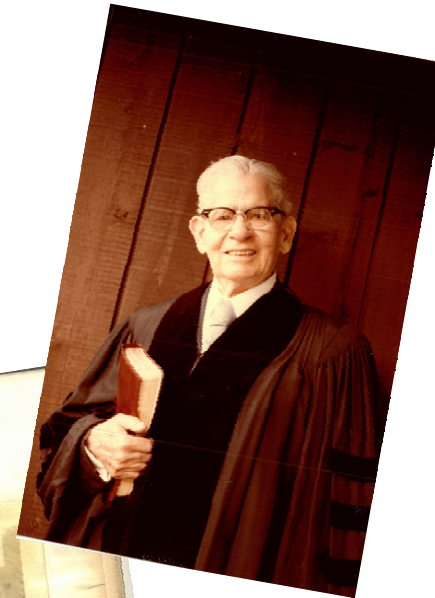
Baptist churches were soon founded. Early emphases were on church planting in rural areas and education. In 1902 the Association of Churches was established, and in 1907 a seminary was founded. By 1916 there were forty-nine churches, most of them led by Puerto Rican pastors. In 1936 the Association changed its name to the Convention of Baptist Churches, and emphasized self-propagation, self-government, and self-support. The Baptist Convention of Puerto Rico called Oscar Rodríguez to be its first Executive Secretary in 1958, transferring responsibility for Baptist work entirely to local leadership. In 1962 the Convention was admitted as a full-fledged region of the Northern Baptist Convention (now ABCUSA).



Laura T. Stoesen, RG 1475, Box 4.

Laura Thompson Stoesen was appointed to missionary work in Puerta de Tierra Church, Puerto Rico in 1919. Stoesen kept diaries and scrapbooks of her time in Puerto Rico, providing invaluable insight into the daily life of early missionaries on the island. Her diary entry references the ordination of Don Erasmo Bremier as pastor of the Puerta de Tierra Church; her scrapbook includes photographs of church workers.

Rev. Dr. Oscar Rodríguez's service with American Baptists spans the Caribbean and mainland U.S. Beyond his terms of service as Director of Christian Education and Evangelism (1936-1942) and Executive Secretary (1958-1969) in Puerto Rico, Rodríguez served as an American Baptist army chaplain during WWII.



Photographs from Biography of Oscar Rodríguez Quiles, RG1598, Volumes 1-3.



1981 San Juan Biennial Poster

The Iglesias Bautistas de Puerto Rico (Baptist Churches of Puerto Rico) hosted the ABCUSA biennial convention in 1981 and 2011, and are hosting this year's ABCUSA Biennial Mission Summit.



Photos, 1981 San Juan Biennial, OGS, Conventions Biennials: Biennial Meetings, Photographs 1979-1985, Box 1174.

(Continued from page 1)

events (e.g. anniversaries, installations, retirements). You may wish to keep samples of worship bulletins, but it is not necessary to keep bulletins from every worship service.

Yet another category is that of ephemera and memorabilia. Scrapbooks, pamphlets, photo albums, and tangible objects (hymnals used through the years, communion sets, etc.) *may* help



tell the story of your church’s ministry, but only if they are clearly identified. Boxes (or thumb drives) of photos *not* labeled with people’s names, dates, and the event are not worth keeping. If you and your church’s history committee can’t identify who the people are or what the event was, people in the future are even less likely to know them.

## Research Snapshot— Eric Nordby

Eric Nordby, a doctoral student in history at Harvard University, visited ABHS to do research for his dissertation. Nordby posits that the colonial-era fight over religious liberty was primarily a fight over taxation, that Baptist views on Church/State relations emerged from a dispute over taxes. He is examining the implications of the taxation of religious bodies on Baptist views on property, taxation, and the responsibilities of civil government.

Tracing the legal, political, and theological arguments on taxation, beginning with the colonial era and continuing to the disestablishment of religion in the 19<sup>th</sup>-century, Nordby is examining the economics of churches that lost support of state-collected taxes.

Nordby noted that ABHS has large collections of colonial church records on microfilm, and said that there is no other place he could have done as much research into the economics of Baptist churches in the 18<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.



As you sort, arrange like items chronologically, placing loose pages or slim booklets into file folders. Write the folder’s contents on the folder where it may easily be seen. It is better to write directly on the folder rather than using labels, because labels eventually fall off.

Electronic files should also be sorted and organized hierarchically. Save files as .PDFs, as this will ensure ongoing accessibility. Use unique descriptive file names (e.g. 2012-01\_Clerks\_Minutes.pdf).

### Inventory

Once you’ve sorted the materials into categories, it’s time to create an inventory. You’ll want to record what documents you have, the quantity and format, and where they are stored. Include as much detail as possible, as this will help people be able to find what they’re looking for.

Next up: How to Preserve your Records

Book1 - Excel				
File Home Insert Page Layout Formulas Data Review View Automate Help Inquire Comments				
	A	B	C	D
1	File title	Dates	Form (ledger book, loose pages, computer file)	Storage Location
2	Constitution & Bylaws	1843	Ledger book	Church library, shelf #1
3	Constitution & Bylaws, revised	1923	typewritten pages in file folder	File Drawer #1
4	Clerk's Minutes	1843-1850	Ledger book #1	Church library, shelf #1
5	Clerk's Minutes	1850-1868	Ledger book #2	Church library, shelf #1
6	Clerk's Minutes	1869-1900	Ledger book #3	Church library, shelf #1
7	Clerk's Minutes	1900-1940	File Folders (4)	File Drawer #1
8	Membership list	1950	MSWord file	Hard Drive #1
9	Annual Reports	1920-2020	File Folders (20)	File Drawer #2
10	Church picnic photos	1938-1965	File folders (22)	File Drawer #3
11	Trustees reports	1875-1902	File Folders (27)	File Drawer #4
12				
13				

## Join the Historical Society and Become a Time Traveler

American Baptist Historical Society membership circles are named for some of our significant Baptist forebears.



Membership Circles (Memberships are for the calendar year)	Annual Gift of
Ann Hasseltine Judson Circle	\$1-50
★ subscription (digital or print) to <i>Primary Source</i>	
Henry Lyman Morehouse Circle	\$51-125
★ subscription (digital or print) to <i>Primary Source</i>	
★ participation in “Time Travelers,” reciprocal museum/archives program <a href="http://timetravelers.mohistory.org/">http://timetravelers.mohistory.org/</a>	
Louise “Lulu” Cecilia Fleming Circle	\$126-250
★ benefits listed above, plus	
★ 1 hour of “Research-by-mail” discounted by 50%	
★ listing as donor in annual report	
Jitsuo Morikawa Circle	\$251-500
★ benefits listed above, plus	
★ Baptist history publication -- potluck!	
★ pair of tickets to ABHS Biennial event	
Samuel DeWitt Proctor Circle	\$501-1000
★ benefits listed above, plus	
★ subscription to <i>American Baptist Quarterly</i> discounted by 50%	
Helen Barrett Montgomery Circle	\$1001-5000
★ benefits listed above, plus	
★ private archives tour (subject to staff availability)	
Samuel Colgate Donors	\$5001 & above
★ benefits listed above, plus	
★ 2 hours free consultation with staff archivist	
Living Heritage Society	inclusion in estate plan
★ inclusion on a special plaque in ABHS Reading Room	



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To use a credit card go to our secure website: [www.ABHSarchives.org](http://www.ABHSarchives.org) and select “Give Now.”

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**INSIDE: 2023 George  
Younger Award Recipient**

### ABHS at the Biennial Mission Summit

- ★ Dinner co-hosted with the American Baptist Hispanic Caucus
- ★ Presentation of the George D. Younger Award
- ★ Signing of the ABC Presidents' Bible
- ★ Workshops offered in Spanish and English:
  - ⇒ "For Such a Time as This?: Baptist Beginnings in Puerto Rico"
  - ⇒ "Build Your Ark Before the Flood: Protecting Your Church's Legacy Before Disaster Strikes"
- ★ Exhibit Hall – visit the ABHS booth and learn more about ABHS resources and ministry

American Baptist  
**HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY**  
*Bringing our legacy to light*

## Save the Date!



**Register Today! Visit:**

[www.AmericanBaptists2023.com](http://www.AmericanBaptists2023.com)