

# Baptist Heritage Sunday

“A great cloud of witnesses...” Hebrews 12:1a



Baptist Heritage Sunday is a time to remember our forebears in the faith. In Hebrews 11, Abel, Noah, Abraham and Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and Moses are listed in the ‘cloud of witnesses’ whose faith, collectively and individually, reminds us of God’s power. This list of witnesses also includes the less famous and anonymous: Enoch, Rahab, Jephthah, the wanderers, the persecuted, women who witnessed miracles, those who administered justice, and those who ‘won strength out of weakness.’

Who in your personal history, your church, and your community are part of that great cloud of witnesses to God’s love? The stories of those individuals may not be recorded in your official church history, but they should be! Since 1853 the American Baptist Historical Society has collected, often from the records of local churches, the stories of American Baptists whose are witnesses to God’s power, faithfulness, and love. Among other things, these records

include information about sacrificial pastors, female mite societies, and youth ministries.

In times of uncertainty we can draw strength and guidance from such stories, as one young historian commented during her visit to research Home Missionary Joanna P. Moore. In the wake of September 11, this visitor to the Historical Society needed more than ever to focus on the witness of someone like Moore, who had crossed boundaries of race and regional cultures when she traveled from Illinois to Louisiana in order to teach newly emancipated slaves.

Your church also has stories to share of faithful ministry. Remembering these people of faith, the writer of Hebrews argues, helps us claim their faith as our own. Surrounded by these witnesses, we, too, can “run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.” (Hebrews 12: 1-2)



The American Baptist Historical Society has prepared a **Local Church History** resource, an interactive digital resource to help churches organize records and compile and preserve their history. To order, send a check for \$15 with your name, address, phone number, and e-mail address. This resource is available as a download or on a thumb drive; please indicate which you prefer.

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