

## History

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If God permits, I'll reach my sixtieth birthday in a couple of days. Sixty candles on the cake.

I already have a lot of gray in my beard. My arms are now too short to hold the book far enough away to read. And my memory? I think I started to lose that ten years ago, but I really can't remember for sure.

Actually, the closer I get to sixty, the younger it seems. I still have my health. I have lots of goals to accomplish. My dad is still going strong at 94. I am young!

And then I remember how I must seem to my children. To them, I am so old that I actually remember history being made. For example, it seems to me that Kennedy's assassination just happened. When I tell my children that I can remember what I was doing when I first heard the news, they look at me like I'm an antique.

And then it hits me. When I was in high school, the Second World War had ended only twenty years before, and yet it seemed like ancient history. I was amazed that my World History teacher was so old that he actually remembered it taking place. Funny, but while 1945 will always seem like ancient history, 1963 seems like part of modern times.

Where is the dividing line between history and current events? For most of us, history is what happened before we were old enough to realize it was happening. For most of us, modern times started when we were about twelve years old.

Now think about the church. It is estimated that 3500 to 4000 churches in the United States will close their doors each year. That's about ten per day.

The average age in some denominations is over 60 years. While there is nothing wrong with a church full of mature believers, it ought to be obvious that no church can survive into the next generation unless younger people begin to attend.

As churches die, some "saints" sit back and say, "I just don't understand it. We're doing exactly what we have always done." What they don't realize is what they were doing thirty years ago seems like ancient history to the ones they are trying to reach.

However, other older Christians have chosen to become real visionaries. These visionaries realize that the times are changing but the biblical message is still relevant. As a result they use their money and influence to do whatever is necessary to reach others with the eternal truths of God.

These visionaries are willing to say with St. Paul, *"I have become all things to all men so that I might save some. I do this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share its blessing"* (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 9:22-23).

As I approach sixty, I realize that I will not always be pastor of Upper Valley Community Church. I want it to outlast me by many, many years. That is why we strive to communicate the Bible with worship styles and programs that are relevant to today. Those who do not attend church usually are not really concerned about maintaining the past. They want help in raising their families and strengthening their marriages. They are searching for meaning and purpose in life. The Bible speaks to the issues they are facing. It is our task to communicate it in a way they can understand.