



***MANAGING AND PRESERVING OFFICIAL
RECORDS FOR CONGREGATIONS***

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WHY RECORDS MANAGEMENT

👍 The denomination's congregations create and use a large quantity of records during their years of existence.

👍 These records take up *expensive* space and often take longer to find because they are kept in remote and crowded storage areas.

👍 A records management program will:

- 1. Help your staff control the creation, storage and length of time needed to keep your records.**
- 2. Provide an orderly and systematic destruction of non-permanent records that meets legal, fiscal, historical, and administrative requirements.**
- 3. Reduce costs associated with the storage of non-current (less frequently used) records.**
- 4. Improve retrieval of non-current records.**
- 5. Identify records to retain permanently because of their legal, administrative, or historic nature.**
- 6. Insure that valuable records are protected from premature deterioration and/or destruction.**

👍 The archives/records management staff of the Presbyterian Historical Society is pleased to help congregations find more efficient and less expensive ways of managing and storing information.

The Presbyterian Historical Society's records management program for the national offices in Louisville saved the church \$1 million in the first three years.

👍 We will also provide advice on the best methods for preserving records of permanent value.

STEPS IN THE RECORDS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

RECORDS INVENTORY

- 👉 Determining the types and scope of the records

RECORDS RETENTION

- 👉 How long each type of record should be kept

RECORDS DISPOSITION

- 👉 Where to keep records used frequently, records used infrequently, and records no longer used

RECORDS PRESERVATION

- 👉 The care of historic and permanent records

RECORDS INVENTORY

👉 The records inventory is a very important step in records management.

👉 As part of this inventory, it is important to determine the location of the records and the type of records.

1. Locate the records

👉 The records may not only be in various offices (file cabinets and computers), but in warehouses, basements, or homes.

👉 In order to locate missing records, it may be helpful to place a notice in the newsletter, on a bulletin board, and announce it during the service and in meetings.

👉 You may want to contact former clerks of session--or if deceased, their families.

2. Describe and identify the types of records

👉 When all the records are located, the inventory can begin. Use an inventory sheet to describe all the records in all locations (see page 5 for sample).

👉 To help identify your records and determine how long they should be kept, it is important that you always include the following information in the inventory:

TYPE OF RECORD (see page 6 for listing)

INCLUSIVE DATES OF THE RECORDS

SIZE (volume - e.g. 5 inches; 1 foot)

COPY/ORIGINAL (you may have many duplicates)

LOCATION

FORMAT (e.g. computer, cassette tape, paper copy. It is possible that you may have the same information on different formats.)

INVENTORY

RECORDS INVENTORY SHEET_(sample)

TYPE	DATES	SIZE	C/O	LOCATION	FORMAT

INVENTORY

TYPES OF RECORDS COMMONLY FOUND

Minutes (session, deacon, trustee, Christian Ed. Committee, etc. note each committee)
Registers (marriage, baptism, death)
Annual reports
Reports (committee, topical, etc.)
Bylaws/charters
Incorporation records
Annual budgets
Annual audits
Financial ledgers of final entry
Subject correspondence
Manuals/handbooks
Newspapers/newsletters
Brochures/promotional materials
Photographs
Property records (deeds, blueprints, etc.)
Wills, bequests
Legal/judicial cases
Contracts
Loan agreements
Personnel records/employee records
FICA / W-2 records
Accounts payable invoices
Accounts receivable records/ledgers
Bank deposit slips
Canceled checks
Bank statements
Cash receipt records
Data for updating mailing lists
Mailing lists
Expense reports
Periodic financial statements
General/routine correspondence (acknowledgments, requests, travel arrangements)
Invitations
Petty cash records
Receipts of purchases
Meeting notices
Travel plan arrangements
Resource files

RECORDS RETENTION

THE RETENTION DECISION PROCESS

When making the decision about how long to keep each record type, four things should be considered about the nature and use of the record type:

1. Does the record fill any fiscal need?

Keep records that have a fiscal need only as long as they are needed to maintain the budget and satisfy any tax requirements.

2. Does the record fill any legal need?

Keep records that fill legal needs only as long as the specific legal problem is unsettled and is a routine matter. In some cases federal requirements mandate keeping the records for a stated period following the cases' resolution.

3. Does the record fill any administrative need?

Keep records that fill an administrative need for only a short time. These records include travel arrangements, routine correspondence, etc. Once the administrative function is filled, throw out the records.

4. Does the record fill any historic need?

Keep records that fill historic needs permanently. Make efforts to ensure their preservation (see the last section).

Sometimes records will fill needs from two areas. When a record fills two needs and one of them is historic, the record should be kept permanently.

RETENTION

RETENTION REQUIREMENTS FOR COMMON TYPES OF RECORDS

Temporary records are usually kept for 7 years. If you are uncertain how long to keep records, consult your auditor, accountant, legal advisor, or contact the staff of the Presbyterian Historical Society. Some retention requirements vary from state to state.

TYPES	RETENTION
Minutes	permanent
Registers	permanent
Annual reports	permanent
Reports	permanent
Bylaws/charters	permanent
Incorporation records	permanent
Annual budgets	permanent
Annual audits	permanent
Financial ledgers of final entry	permanent
Subject correspondence	permanent
Manuals/handbooks	permanent
Newspapers/newsletters	permanent
Brochures/promotional materials (1 copy)	permanent
Photographs	permanent
Property appraisals, records of sale	20 years after sale
Architectural drawings, plats, plans, blueprints	permanent
Wills, bequests	permanent
Legal/judicial cases	permanent
Loan agreements	satisfaction + 20 years
Contracts	active + 3 years
Personnel records/employee records	employment
FICA / W-2 records	7 years
Accounts payable invoices	3 years
Accounts payable	7 years
Accounts receivable records	3 years
Bank deposit slips	3 years
Bank statements	7 years
Canceled checks	7 years
Cash receipt records	3 years

TYPES	RETENTION
Data for updating mailing lists	1 year
Mailing lists	active
Periodic financial statements	2 years
Expense reports	7 years
General/routine correspondence	3 years
Invitations	1 year
Petty cash records	7 years
Receipts of purchases	7 years
Meeting notices	1 year
Travel plans/arrangements	1 year
Resource files	active

RETENTION

DEFINING TEMPORARY AND PERMANENT RECORDS

- 👍 Once you have established retention for all the different types of records, you can reduce storage cost and improve access by identifying and storing records according to the category and the nature of each record in the category.
- 👍 There are two record categories:
 - TEMPORARY RECORDS
 - PERMANENT RECORDS
- 👍 Both record categories have records with the following characteristics:
 - ACTIVE
 - INACTIVE
 - VITAL

TEMPORARY RECORDS: *ACTIVE*

Active temporary records are used frequently, such as the current year's expense reports or accounts receivable records. These records have no historic value. Store these records in the office only while they are used daily or weekly.

TEMPORARY RECORDS: *INACTIVE*

Non-current temporary records are used infrequently, but must be kept for a limited time period (for I.R.S. or other requirements). These records can be weeded out of the "active" office files and stored in a less busy, costly space (e.g., storeroom or warehouse). Label them clearly, indicating their content and when they can be discarded.

TEMPORARY RECORDS: *VITAL*

Vital temporary records are essential for the church to function smoothly. If destroyed or lost, the church would be unable to operate until the records were recovered or recreated. If these records are not microfilmed, store them in a location protected from theft, fire, and water damage or any other type of potential disaster.

RETENTION

PERMANENT RECORDS: *ACTIVE*

These records contain information of permanent value, but they are also used frequently, such as current minutes or annual reports. A copy of these records can be filed in the current files, or the whole record can be microfilmed and the film used as the office reference copy. The originals should be in an area protected from fire, flood, theft or any other type of damage.

PERMANENT RECORDS: *INACTIVE*

These records possess historic or legal value, but are not used frequently. They should not be stored in an active area, but in an area that encourages long term preservation as much as possible (see preservation section).

PERMANENT RECORDS: *VITAL*




These records are permanently valuable and are essential for the church to function. They should be stored in an area protected from theft, fire, water, or any other potential type of damage. Baptismal records are an example of these types of records.

RECORDS DISPOSITION



After identifying record types and determining retention schedules, you can achieve further cost savings by relocating less frequently used records.

Remember that office space is expensive to rent, create and expand, especially given the cost of filing equipment.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

-  Keep records used daily or weekly close at hand in the office or filing station.
-  Store non-permanent records that are used only a few times a month or a few times a year, but take up extensive space, in a more remote, less expensive area (e.g. storeroom, basement). This approach leaves room in office file cabinets for more frequently used files. It might also save the cost of purchasing extra file cabinets, or even maintaining/renting more office space.
-  Store records that are used infrequently but are necessary for legal purposes in a more remote (but safe and secure) area.

DESTRUCTION

-  Remove non-current temporary and non-current permanent records from the office and transfer them into a box on an annual basis. Label the boxes with a statement of their content. Add a destruction date on the label for non-current temporary records.
-  An appointed person should check the storage area yearly and remove and destroy the records marked for that year.

RECORDS PRESERVATION

THE NEED TO PRESERVE PERMANENT RECORDS

Permanent congregational records document many aspects of the life of the church and its mission. In addition, they provide vital links to understand the development of and commitment to the community of faith. It is therefore crucial to preserve these records indefinitely.

For information and guidelines in starting an archives, contact the staff at the Presbyterian Historical Society.

CAUSES OF DETERIORATION

The nature of records themselves can be one of the biggest preservation challenges. Whether the records are paper or computer disks, the components of these materials are not permanent and are susceptible to various environmental problems.

ACID

Acid is the major cause of the internal destruction of paper-based records. Most paper is composed of acidic materials that break down the paper fibers.

LIGHT

Natural and artificial light are damaging to all record formats (paper, tapes, films, cassettes, computer disks, etc.) Sunlight is the most damaging of all.

TEMPERATURE

High or fluctuating temperatures can damage all record formats. Temperature fluctuation is more damaging than a constantly high temperature.

PRESERVATION

HUMIDITY

Both extremely dry and humid environments damage all record formats. Mold and rust can develop in high moisture environments and quickly damage most formats. Extremely dry environments cause paper, film, and other materials to become brittle.

HANDLING/STORAGE

Many times records are damaged through handling. Papers are often folded, bent or rolled. Improper storage and handling can also cause books to warp, tear, or develop sagging text blocks.

Computer tapes, disks, audio cassettes, and reels become damaged through over-handling, careless storage or exposure to magnets or magnetic fields.

High risk areas, such as unlocked, unsecured rooms or space under plumbing or leaking roofs, can pose threats to records.

SOLUTIONS

Here are some basic steps to take to reduce the environmental threats and lengthen the life of the records.

ACID DETERIORATION

Acid-free paper: When creating important permanent documents such as minutes or reports, use acid-free (alkaline based) paper. The Presbyterian Historical Society can provide you with names of suppliers.

Microfilming: Originals which are already on acidic paper can be microfilmed to preserve the information. Microfilming is strongly encouraged since it allows the creation of a security copy of the records in the event of a disaster. The Presbyterian Historical Society offers microfilming services at cost (see page 17).

PRESERVATION

LIGHT

To help minimize light damage, store records in an area without windows, or block out the windows using dark shades or other means. Keep lights off when the area is not in use. Install ultra-violet sheaths on florescent lights.

TEMPERATURE

Keep temperature at a low, constant level as much as possible (68 to 72 degrees Fahrenheit if possible). Temperatures that fluctuate are more damaging than high temperatures, so it is better to maintain a constant high temperature of 80 for a 24-hour period, for example, than to have a nighttime reading of 70 and a daytime reading of 85.

HUMIDITY

The use of de-humidifiers, humidifiers, and air-conditioning can help maintain a good environment. Photocopy materials that are already brittle onto acid-free paper.

HANDLING/STORAGE

Handle permanent records with care. Make sure books and files are not being curled, folded, or bent in storage. Do not use tapes or metal fasteners (staples, metal paper clips, etc.) Do not use post-it notes on permanent records. The glue remains on the paper and accelerates deterioration.

Store permanent records in a dark, cool, dry environment away from food areas and any areas that can cause damage through leaks, floods, excessive light (natural or artificial) and pests.

Do not store permanent records on electronic media such as computer hard drives or disks, CD-ROMs, etc. New technologies increase the problem of accessing records with outdated or no-longer-extant software or hardware, and data loss can occur in storage as well as during active use. For short-term storage, make back-up copies regularly and store them off site. For long-term storage, transfer the records to paper or microfilm.

These are some very basic steps for storage. If your program and resources permit more expansive steps, please contact the staff at the Presbyterian Historical Society.

ARCHIVAL SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE PRESBYTERIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

STORAGE OF PERMANENT RECORDS



For security or other considerations, you may wish to send permanent records to the Presbyterian Historical Society. We will gladly accept the following congregational records on deposit (that is, the ownership of the records remains with the congregation):

minutes (sessions, deacons, trustees, congregational meetings, and women's associations) *
registers
charters, articles of incorporation
property records

***Please note that the PHS accepts only the original signed minutes or microfilmed copies of the originals for deposit.**

Before shipping records please contact:

Presbyterian Historical Society
Presbyterian Church (USA)
425 Lombard Street
Philadelphia, PA 19147
215-627-1852

refdesk@history.pcusa.org
www.history.pcusa.org

MICROFILMING



The Presbyterian Historical Society will microfilm your records at cost. The society established the microfilming program to address the problems associated with preserving manuscripts, published records, and other materials. In contrast to most commercial microfilming firms, the society uses archival quality microfilm, and the microfilmer is trained to handle rare and fragile documents.



When the society films records for congregations, we retain and preserve the archival master negatives as well as a positive use copy. A positive copy is also provided to the church whose records are filmed. This copy can be used on microfilm readers available at most public and college libraries.



If you are unable to send your permanent records for microfilming, contact your state archives. Some state archives have microfilm programs that offer archival quality filming at reasonable cost. We can also supply you with information about ANSI/AIIM standards for archival film if you wish to work with a local vendor.

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