

Manual for South Carolina religious archives and recordkeeping

by Jeanette Bergeron

**South Carolina
State Historical Records Advisory Board
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Foreword

About this manual

It is with a great deal of pleasure that the State Historical Records Advisory Board (SHRAB) publishes this archives and record-keeping manual for South Carolina's religious organizations. The SHRAB became aware of the need for such a manual as a result of its recently completed grant program. While the SHRAB funded a number of church and synagogue projects to establish archives, there was no up-to-date and comprehensive guidance available for religious organizations in South Carolina. Though this manual deals with policies and practices for Christian church settings, using examples from the experience of one church, the guidelines it offers will help many other South Carolina religious organizations set up and operate an archives program and conduct the daily management of their records.

Some background on how this manual came to be published is in order. On 3 September 1998, the SHRAB awarded grants to seventeen South Carolina institutions and organizations, including public libraries, historical societies, university libraries, museums, and churches. Among the seventeen grants was one to St. Michael and All Angels' Episcopal Church, Columbia. The grant included a provision that the consultant hired to help the church in its archival and record-keeping matters should also draft a manual for the benefit of all of South Carolina's churches.

This grant was awarded in the final round of the SHRAB's second grant program for repositories of non-government historical record, the first having been in 1995–1997. It was supported by a \$100,000 grant from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC, Grant No. 97-096) and a \$50,000 cash match from the South Carolina General Assembly. The SHRAB had already funded synagogue projects, a statewide Jewish heritage project, and several church projects. All pointed up the great need South Carolina's religious organizations had for basic direction and guidance in archives and recordkeeping—a need that could best be served by a manual. Jeanette Bergeron, the grant-funded consultant for the St. Michael and All Angels' Episcopal Church project, was uniquely qualified for the work, having already served as consultant to several SHRAB-funded church projects across the state. The final preparation of the manual for publication was performed by Deputy SHRAB Coordinator Patricia A. Morris, who also served as the project administrator for the SHRAB's 1995–1999 grant programs. I hope you find this manual a useful starting point and guide in organizing and managing your historically valuable records.

About the SHRAB and other resources

The SHRAB serves as the state's liaison with the NHPRC, the grants program of the National Archives. SHRAB members are appointed by the governor, serve as the state's central advisory body for historical records planning, review grant proposals submitted to the NHPRC by South Carolina institutions and organizations, conduct grant projects funded by state and the NHPRC within South Carolina, and engage in a variety of educational activities, both independently and in conjunction with other organizations. Staff support for the SHRAB is provided by the South Carolina Department of Archives and History.

In addition to this manual, the SHRAB also funded, through a grant to the South Carolina State Library, the purchase of over one hundred fifty books and video tapes on archives and records management. These materials are available at the State Library in Columbia or through interlibrary loan to libraries elsewhere in the state. Be sure to take advantage of these other resources. If you would like more information about the SHRAB, visit the Board's Internet website: <http://www.state.sc.us/scdah/shrab1.htm>, or write to the SHRAB, c/o South Carolina Archives and History Center, 8301 Parklane Road, Columbia, SC 29223-4905.

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Preface

Portions of this manual were developed with funding from a grant provided by the South Carolina State Historical Records Advisory Board (SHRAB) in late 1998. The grant was awarded to St. Michael and All Angels' Episcopal Church, Columbia, South Carolina, to care for its rapidly expanding document collection.

Although founded in 1957 and relatively new by church standards, St. Michael and its congregation realized its records had already become voluminous. In general, the church needed to manage its records process carefully. In particular, archival records needed to be sorted from others and separately cared for. The SHRAB awarded the grant to establish a records program. It also stipulated the production of a manual to serve as a model for religious Archives in South Carolina.

I had the privilege of serving as consulting archivist to St. Michael Church on this project. I am indebted to the hard work, enthusiasm and discerning eyes of members of the St. Michael Archives Committee, especially Charles Wickenberg and Theresa Hicks, the co-chairs. It is not often one gets to work with a volunteer archives committee that includes the talents of a former editor for the *State*, a professional genealogist, several practicing librarians, and charter members of a church!

My involvement with archives started in the late 1970s at Bankers Trust of South Carolina where, among other duties, I managed an advertising archives. Since then, I have worked with many private archives. For this manual, I relied on my working experience not only with St. Michael's Church but also with the archives of the synods and churches of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America in the South, the two Episcopal dioceses in South Carolina, Green Sea Baptist Church, and Trinity Episcopal Cathedral. I also relied on my knowledge of my own church's records, First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

This is not a book of academic theory and footnotes. It is a practical manual of tips and guidelines *for small budgets*. It is rooted in personal experience, a career of handling millions of documents and other archival items, and numerous, ever-changing sources—many not in print. I would, however, like to acknowledge the special wisdom and skills of four South Carolina archivists with whom I network regularly: Sharon Bennett, Patricia Morris, Connie Schulz, and Bob Williams.

I am convinced that the denominations and congregations of South Carolina have a rich documentary heritage virtually unparalleled in America. If your church has not yet contributed to this heritage, I hope this manual will guide you far in that process.

—Jeanette Bergeron
1 May 1999

Chapter 1: what are archives?

A worldwide genealogical boom has elevated the importance of religious and church archives and placed greater demands on church offices for information from church records. The archival records from church archives, however, have always been most important because they record the activity of nurturing spiritual growth and yield priceless vital statistics. One generation can leave another no greater gift than the preservation of church records.

The term “archives” describes both records that have been selected for permanent preservation because of their value and the physical space that houses the archival collection. To distinguish between the two meanings, this manual designates the physical space for archives as “Archives” and archival records as “archives.”

Records with archival value link us to our past. They help us understand who we are, where we came from, and why we often act the way we do. Just think of the things that are rooted in your church history—its location, architecture, artwork, interior design, worship materials, organizational structure, forms of worship, choice of pastors, support of missions, ministry to the community, social concerns, leadership patterns, and countless other facets of its life. Using its archives to reflect on its history helps us determine the future of our ministry better. In addition, archives give us inspiration by yielding information about people who created our heritage and made us proud heirs.

Differences between archives and libraries

Anyone who works with archives should be clear about the distinction between an Archives and a library.

Although many archivists are also accredited librarians, and although some libraries house special collections of archives, the principles followed for the care of a library’s special collections are **not** those used for the commercially mass-produced books, videotapes, or magazines that distinguish the holdings of a library from the holdings of an Archives. Libraries generally arrange their mass produced materials around one of two major classification systems—the Dewey Decimal System (Dewey), which is used in public libraries where books are collected on a full range of subjects, and the Library of Congress Classification System (LC), which is used chiefly in academic and special collection libraries where subjects are collected in much greater depth—and they lend most of their materials. Many churches will already have a library or similar resource center when they decide to establish an archives.

Archives, on the other hand, generally contain unique materials that an organization creates in the ordinary course of business. Little is mass-produced. The smallest unit in an archival collection is a single-page document or photograph, a situation that, when compared with a library’s, poses unique problems for arrangement and retrieval—how do you keep up with all these single pieces of paper. Neither Dewey nor LC works well, so to arrange archives, you follow principles like original order and arrangement by creator. You also give special consideration to the preservation and security of archives, and you never lend them. Once archival documents are placed in the church Archives, they belong to the entire congregation and should not leave the building.

Getting started: a checklist

Organizing a church Archives involves a few steps, a modest investment in supplies, and a considerable investment in time and labor.

Basic steps:

- 1. Select an archives or historical committee supported by your congregation's governing board.
- 2. Look at archival programs run by churches in your locality.
- 3. Develop a collection management policy that explains what you will keep and what you will return or throw away. See sample policies beginning on page 75.
- 4. Involve church workers in your plans. Together you can identify and safeguard archives and invite donations from other members of the congregation.
- 5. Select a proper storage area for the archives collection. See page 20.
- 6. Accumulate archival material in one location.
- 7. Maintain an accessions register to show who gave what, when it arrived, and where it is located. See the sample on page 17.
- 8. Prepare a checklist or inventory of the records, papers, and other items already on hand. This will be a preliminary list without detailed descriptions of what the documents contain. See the sample on page 18.
- 9. Create a plan to locate and copy or transfer missing records.
- 10. Determine what the major record groups will be for your collection and begin to arrange, describe and preserve them accordingly. See page 15.
- 11. Purchase appropriate archival supplies. See page 21.
- 12. Plan for the continued support of the archives. You could apply for a regular budget allocation for preservation supplies and equipment in the same way you allocate funds to purchase office supplies, or you could ask your memorials committee to suggest the Archives as a recipient for memorial gifts.
- 13. To save today's history, devise a plan to collect today's archives as they are generated—your yearly board minutes, newsletters, bulletins, and so on. Ask the church secretary and other key officials to forward pristine copies of these items to the Archives. Documents from 1999 will be as interesting to people living in 2099 as documents from 1899 are to us today. See page 32 for the best way to prepare today's archives.

Chapter 2: Identifying your records

Remember church records belong to the church. This is true regardless of who created a record or has been its custodian. If church records are in private hands, they should be reclaimed if possible and stored for safekeeping by church authorities. Most church members, if they think about it, will realize they are incurring an unnecessary personal liability if they, alone, are responsible for safeguarding any church property they hold from the danger of fire, water damage or other disasters.

Locating archives on church grounds

Ask church staff and officers if they have seen any old records and documents. Search, with permission, if necessary:

- safes or walk-in vaults
- filing cabinets holding today's business
- filing cabinets holdings yesterday's business
- attic and basement
- closets and built-in cabinets and bookcases
- library
- cases and boxes
- behind pulpits, under pews and chairs
- between old wall partitions
- cornerstone
- outbuildings

Locating archives held by others

Once you have searched the church premises thoroughly, look for documents stored off church grounds. Likely candidates would include:

- a bank safe deposit box
- church members, present and past
- former pastors
- files of local newspapers
- files of local public libraries and history rooms
- the state's municipal and county libraries, historical societies, archives, town halls, and courthouses
- denominational magazines, especially early editions
- nearby churches of your denomination
- church offices at the regional, district, diocese, synod, or national level
- non-resident members and children of deceased members
- local garage sales, auctions, book sales, flea markets, and rummage sales

While another archival institution may not be willing to give you materials it has processed and cared for at its expense for years, it may be willing to help you obtain copies or at least get descriptions of the materials it holds on your church.

When is an item archival?

When members of a church archives committee gather to sort church records, the question most frequently heard is “Do we need to save this?” Some members will want to save everything, others almost nothing. To be of archival value, a record should meet three standards:

- 1. It should have been created by a unit of the local congregation or should be a news clipping or a similar document that contains information about a unit of the local congregation.*
- 2. It should appear on the list of records commonly held by local religious archives. (See page 99 for a short list and pages 29–64 for more details.)*
- 3. It should pass the appraisal test, as described below.*

Appraisal

Appraisal is the process of determining the value, and thus what will be the final disposition, of records based on their administrative, legal and fiscal use, their value for information and research, their arrangement and their relationship to other records. Every church will have exceptions to the following appraisal criteria, but used as guidelines, they should help most of you gauge the value of your documents.

Appraisal checklist

Answering the following questions will help you decide which records are archival and what noncurrent records should be destroyed or transferred to the custody of others. As your Archives matures, develops, and acquires additional materials, your church should periodically review and reappraise its archival holdings.

- How old is the record? Because of their age, an Archives may keep almost all 19th-century records and hold only selected 20th-century records .
- Does the item duplicate holdings already in the Archives? If yes, discard it.
- Does the item add to the value of holdings already in the Archives? If yes, keep it.
- Is the informational content summarized or available in a report or statement? An Archives may decide to keep the summary rather than the whole document, depending on space and supplies.
- Does the item discuss policies and procedures? If yes, keep it—it is a substantive record.
- Does the item reflect the decision-making processes of your church? If yes, keep it.
- Is the item a housekeeping record or a piece of courtesy correspondence that discloses meeting arrangements or expresses thanks but does not convey the subject matter of the meeting? If it is solely a housekeeping record or a courtesy piece, discard it.

- Is there a legal or fiscal reason for keeping the document? If yes, keep it. Most legal and fiscal records are permanent archives. See the retention charts in this manual for further details.
- Will there be an administrative or informational reason to have this record twenty years from now? If yes, keep it.
- Does the record contain unique information about a person, place or event. If yes, keep it.
- Does the material have unique inherent value because of its association with an important person or event, because it tells a story, or because it will display well? If yes, keep it.
- Is the information dependable and truthful? If not, discard it.
- Is the information sensitive? If it will be harmful to the living or their descendants, access should be restricted or the item should be destroyed—pastoral counseling records, for example.
- Is the record potentially harmful to other records in the Archives because it is has mold, mildew or similar damage, and is the cost to remedy this damage unjustifiable? If yes, discard it.
- Is this record a single miscellaneous item or a collection of items? Unless they are very old or historic (“your” Magna Carta or Declaration of Independence), single miscellaneous items are of little use to a smaller Archives. Multiple related items will have more informational value over time.
- Is this record more suitable for the collection of an Archives like the regional church archives? If yes, inquire about forwarding it to that Archives.
- Is the item in its original state? Records with handwritten notes in the margins were usually annotated after they were created. These, therefore, are actually legal documents in their own right. Make sure you save the document you need to save. If the only copy you have has been annotated, save it until you find the original unannotated version.
- Is the format something your Archives can deal with? If, for instance, it is a computer diskette or a sound recording, do you have the equipment to play it back or can you convert it at reasonable cost? If the answer to either question is no, discard it. Millions of 5¼ inch floppy disks that exist today are inaccessible unless you can find a computer with dual drives—and then is it worth it?
- Do you know what the record was for or can you find the answer without spending too much time and effort? If no, either discard it, or if it seems valuable, offer it to a more suitable Archives.

Creating archival records: what your church staff needs to know

While you are on a mission to locate and preserve your church archives, others in your church will be producing materials and information daily. These materials and information may become archives someday. Below are some tips for preparing records, which you can pass on to them. Records prepared this way will result in better-quality archival documents for the future.

Preparation checklist

- Put the final versions of all documents on good-quality paper, preferably acid-free. This includes the copies of documents the church keeps when it mails the originals elsewhere.
- Date every document with the month, day and year in four digits. Before long, archival workers

will wonder did a document dated 6/1/10 come from the twentieth century or the twenty-first. It is hard to believe that today, a large number of archival documents carry no date at all.

- Make sure the ink used to print your documents gives good coverage. Use good-quality dark cartridges in the computer printer and good-quality dark toner in the copier machine.
- Label second, third, and succeeding pages with a brief subject identifier and the date to avoid confusion should page one become separated from the others—*Vestry Minutes, Feb. 8, 1999, page 2*, for example.
- If you will be binding bulletins, minutes, newsletters, and like documents, give them generous margins. That way, you will be able to photocopy them flat later because you will have left enough room to keep the binding flexible and the center gutter wide. One suggestion is to bind one set of these materials for reference and keep an unbound set in the Archives.
- Try to keep your office records in a moderate environment—dry, reasonably cool, free of dust, free of crumbs that may attract insects, and away from overly bright light or sunshine except for short periods of time.
- Try not to staple, hole-punch, enclose in a plastic binder or notebook, or encircle with a rubber band any copy that will be passed on to the Archives. It's a good practice to set aside a copy for the Archives and then staple or bind other copies for use.
- Instead of saving news clippings directly from a newspaper, cut them out, photocopy them on good-quality paper, and label them with a date, page number, and the name of the newspaper. Newsprint deteriorates quickly and harms the paper around it.

Chapter 3: Caring for your records

Now your church has identified its archival records, how do you take care of them? Archivists call the next step “processing.” Processing involves arranging and describing the records so they can be easily used and preserving them through proper storage, packaging, labeling, and shelving. Let’s look at it one step at a time.

Before we look at the process one step at a time, keep two points in mind. In an ideal world, you should handle a document only once when you are processing. This is not for preservation as much as it is for efficiency. Just as you would never get through the daily mail if your indecisiveness meant you kept picking it up and putting it down, so, too, you will never get your Archives off the ground if you keep picking up a document, getting frustrated with it, putting it down, shuffling it around, and coming back to it a week, a month, or a year later. Make a decision, even if it means thinking out loud with someone else, consulting archival literature, reviewing your policy guidelines, flagging it for further research—whatever works.

The other point is that an Archives is a work in progress. Sometimes you may have to defer a final decision on what to do with a document until your Archives is better established. That’s okay. Archivists label folders in pencil—for purposes of flexibility as well as preservation. You can make a deliberate decision to defer final judgment on a record or a series until you understand the big picture better. You should keep records you will be deferring in a special holding area. Label them for easy identification, and don’t forget to come back to them eventually!

Now let’s look at the three major steps of processing.

Arranging the church archives

Arrangement is the process of organizing papers or records in accordance with accepted principles. Archivists follow two main principles of arrangement—original order and provenance. As it implies, original order means that records should be kept in their original filing arrangement to preserve their unique relationships to each other. Provenance means that the records of one organization or unit should not be mingled with the records of another organization or unit. Generally, these two principles work in harmony with each other.

As far as provenance goes, since all your records should be derived from one single organization—your church—your concern will be not to mix records of one subunit with records of another subunit. You would, for instance, want to keep men’s auxiliary records separate from women’s auxiliary records—you would not intermingle their financial records, their minutes, and so on. At the very least, you should store them in separate folders, although they may ultimately be housed in a single box labeled “Auxiliaries,” depending on the quantity you have of each.

Original order can be a bit trickier. Often, in a church, one person may have created the records, another person may have placed some of them into a filing scheme later, and eventually another person may have boxed them up for storage in the attic or basement. Now, yet another person has rescued them for the Archives. Somewhere along the way, the original order may have been lost. Where there is no apparent order or there is a hodgepodge of different orders for the same types of

records, you are free to create one that makes sense for the future use of the records.

The final arrangement should be one that provides users with the best access to the informational content of the records. Let's look at an example of membership transfers. Imagine that your church has kept these records by year, with 1994 separated from 1995 and so on for other years. The filing system within each year, however, is not always the same. Some years they were filed alphabetically by last name, while other years they were filed by month and day. You can probably help future user best by filing them all alphabetically by last name. After all, people usually remember names but have terrible memories for exact dates. In this case, you will opt for consistency to help users by maintaining original order on some records and modifying it on others.

Possible styles for arrangement

- original order
- provenance (by major records-creating units of your church)
- chronological
- alphabetical
- chronological within alphabetical, or vice versa
- subject headings
- organizational (based on your church's organization chart)
- format (minutes, ledgers, photographs)
- an arrangement suggested by your national church body

Organizational charts

Consulting the organizational chart of the church can be especially helpful in determining an arrangement according to units of the congregation. If you lack an organizational chart, it would be worth your time to create one. It will help you both establish a comprehensive archives and organize the materials within it.

Photographs

In the case of photographs, you will more than likely have no original order to go by. In this case, you may find a subject arrangement most helpful. You could, for instance, organize them by building exteriors, building interiors, pastors, youth activities, women's auxiliary, anniversary events, and so on.

Mixed items

If you have a mixture of items, including many single items, and you are stumped about how to arrange them, ask yourself "What does this really relate to?" or "What would someone use it for in the future?" and try to build an arrangement from the answers.

Tip for beginners

Until you become comfortable with arranging records or until you have a better idea of what most of the records will be like in your Archives, dedicate a document box for each of your church's major records-creating unit. After you have accumulated documents in your containers, sort them into chronological order according to record type: correspondence, minutes, reports, printed documents, financials, photographs, and so on. You can continue to refine your arrangement over time.

Miscellaneous

Miscellaneous is not an acceptable permanent arrangement. It will only come back to haunt you. Nobody ever found a document again after it was labeled “miscellaneous.” Find these records a better home, even if you change your mind about them several times.

Describing the church archives

Description is the process of describing your collection through the preparation of finding aids. In an archives, finding aids are the equivalent of a card catalog, an online public access catalog, or a bibliography in a library. Description allows you to establish intellectual control over the content of your Archives.

Word processing software on a computer is almost essential for the development of finding aids. You will need to make many revisions in the finding aids as your collection grows, fills in, and expands. If you want to share your finding aids electronically with other archives, then you should use one of the two “universal” word processing programs-Microsoft Word or WordPerfect.

You should house all your finding aids in notebooks which can be easily updated and easily accessed by workers and users of the Archives.

Accessions register

There are several basic types of finding aids. The first is an accessions register. Typically, an accessions register will record the date, title, office, volume, condition of the record, person transferring or donating materials, and restrictions on access. The accession register constitutes a permanent verification of what was contributed to the Archives. It is far better to write this information into a log than to rely on memory, especially when an Archives hopefully will be maintained by a succession of church historians and archives committee volunteers over many decades.

The register can either be a log or a cardfile of note cards, whichever works best for your Archives. One hint on creating an accession register is to fill it out in pencil, especially the location column. The location information-where you actually store this record in the Archives-is absolutely essential for you to be able to link your donations with your storage locations and find them repeatedly. However, locations can change over time and it’s important to be able to update your accession register.

Sample accession register

No.	Date	Description	Received	From	Volume (qty)	Location
99-10	1/22/99	Congregational Meeting Minutes, 1959-84 in good condition	12/30/98	Secretary	2 vols.	Container 10
99-11	1/30/99	Monthly newsletters, 1982-1998, in good condition except 1985 (water damage)	1/10/99	Secretary	1 carton	Container 20

Checklist or inventory

Another basic finding aid is a checklist, or inventory, which lists the holdings in the Archives. This is a preliminary list of the records and papers already on hand, and it should include any materials that are not in the physical control of the Archives but which are archival nevertheless—important financial papers, which may be housed in the church safe for the convenience of the church treasurer and church secretary, for example. The inventory may or may not include detailed descriptions of what the records contain, but it needs to tell you, and those who follow you, where the materials can be found.

The following shows a sample inventory from St. Michael and All Angels' Episcopal Church.

Sample Collection Inventory—June 1999
Archives
St. Michael and All Angels' Episcopal Church
Columbia, SC

- 1 Box, Annual Parish Reports and Annual Parish Meeting Minutes*
 - Annual Parish Reports—1958–66, 1969–72, 1974, 1979–82*
 - Parish Meeting Minutes—1968, 1970–72, 1974–75, 1982*
- 1 Box, Registers of Church Services, 1957–96*
 - (bound books with attendance numbers, officials, etc.)*
- 2 Boxes, Parish Registers, 1958–99*
 - (microfilm and separately bound books on baptisms, communicants, marriages, etc.)*
- 2 Boxes, Vestry Minutes, bound, 1959–89*
- 4 Boxes, Vestry Minutes, unbound, 1959–98*
- Estimated 2 Boxes, Vestry Correspondence and Reports (sorting in progress)*
- 1 Box, Photographs (approx. 2 boxes more unprocessed)*
- 3 Boxes, Guardian newsletters, 1965–1996*
 - Includes Magpie predecessor newsletter & Youth Guardian*
- 2 Boxes, Bulletins, bound, 1978–97*
- 2 Boxes, Bulletins, unbound, 1959–98*
- 1 Box, Episcopal Church Women's records (sorting in progress)*
 - Includes original Women's Auxiliary records*
- 1 Box, Membership Records Letters of Transfer, In and Out, 1970–72, 1975*
- 1 Box, Churchyard Committee records*
 - Includes bylaws, minutes, financials, court orders*
- 1 Box, Preschool program records*
- Estimated 5 Boxes, Memorial records (sorting in progress)*

Box description

As you flesh out the arrangement of your archival collection, there are other finding aids, or guides, you can produce to help with the future use of the collection. One simple guide is a box description.

In addition to listing the titles on the folders, it can also provide other pertinent data like dates, background on the creating unit of the records, and information about the relationship of these records to others in your Archives.

Sample Box Inventory
Archives —St. Michael and All Angels' Episcopal Church
June 1999

This box contains documents from the startup of the St. Michael & All Angels' mission in the Trenholm Road area of northeast Columbia in 1957–1958 and later records related to the creation of the parish. Originally the mission met at Satchelford Road Elementary School. Ongoing parish administrative records, such as bylaws, organization charts and planning documents, are also stored here.

1 Box, Parish Organization and Administration records

Organization of Mission; origination of St. Michael name & other symbols,
1957–58

Bylaws, 1969, 1971, 1972, 1974, 1981, 1987, 1993

Organization chart, 1981, 1984

Parish officers, 1972, 1985

Parish Council, 1975

Parish Life Commission, 1994

Adult Education Commission, 1992

Parochial Reports, 1958, 1959, 1964

Planning Study, 1966–67

Survey of members, 1985

Parish goals, 1980

Parish self study, 1990

Electronic catalogs

If your church archives committee can tap the talents of an experienced database designer in the congregation, you can set up a simple database catalog for your Archives in Microsoft Access or another software program. This will allow you to do easy subject term searching and date searching—you can, for instance, conduct a search by using the “find” feature under “edit” in Microsoft Word. If your church has its own web site, you might want to put your archives database on the site and let Internet surfers know what materials are housed in your Archives.

If you really want to get sophisticated with your finding aids, you can learn machine-readable cataloging (MARC) and set up “official” catalog records the way major Archives do. An alternative is to submit a description of your collection to the Library of Congress' National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections (NUCMC), which will then list it in RLIN, a national catalog network of research collections, and alert researchers to the location and nature of your holdings.

If all this makes your head spin, don't worry, you can stop where most small archives do—with an accessions register, a collection inventory, and box description guides.

Preserving a small archives

It is just as important to extend the physical life of your archives as it is to collect them. If records disintegrate, as is happening every day with nineteenth-century church convention minutes, they cannot function as the memory bank for your church. The physical environment in which you house your archives is the most important ingredient to their safety and well being.

Selecting archival space

What characteristics are important for the storage area for your archival records? If possible, it is best to have a room dedicated to your archives. The best situation would be a fire-resistant or fireproof vault room. It is surprising how many churches already have one—often with a large combination-safe walk-in door and reinforced safe walls or cinder-block walls.

If you don't have a walk-in vault or other fireproof room, choose a room that:

- can be locked securely.
- can be maintained at more or less even temperature and humidity levels (65–60 degrees Fahrenheit and 44–50 percent humidity).
- is free from mildew or mold odor.
- is not located under, above, or adjacent to a kitchen with the dangers it would pose from fire, food odors, and food sources, which attract insects.
- is exposed to a minimum light from windows. You can cover windows with blinds, curtains, or shades.
- is not located under or adjacent to water pipes, commodes, and other sources of running water or waste disposal.
- is clean and free from insect infestation.
- is preferably on a middle floor. Basements and attics both pose potential dangers in severe wind storms or floods.
- has electrical outlets for reading lights and other equipment.
- has sufficient space inside or nearby for processing the archives and for helping researchers use them.
- is convenient to a photocopier.

Aim for as many of these conditions as you can achieve, starting with the ones listed first. You should keep fire extinguishers—for putting out paper fires and electrical fires—as close to the Archives room as possible. You should also have heat, smoke, and water detectors, with alarms that sound both on and off premises. To monitor temperature and humidity, you can purchase an inexpensive card from an archival supply house and attach it at eye level in your Archives room. You may also borrow a package of environmental monitoring equipment from PALMCOP. A PALMCOP consultant will help you analyze its data. If humidity is excessive over a long period of time, especially in the summer, use a dehumidifier in the room.

Selecting shelving

How do you equip your Archives? The best answer is the most economical-use industrial steel shelving with an enamel-coating. Resist the temptation to custom-build beautiful wooden bookshelves unless you can coat them with many clear archival polyethylene coatings. Unlike steel, which is inert, wood contains natural acids, which migrate to paper in contact with the wood. Varnishes and stains give off harmful chemicals as gas.

The shelving units should have shelves enough to allow your document cases and record cartons to sit directly on them. The cases and cartons should not be stacked on top of each other. Unless the records boxes are small and flat, stacking them on top of each other breaks them down and creates undue stress on the records inside.

A safe or fireproof cabinet, while convenient for storing your most valuable minutes and membership records, will not hold all your church archives. Because mold builds up in some types of safes, it is important to open its door occasionally to let the air circulate.

You should have lighting enough to carry out the work in the Archives. Unless you leave documents sitting out—and you shouldn't—there is no need to install special light filters for the short time most documents will be exposed.

Selecting supplies

Packaging is probably the most important element of archival preservation. You should house your archival materials in acid-free containers in a dark space where they are away from any light source and protected from dust. You need to invest in two types of supplies to accomplish this: acid-free folders and acid-free boxes in various sizes. Most of your Archives budget will be invested in these. They are crucial to the protection of your archives, and you should make them your annual priority.

Besides light, humidity, and insect damage, which can all be managed, documents disintegrate because of acid—acid inherent in poor-quality paper, acid from manila office folders, acid from other documents, and acid from dust. While it is not practical for a church to deacidify its archives *en masse* as the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., is doing to its historic collections, their disintegration can be slowed by storing them in acid-free folders within acid-free boxes.

The preferred archival storage box is the gray document case created in the style of the original Hollinger Corporation box. Many experienced archivists buy the legal-size boxes and folders exclusively. The difference in cost is small, and they can accommodate both letter- and legal-sized documents, which are often mixed together in files. Although the cubic-foot-size record carton is more economical, its seventy-five-pound weight when filled with records is more than most female and elderly archives workers and volunteers can safely handle, especially when the cartons are stored on overhead shelves.

Specialty-size boxes exist for microfilm rolls, videotapes, oversize flat documents like tabloids and newspapers, blueprints, and so on. The preferred storage box for archival photographs, slides, and negatives is one that is both acid-free and lignin-free. Photographs, computer media, videotapes, and similar media should each be stored in separate containers, away from each other and from paper documents. They give off chemical gasses, which can hasten the deterioration of other materials.

Generally, you can not purchase genuine archival supplies locally. Use of the “archival” designation is tossed around just as casually as “sugar-free” is among foods, but it does not necessarily mean

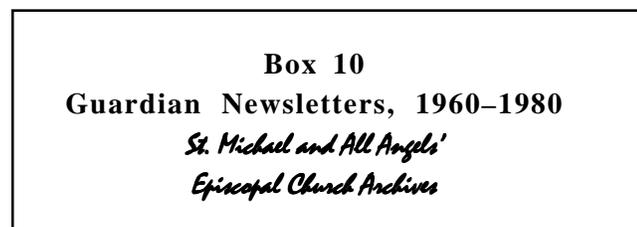
acid-free. A list of reputable supply companies is included in Appendix D at the back of this manual. Order a catalog and get on a mailing list. You will not be bombarded with mailings.

Today's archival preservation practice can best be described as "benign neglect." Archivists try not to do anything to a document that can not be reversed, and they generally concentrate on proper storage procedures. Here are some basic preservation practices for specific types of documents:

Archival storage cartons

- Store everything in acid-free and lignin-free containers. Standard cardboard boxes contain harmful chemicals that will migrate to records over time.
- Label your storage containers with the information necessary to retrieve the contents. Develop a uniform system and consistently apply it. There are three standard pieces of information that typically go on a label: a unique one-of-a-kind box number, the name of the record series contained in the box (possibly with dates), and the name of your Archives. Make sure the labeling is large and legible.

Sample container label



- For permanent labels, you can purchase small quantities that are acid-free from archival supply houses. If the contents of the box change, you can place another label over the first one.
- When you store folders on their edges in document cases, often you will have unused space in the back which causes document folders to curl up and shift. The solution to this is either to buy an acid-free spacer board from an archival supply house or to roll up and tuck an acid-free folder in the back. You can also purchase slim or half-width storage boxes.
- Have a supply of acid-free "file out cards" so you can mark where you have temporarily removed any folders or documents from a box for reference use, repairs, or other activity. The cards are available from an archival supply house.

Archival storage folders

- Use acid-free folders to both preserve papers and help with your filing scheme. Archival folders are the most important supply investment you can make. Use your folders to keep natural groupings of papers together and separate from other pages. If, for instance, you are filing minutes, try using a separate folder for each year, especially if you have twenty-five or more pages per year. You can safely store documents that take up $\frac{1}{4}$ " to $\frac{1}{2}$ " of space in one folder.

- Label all acid-free folders along the top tab with a No. 2 pencil. Print or write in large, legible letters so the contents can be determined at a glance. Typically, a folder label contains three pieces of information: a box/folder identifying number, the name of the series, and information on the specific folder contents. For instance:

Sample folder labeling

(top edge of folder)

10-1

Guardian Newsletters

1960

Explanation: 10-1 stands for Box 10, Folder #1. This folder is part of the series Guardian Newsletters and it holds Guardians from the year 1960. The next folder will be labeled 10-2 and will hold Guardians for 1961.

Archival handling of paper documents

- Unfold documents to their full size and store them flat, unless they have been folded so long they will break on the crease.
- Do not write notations on your archival documents and do not underline passages. Addenda like these change the legal nature of your documents.
- Use acid-free paper to create current permanent records.
- Use acid-free paper to interleaf poor-quality archival records.
- Most envelopes can be discarded. If you need to save any, keep them in mylar or polyethylene envelopes. The acid from the glue on the flaps that hold an envelope together can migrate over time through seven or more pages in either direction.
- Photocopy newsprint articles, thermafax pages, and woodpulp-mimeograph pages onto acid-free paper. Focus on saving the contents rather than the paper itself.
- Place fragile documents in mylar or polyethylene covers.
- Never use pressure-sensitive tape to repair tears in paper. If a page is in several pieces, have a conservator repair and encapsulate it or place it in its own folder—use a photocopy for reference.
- Archivaly clean dirty papers or dirty endpages in a hardbound journal with either an artgum eraser or with absorene cleaner available from a wallpaper store or archival supply house. Be very careful not to tear the page. To use absorene, remove half a fistful from the container and knead it into a pliable dough-like ball. As you move it over the page and it absorbs dirt from the document, you can rework the dirty absorene into the center of your absorene ball. This technique requires some basic training from a preservation specialist. Contact PALMCOP or the South Carolina Archives.
- Air all musty items, including documents, photographs and objects like textiles. If mold or insects are present, contact a conservator. Do not mix infested items with the rest of the collection.
- Never laminate a document. This once-popular process is no longer considered archival. Instead, learn the skills of encapsulating documents in mylar. Encapsulation is reversible because it does not adhere to the document. Instead, it provides it a mini-environment in which the document can breathe.
- Ledgers and other journals should be stored flat in acid-free flat cases with a drop-front for easier handling. Remove all paper clips and extraneous documents. You may want to keep the documents you remove together and note which journal they came from.

- Know your limitations and entrust the handling of very old, very fragile, or very special documents to the care of a professional conservator for deacidification, cleaning, or complex repairs. The South Carolina Department of Archives and History is only one of many institutions with a professional conservation laboratory for this purpose.

Removing unsafe fasteners

- Avoid the use of rubber bands. They deteriorate and adhere to paper. Remove them when you store documents in acid-free folders.
- If you have something like a fragile journal whose papers need to be held together, invest in unbleached cotton tying tape from an archival supply house. To prevent it from crushing the edges of the papers, it should be 1/4" inch or more thick. Tie it around the archival material the way you would tie string around a birthday present. Do not, however, use gift wrapping tape; it is full of dye.
- Use fasteners made of stainless steel, plastic, and monel, not standard paper clips and staples, which will rust. Brittle pages should not be clipped together. Even plastic clips will cut into paper as it grows older; insert a small mylar tab between the clip and the paper to reduce the likelihood of damage. The best practice, however, is to preclude the use of fasteners altogether by keeping related documents together in a folder.
- Remove archival documents from three-ring binders and store them in acid-free folders. The metal in the binders rusts over time, and the plastic, which adheres to the documents, lifts off any lettering that touches it.
- Transfer all documents from plastic folders to acid-free folders. Few plastic covers are archivally sound, and it's best not to take a chance with them.
- Remove post-it notes from archival documents. The glue strip is harmful, and over the years, the note will leave a square mark on the document it is stuck to.

Archival photocopying

- Purchase an inexpensive pH testing pen from an archival supply house and test your church's copier paper. You may be surprised to learn that it is already acid-free. More and more standard office papers are acid-free—the federal government has mandated acid-free paper for all federal government printing, and because of this, paper companies are converting much of their production to acid-free papers.
- Use photocopiers, which use heat to fuse a carbon image to paper. When copied this way, documents on permalife or acid-free paper have a sheet life of 300 years.
- To repeat a tip listed above, photocopy newsprint articles, thermafax pages, and woodpulp mimeograph pages onto acid-free paper. Focus on saving the contents rather than the paper itself.

Archival microfilming

- Microfilm your key church records, especially membership records, congregational meeting minutes, and governing board minutes—vestry, council, trustees, etc. Specify archival filming practices; contact the South Carolina Archives for a list of vendors who are certified to do this sort of filming. If the records are in order, archival quality filming is not very expensive.
- Keep the original microfilm off-site in another archival repository some other safe place.

Archival photograph storage

- Store photographs apart from other documents. To prevent damage from the chemicals used in different development processes, separate photographs into prints, case photographs, slides, and negatives and store them apart from each other as well.
- Preserve your prints in clear mylar or polyethylene envelopes so you can identify them without handling them.
- Arrange your photographs by subject so you can find them again easily. Keep like photographs together—pastors, building exteriors, building interiors, anniversaries, youth activities, and so on.
- Although prints should be stored one to a sleeve, you may not have enough supplies for this. You may store multiple prints in the same envelope if there is nothing on the reverse side that will damage the next print, and if you do not store a smaller print face up on a larger one. You can put the largest prints first or store prints back-to-back.
- Preserve your negatives and slides in mylar or polyethylene envelopes. Many envelope sleeves that originally come with negatives, slides, and prints are not archival, even though some may be labeled “archival.”
- Identify the dates, events, and people in your photographs. Otherwise, they are of little use to your Archives. You should lightly number your photos in No. 2 pencil on the back on the edge and write up a corresponding list of captions on acid-free paper, which can then be tucked in behind the photos. You can also buy an inexpensive film marking pen, which will allow you to write on the outside of photo envelopes (be sure the photos are not inside when you do this).
- Consider having old fragile or fading photographs professionally photographed to create a new copies. Many professional photocopy shops can also make excellent photocopies of prints at a reasonable cost. If neither of these methods is feasible, photocopy your original prints on your copier and use the copies for display and research, keeping the originals safe from further handling. Do not run photos through the automatic feed of a copier.
- Avoid displaying original photographs in sunlit or overly bright places. Use copies instead.
- If slides are a major part of your collection, be sure you archive slide equipment so future users of the Archives will always be able to view the images. If you will be projecting the slides often, Fujichrome slides last longer than others. If the slides are used frequently, you’ll need to make a duplicate set for projection.

Archival scrapbook storage

As a general rule, archival materials should be stored in file folders and archival boxes. Some records are used so frequently, however, they are best stored in scrapbooks. Some groups—like the ladies’ auxiliary or the youth group—may have a tradition of creating annual scrapbooks of their activities. Since these scrapbooks eventually come to the Archives, you should get the groups to use materials that will not deteriorate.

- Use only scrapbooks supplied by an archival supply house. Most other scrapbooks are high in sulfur content and will damage the documents they are supposed to protect.

- Never use glue or standard cellophane tape to stick an item to a page in a scrapbook. Instead, use archival mylar pockets, corner holders, water-soluble adhesives, or acrylic adhesive tape (heat set).
- Store scrapbooks flat in acid-free flat-file cases. This will preserve them from dust and deterioration from light.

If you receive an old scrapbook there are three approaches you may use to store it:

- Loosen the covers if the book is overstuffed; interleave the pages with mylar or buffered tissue and place it flat in its own box. Try to put it in a box that fits its dimensions snugly but not tightly.
- Disassemble the book and folder the items in it and box it in a document case.
- Have the book microfilmed and either store it away in its own box or discard it.

Archival records other than flat or bound paper documents

A general warning

Not all records of permanent value are stored on permanent materials (or media). Some media is unstable and disintegrates—Polaroids curl and fade; color prints change color; cellulose nitrate negatives will explode, and as they burn they will give off toxic fumes; older “safety film” will melt, leaving a vinegary smell. Other media may require a now obsolete machine to get access to the information they contain—the 16 mm film projector, for example, hasn’t been manufactured for a quarter century; the machines required to play dictabelts or plastic discs have not been manufactured for the last forty years; videotapes on the Beta format can’t be played on VHS recorders—the only recorder now available and one that, within ten years, will no longer be manufactured; computer software and hardware are being upgraded and abandoned every few years; to retain their sound, audio tapes or cassettes have to be recopied every ten to fifteen years; and you know what happened to 8-track tapes and vinyl records!

Think carefully, therefore, before you collect records on anything but paper or microfilm, for the records your Archives holds are your organization’s permanently valuable documents. If you choose media other than paper or microfilm to store your records, eventually someone will have to reformat, or copy, or restore them, for the media will wear out. You can try to store the machines you need to play old films, recordings, and computer diskettes, but they will cost you in space and maintenance. You will have to budget for upgrades and copying to new formats.

As a rule of thumb, the older the process, the more stable and durable it is. Paper lasts longer than magnetic media. Paper from the early nineteenth century is far more durable than paper from the 1940s. An older black and white photograph is much more stable than any color image—if you have a significant number of images in color, make black-and-white copies of them. Older inks are usually permanent and stable, but ball point and all flair tip pens will damage your records. The old slick-paper fax will literally disappear in less than three years, so copy any permanently-valuable fax to permanent paper. Film stock, however, is different. Negatives or microfilm on older film are usually less stable than those on the newer polyester-based film. Thus, when possible, old negatives should be copied to the new film. Likewise newer photocopies are more stable than early ones.

If you can't make a paper or microfilm copy of records on unstable or outdated formats, you will have to make tough decisions about how much money your Archives can afford to keep the information. If the records are truly valuable but too expensive or too fragile for you to keep, you may want to pass them on to an institution with the resources to care for them. If you do, make sure that institution will provide research access to them promptly and will give you copies your researchers can use.

What records should be kept on special media?

Now you are aware of some of the difficulties of maintaining records on special media, the following pages have some tips on judging whether or not you should try to keep them in your archives.

Key to making these decisions is sorting resource materials from documentation of church activities. "Resource materials" include professional literature and training materials. Such items are used by staff for reference in their work. These items may be kept in staff offices or circulated in the church's library. They are not records created by the church, although they may be used by members of the congregation. Records documenting "church activities," on the other hand, would be generated by the church in the course of its functions. These would be the church's archival records and would include records of significant anniversary celebrations and major church celebrations like the dedication of a new building or the ordination of a new bishop. They could also include records about church-sponsored community activities, or records about the history of the church.

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Special media guidelines

Record Title	Maximum Yrs. Retention	Recommendation for Disposition
Artifacts and memorabilia	Permanent.	Keep permanently in Archives such items as communion sets, offering plates, historic Bibles, signs, pulpit appointments, gavels, hymnals, trophies, scrapbooks, cornerstone contents from current or previous sites, and other items closely identified with a special person or event. Store metals and textiles in their individual boxes. Don't mix them with paper and film.
Audiotapes, church activities	Permanent.	Keep permanently in Archives. Seek advice for proper care and storage. NOTE: Playback equipment should also be archived.
Audiotapes, resource files	For life of administrative use.	Destroy when superseded by later edition. <i>Not archival.</i>
CD-ROMS, church activities	Selective retention up to permanent.	If activities are identified and dated, keep permanently in Archives. Usefulness & value increase further if people are also identified. Seek advice for proper care and storage. NOTE: Playback equipment should also be archived.
CD-ROMS, resource files	For life of administrative use.	Destroy when superseded by later edition. <i>Not archival.</i>
Filmstrips, church activities	Selective retention up to permanent.	If activities are identified and dated, keep permanently in Archives. Usefulness & value increase further if people are also identified. Seek advice for proper care and storage. NOTE: Playback equipment should also be archived. Films can also be converted to later media.

Record Title	Maximum Yrs. Retention	Recommendation for Disposition
Filmstrips, resource files	For life of administrative use.	Destroy when superseded by later edition. <i>Not archival.</i>
Photographs	Selective retention up to permanent.	If activities are identified and dated, keep permanently in Archives. Usefulness & value increase further if people are also identified. Seek advice for proper care and storage. Keep only those with clear, reproducible images. Choose black and white over color. Color originals should not be put on exhibit because they fade.
Photograph negatives	Selective retention up to permanent.	If activities are identified and dated, keep permanently in Archives. Usefulness & value increase further if people are also identified.
Slides	Selective retention up to permanent.	If activities are identified and dated, keep permanently in Archives. Usefulness & value increase further if people are also identified. Seek advice for proper care and storage. NOTE: Viewing equipment should also be archived. If these images will be projected often, make a duplicate set.
Videotapes, church activities	Permanent.	Keep permanently in Archives. Seek advice for proper care and storage. NOTE: Play- back equipment should also be available, and you must budget for upgrades or reformatting.
Videotapes, resource files	For life of administrative use.	Destroy when superseded by later edition. <i>Not archival.</i>

Archival audio-visual storage

- Standard freezer bags from the grocery make excellent storage envelopes for videotapes and audiocassettes. Label them with a film-marking pen and store them in standard acid-free cases on your shelves. Metal shelving may become magnetized temporarily when cleaning crews operate motorized equipment in the area. You should not, therefore, rest magnetic tapes or any magnetic media directly on the metal shelves. They should always be in containers.
- Audio tapes should be copied to 60- or 90-minute tapes on one side only. Longer tapes are thin and the sound “bleeds through” over time.
- At least twice a year, rewind audio and videotapes to eliminate the magnetic pulses that build up in them and tend to erase the tape itself.
- Do not rewind tapes at high speeds. Use slower speed rewinding machines for videos.
- Plan to transfer the information on the tapes to new, high-quality tapes periodically. This is especially important if technology is changing so rapidly that one of your formats will be inaccessible in the future.
- Clean and repair 8mm and 16mm film and transfer it to videotape for reference use. Do not, however, discard the original film because it has a longer life span than videotape. You can make additional copies from the original film in the future when your videotapes wear out.
- Store 8mm and 16mm film well away from your other archives. They contain the most volatile chemicals of any other item in your collection. Large collections of old film can even constitute a fire hazard.
- If possible, archive the equipment that allows you to hear and view your audio-visual media. Do not assume these items are being kept in other parts of your church.
- Video tapes.

Archival artifact storage

- Limit the number of artifacts you accept into your church Archives. Operating a museum is not your mission. Artifacts can easily consume lots of valuable space, so be sure there is a correlation between the artifacts and other items in your collection.
- Keep all artifacts, particularly textiles, clean. Make sure they are protected from dust, excessive bright light, heat, and moisture.
- Sort artifacts by type—old books, silver, other metals, fabric items, wooden items—and keep each type in separate acid-free boxes. Flat drop-front boxes are excellent for storage, and archival supply houses make many specialty boxes for artifacts.
- For added protection, individually wrap artifacts in acid-free tissue paper, available from archival supply houses.
- If you display artifacts in a case, purchase inexpensive desiccant canisters from an archival supply house. These canisters will absorb moisture from the case and can be dried out in an oven and reused many times. The canisters are also good for absorbing moisture in church safes.

Negative storage

- Identify and isolate all cellulose nitrate negatives,
- If you detect an odor of rotten eggs or vinegar among the negatives, isolate them and contact a conservator or preservation specialist for advice.

Color photographs

- If you have important images on color photographs, do not display them unless you have a duplicate.
- Make color photocopies of any photographic image and use the copies in exhibits.
- Slide images are fragile. If you must keep them, you will have to make duplicates of the best ones and keep the master copies stored away; don't project them.

Chapter 4: Retention periods for records

Most of this manual is devoted to retention charts for various categories of church records. In addition to the appraisal criteria described in the previous chapter, these charts will help you determine—at a glance—what is typically archival, what is not, and how long to keep various types of church documents. These charts are based on practices used in many different religious archives and on the published recommendations of records retention expert Donald S. Skupsky.

The retention schedules listed here are intended as general guidelines for churches to follow in adopting retention policies and schedules specific to their individual needs. Denominational practices and local customs may require changes to the vocabulary and headings found here. Sometimes opinions differ about how long records should be maintained—cancelled checks, for example. This manual lists more conservative—or longer—time periods. In all cases, churches are advised to consult their legal counsel, the South Carolina Archival Association, the South Carolina Department of Archives and History, or a local chapter of the Association of Records Managers and Administrators (ARMA).

These charts cover both permanent archival records and other records, which are created and eventually destroyed.

ORGANIZATIONAL RECORDS RETENTION

Record Title	Maximum Yrs. Retention	Recommendation for Disposition
Articles of Incorporation	Permanent.	Keep permanently in Archives.
Bylaws	Permanent.	Keep current version as well as all previous versions in Archives.
Charter	Permanent.	Keep permanently in Archives.
Charter member list	Permanent.	Keep permanently in Archives.
Charter petition	Permanent.	Keep permanently in Archives.
Constitutions, current and previous versions	Permanent.	Keep permanently in Archives.
Incorporation papers	Permanent.	Keep permanently in Archives.

ROUTINE PUBLICATIONS RETENTION

Record Title	Maximum Yrs. Retention	Recommendation for Disposition
Acolyte schedules & awards	Permanent.	Keep permanently in Archives.
Altar guild schedules & responsibilities	Permanent.	Keep permanently in Archives.
Anniversary & other special events	Selective retention 5 yrs to permanent.	Retain substantive items permanently in Archives (financials, directories, commemorative brochures, memorabilia, planning documents, etc.). Destroy routine items after 5 yrs. See more details in other retention charts (financial, correspondence, etc.)
Attendance statistics	Permanent.	Keep permanently in Archives.
Biographical sketches of pastors	Permanent.	Keep permanent in Archives.
Board minutes, also known as vestry minutes, council minutes, etc.	Permanent.	Keep permanently in Archives.
Bulletins for special services	Permanent.	Keep permanently in Archives.
Bulletins for weekly services	Selective retention to permanent.	Space permitting, keep permanently in Archives. Otherwise, keep bulletins of special services.
Calendars of activities	Permanent.	Keep permanently in Archives.
Call letters to pastors and other church workers	Permanent.	Keep permanently in Archives.

Record Title	Maximum Yrs. Retention	Recommendation for Disposition
Choir schedules & selections	Permanent.	Keep permanently in Archives.
Church school records	Selective retention 5 yrs to permanent.	Retain substantive items permanently in Archives (financials, member lists, teacher information, study curricula, attendance, etc.) Destroy routine items after 5 yrs. See more details in other retention charts.
Churchyard records 5 yrs to permanent.	Selective retention	Retain substantive items permanently in Archives (minutes, financials, bylaws, legal information). Destroy routine items after 5 yrs. See more details in other Retention charts (financial, correspondence, etc.)
Committee correspondence	Selective retention 5 yrs to permanent.	Retain substantive correspondence permanently in Archives. Destroy routine items after 5 yrs. See more details in Correspondence Retention chart.
Committee minutes	Permanent.	Keep permanently in Archives.
Conduct of services (procedures)	Permanent.	Keep permanently in Archives.
Congregation meeting minutes, chiefly annual or special meetings	Permanent.	Keep permanently in Archives.
Congregation reports, annual	Permanent.	Keep permanently in Archives.

Record Title	Maximum Yrs. Retention	Recommendation for Disposition
Council minutes, also known as vestry or board minutes	Permanent.	Keep permanently in Archives.
Day care school records	Selective retention 5 yrs to permanent.	Retain substantive items permanently in Archives (minutes, financials, pupil lists, directories, newsletters, anniversary publications, etc.) Destroy routine items after 5 yrs. See more details in other Retention charts (financial, correspondence, etc.)
Counseling records (such as marriage or personal spiritual counseling)	At pastor's discretion.	Highly confidential records, representing the highest level of clergy/penitent privilege. Property of the pastor and should not be left behind when pastor leaves the church.
Curricula	Selective retention to permanent.	Keep samples permanently in Archives.
Education records	Selective retention 5 years to permanent.	Retain substantive items permanently in Archives relating to Sunday school, confirmation classes, Vacation Bible School and adult education (class and teacher lists, curricula samples, records of events and activities). Destroy other items after 5 yrs.
Greeter schedules & responsibilities	Permanent.	Keep permanently in Archives.

Record Title	Maximum Yrs. Retention	Recommendation for Disposition
History booklets	Permanent.	Keep permanently in Archives.
Hymnals	Permanent.	Keep samples permanently in Archives.
Lay ministers records	Selective retention to permanent.	Retain applications, approvals, schedules and description of duties in Archives permanently.
Lay workers records	Selective retention to permanent.	Retain substantive items permanently in Archives. See Correspondence and Personnel retention charts for further detail.
Memorial records	Selective retention 5 yrs to permanent	Retain substantive items permanently in Archives (minutes, financials, donor and honoree lists). Destroy routine items after 5 yrs. See more details in other retention charts (financial, correspondence, donor. etc.)
Men's auxiliary records	Selective retention 5 yrs to permanent	Retain substantive items permanently in Archives (minutes, financials, member lists, officers, bylaws, directories, newsletters, anniversary publications, etc.) Destroy routine items after 5 yrs. See more details in other retention charts.
Minutes of higher church bodies (dioceses, synods, districts, national church)	Selective retention to permanent.	Optional permanent records, considered valuable resources by many congregations.

Record Title	Maximum Yrs. Retention	Recommendation for Disposition
Missionary & mission projects	Selective retention 5 yrs to permanent.	Retain substantive items permanently in Archives (minutes, financials, etc.) Destroy routine items after 5 yrs. See more details in other retention charts (financial, correspondence, donor, etc.)
News releases and newspaper clippings	Permanent.	Copy clippings onto acid-free paper & keep copies permanently in Archives.
Newsletters for membership	Permanent.	Keep permanently in Archives.
Officer lists for board, vestry,	Permanent.	Keep permanently in Archives.
Organization charts	Permanent.	Keep permanently in Archives.
Pastor correspondence	Selective retention 5 yrs to permanent.	Retain substantive correspondence permanently in Archives. Destroy routine items after 5 yrs. See more details on Correspondence Retention chart.
Planning studies	Permanent.	Keep permanently in Archives.
Preschool program records	Selective retention 5 yrs to permanent.	Retain substantive items permanently in Archives (minutes, financials, pupil lists, directories, newsletters, anniversary publications, etc.) Destroy routine items after 5 yrs. See more details in other retention charts (financial, correspondence, etc.)

Record Title	Maximum Yrs. Retention	Recommendation for Disposition
Professional staff records	Selective retention to permanent.	Retain substantive correspondence permanently in Archives. Destroy routine items after 5 yrs. See more details on Correspondence Retention chart.
Promotional materials (for membership, stewardship, evangelism, etc.)	Permanent.	Keep permanently in Archives.
Registers of church services, with attendance, officiating and other service data	Permanent.	Keep permanently in Archives.
Sermons	At pastor's discretion.	Property of the pastor, although donated manuscripts of special commemorative sermons are excellent permanent archives.
Sunday school records	Selective retention 5 yrs to permanent.	Retain substantive items permanently in Archives (financials, member lists, teachers, curricula, attendance records, etc.). Destroy routine items after 5 yrs. See more details in other retention charts (financial, correspondence, etc.)
Surveys of membership	Permanent.	Keep permanently in Archives.
Telephone call logs	Up to 1 yr.	Keep current year. <i>Not archival.</i>
Trustee minutes, also known as board, vestry or council minutes	Permanent.	Keep permanently in Archives.

Record Title	Maximum Yrs. Retention	Recommendation for Disposition
Usher schedules & responsibilities	Permanent.	Keep permanently in Archives.
Vacation Bible School records	Selective retention 5 yrs to permanent.	Retain substantive items permanently in Archives (financials, member lists, teacher information, study curricula, attendance records, etc.). Destroy routine items after 5 yrs. See more details in other retention charts (financial, correspondence, etc.)
Vestry minutes	Permanent.	Keep permanently in Archives.
Women's auxiliary records	Selective retention 5 yrs to permanent.	Retain substantive items permanently in Archives (minutes, financials, member lists, officers, bylaws, directories, newsletters, anniversary publications, etc.) Destroy routine items after 5 yrs. See more details in other retention charts (financial, correspondence, etc.)
Yearbooks of the national church	Selection retention to permanent.	Optional permanent records, considered valuable by some congregations.
Youth auxiliary records	Selective retention 5 yrs to permanent.	Retain substantive items permanently in Archives (minutes, financials, member lists, officers, bylaws, directories, newsletters, anniversary publications, etc.) Destroy routine items after 5 yrs. See more details in other retention charts (financial, correspondence, etc.)
Youth awards information	Permanent.	Keep permanently in Archives.

MEMBERSHIP RECORDS RETENTION

In some congregations such as Episcopal and Lutheran, these types of records may be combined in registry books referred to collectively as Parish Registers. In other cases, they are physically separate. These vital statistics records will be valuable in the future.

Record Title	Maximum Yrs. Retention	Recommendation or Disposition
Baptism registers	Permanent.	Keep permanently in Archives.
Burial registers	Permanent.	Keep permanently in Archives.
Communicant registers	Permanent.	Keep permanently in Archives.
Confirmation registers	Permanent.	Keep permanently in Archives.
Death registers	Permanent.	Keep permanently in Archives.
Directories, membership	Permanent.	Keep permanently in Archives.
Marriage registers	Permanent.	Keep permanently in Archives.
Members dismissed	Permanent.	Keep lists permanently in Archives.
Members excluded	Permanent.	Keep lists permanently in Archives.
Members received	Permanent.	Keep lists permanently in Archives.
Membership rolls	Permanent.	Keep lists permanently in Archives.
Parish registers and other membership registers	Permanent.	Keep permanently in Archives.
Transfers into church	Permanent.	Keep permanently in Archives.
Transfers out of church	Permanent.	Keep permanently in Archives.

OFFICIAL REPORTS RETENTION

Record Title	Maximum Yrs. Retention	Recommendation for Disposition
Church profiles	Permanent.	Retain permanently in Archives.
Parish profiles	Permanent.	Retain permanently in Archives.
Parochial Reports	5 yrs to permanent.	Destroy after 5 yrs. or transfer to Archives for permanent retention.
National/Diocesan returns	5 yrs to permanent.	Destroy after 5 yrs. or transfer to Archives for permanent retention.
Statistical summaries	Permanent.	Transfer to Archives after administrative use ceases.

FINANCIAL RECORDS RETENTION

(See Also Donor Records Retention)

Record Title	Maximum Yrs. Retention	Recommendation for Disposition
Accounts payable files	Up to 7 years.	Destroy after 7 years OR keep current year + 4 years after an audit. <i>Not archival.</i>
Accounts receivable files	Up to 7 years.	Destroy after 7 years OR keep current year + 4 years after an audit. <i>Not archival.</i>
Amortization records	Up to 7 years.	Destroy after 7 years OR keep current year + 4 years after an audit. <i>Not archival.</i>
Annual financial statements	Permanent.	Retain permanently. File clean copy in Archives.
Assessment/apportionment data (<i>usually in reference to assessment on local church by a higher administrative level of the denomination</i>)	5 years.	Destroy after 5 years. <i>Not archival.</i>
Audit reports	Permanent.	Retain permanently. File clean copy in Archives along with transmittal cover letter.
Audit working papers and backup	Up to 5 years.	Retain current year + 4 yrs. after an audit. <i>Not archival.</i>
Balance sheets, annual	Permanent.	Retain permanently. File clean copy in Archives.
Balance sheets, monthly and quarterly	2 years.	Retain two years. <i>Not archival.</i>

Record Title	Maximum Yrs. Retention	Recommendation for Disposition
Bank deposit books	Up to 7 yrs.	Destroy after 7 years OR keep current year + 4 years after an audit. <i>Not archival.</i>
Bank deposit slips	7 years.	Destroy after 7 years OR keep current year + 4 years after an audit. <i>Not archival.</i>
Bank statements	Up to 7 yrs.	Destroy after 7 years OR keep current year + 4 years after an audit. <i>Not archival.</i>
Bank reconciliations	2 years.	Retain two years. <i>Not archival.</i>
Bills, paid for general expenses	Up to 7 yrs.	Destroy after 7 yrs. OR keep current year + 4 yrs. after an audit. <i>Not archival.</i>
Bonds, cancelled	Up to 4 yrs.	Destroy after current year + 3 yrs. from date of cancellation. <i>Not archival.</i>
Budgets, approved and revised	Permanent.	Retain permanently. File clean copy in Archives.
Budgets, proposed, and worksheets	For life of administrative use.	Destroy after administrative use ceases. <i>Not archival.</i>
Cash disbursements	Up to 7 yrs.	Destroy after 7 years OR keep current year + 4 years after an audit. <i>Not archival.</i>
Cash journals for general receipts and disbursements	7 yrs to permanent.	If posted to a general ledger, destroy after 7 yrs. Retain permanently in Archives if not posted to a general ledger.

Record Title	Maximum Yrs. Retention	Recommendation for Disposition
Cash receipts	Up to 7 yrs.	Destroy after 7 years OR keep current year + 4 years after an audit. <i>Not archival.</i>
Cash sales slips	Up to 7 yrs.	Destroy after 7 years OR keep current year + 4 years after an audit. <i>Not archival.</i>
Cashbooks for discretionary accounts	Up to 7 yrs.	Destroy after 7 years OR keep current year + 4 years after an audit. <i>Not archival.</i>
Cashbooks for special fundraising subscriptions	Permanent.	Keep permanently. Retire to Archives after the campaign.
Certificates of deposit, cancelled	3 yrs. after redemption.	Destroy 3 yrs. after redemption. <i>Not archival.</i>
Chart of accounts	Permanent.	Keep permanently. Retire old listings to Archives after revision.
Check registers	7 yrs.	Destroy after 7 yrs. <i>Not archival.</i>
Checkbooks and stubs	Up to 7 yrs.	Destroy after 7 years OR keep current year + 4 years after an audit. <i>Not archival.</i>
Checks, cancelled selective	Up to 7 yrs.,	Destroy after 7 years OR then keep current year + 4 years after an audit. NOTE: Three exceptions are archival and should be retained permanently: checks paying for capital expenditures, taxes and real estate property purchases.
Correspondence regarding issues	Permanent.	Retain permanently in Archives; tax notes, duplicate copies, drafts may be discarded 3 yrs. after settlement.

Record Title	Maximum Yrs. Retention	Recommendation for Disposition
Cost accounting records	Up to 7 years.	Destroy after 7 years OR keep current year + 4 years after an audit. <i>Not archival.</i>
Cost sheets	Up to 7 years.	Destroy after 7 years OR keep current year + 4 years after an audit. <i>Not archival.</i>
Cost statements	Up to 7 years.	Destroy after 7 years OR keep current year + 4 years after an audit. <i>Not archival.</i>
Credit card charge clips	Up to 7 years.	Destroy after 7 years OR keep current year + 4 years after an audit. <i>Not archival.</i>
Credit card statements	Up to 7 years.	Destroy after 7 years OR keep current year + 4 years after an audit. <i>Not archival.</i>
Debit advices	Up to 7 years.	Destroy after 7 years OR keep current year + 4 years after an audit. <i>Not archival.</i>
Deposit slips	Up to 7 years.	Destroy after 7 years OR keep current year + 4 years after an audit. <i>Not archival.</i>
Donations	Up to 7 years.	Destroy after 7 years OR keep current year + 4 years after an audit. <i>Not archival.</i>
Expense reports	Up to 7 years.	Destroy after 7 years OR keep current year + 4 years after an audit. <i>Not archival.</i>
Financial plans	Permanent.	Place permanent copy in Archives.

Record Title	Maximum Yrs. Retention	Recommendation for Disposition
Financial statements, annual	Permanent	Place permanent copy in Archives.
Financial statements, monthly	Up to 2 yrs.	Destroy after 2 years. <i>Not archival.</i>
Grant-in-aid proposals, successful applications	Selective retention up to Permanent.	Retain proposal, final report and substantive correspondence in archives. Destroy other items.
Grant-in-aid proposals, denied applications	Up to 2 yrs.	Destroy after current year + 1 yr. <i>Not archival.</i>
Investments permanent.	7 yrs. to	Destroy distribution notices and courtesy correspondence after 7 yrs. Transfer copies of conditions, restrictions, legal opinions and summary distribution history to Archives for permanent retention.
Invoices and paid bills for major building construction and structural alterations	Permanent.	Transfer to Archives for permanent retention.
Invoices for general expenses	7 yrs.	Destroy after 7 yrs. OR keep current year + 4 yrs. after an audit. <i>Not archival.</i>
Journal entry sheets	7 yrs.	Destroy after 7 yrs. OR keep current year + 4 yrs. after an audit. <i>Not archival.</i>
Journals for general funds	Permanent.	Retain permanently in Archives.
Journals for payroll	7 yrs.	Destroy after 7 yrs. <i>Not archival.</i>
Journals for special funds	Permanent.	Retain permanently in Archives.
Ledgers for general funds	Permanent.	Retain permanently in Archives.

Record Title	Maximum Yrs. Retention	Recommendation for Disposition
Ledgers for special funds	Permanent.	Retain permanently in Archives.
Ledgers, subsidiary	Permanent.	Retain permanently in Archives.
Loan schedules	For life of administrative use.	Keep until loan is discharged or until administrative use ceases. <i>Not archival.</i>
Monthly financial reports	2 yrs.	Destroy after 2 yrs. if annual report is available. <i>Not normally archival.</i>
Paid bills for general expenses	7 yrs.	Destroy after 7 yrs. OR keep current year + 4 yrs. after an audit. <i>Not archival.</i>
Petty cash receipts and accounts	7 yrs.	Destroy after 7 yrs. OR keep current a year + 4 yrs. after an audit. <i>Not archival.</i>
Procedures for accounting	For life of administrative use plus 10 years.	Keep for 10 years after administrative life ceases.
Purchase orders	7 yrs.	Destroy after 7 yrs. OR keep current year + 4 yrs. after an audit. <i>Not archival.</i>
Receipts and disbursement reports, monthly & annually	Permanent.	Retain permanently in Archives.
Receipts for general accounts	7 yrs.	Destroy after 7 yrs. OR keep current year + 4 yrs. after an audit. <i>Not archival.</i>
Sales slips and receipts	7 yrs.	Destroy after 7 yrs. OR keep current year + 4 yrs. after an audit. <i>Not archival.</i>
Shipping and freight records	3 yrs.	Destroy after 3 yrs. <i>Not archival.</i>
Tax-exempt certificates	Permanent.	Retain permanently in Archives.

Record Title	Maximum Yrs. Retention	Recommendation for Disposition
Tax form 990	Permanent.	Retain permanently in Archives.
Tax returns and filings	7 yrs.	Destroy 7 yrs. after filing provided no action is pending. <i>Not archival.</i>
Travel expenses	7 yrs.	Destroy after 7 yrs. OR keep current year + 4 yrs. after an audit. <i>Not archival.</i>
Trial balances, closing	7 yrs.	Destroy after 7 yrs. OR keep current year + 4 yrs. after an audit. <i>Not archival.</i>
Trust fund files	7 yrs. to permanent.	Destroy distribution notices and courtesy correspondence after 7 yrs. Transfer copies of conditions, restrictions, legal opinions and summary distribution history to Archives for permanent retention.
Trust fund registers	Permanent.	Retain permanently in Archives.
Vendor files	For life of administrative use.	Destroy when superseded by later edition. <i>Not archival.</i>
Vouchers	7 yrs.	Destroy after 7 yrs. OR keep current year + 4 yrs. after an audit. <i>Not archival.</i>

DONOR RECORDS RETENTION

(See also *Financial Records Retention*)

Record Title	Maximum Yrs. Retention	Recommendation for Disposition
Bequest papers	Permanent.	Retain permanently. File in Archives, with restricted access if necessary.
Cash journals for receipts on plate and pledge offerings	7 yrs.	Destroy after 7 years. <i>Not archival.</i>
Correspondence regarding probate issues	Permanent.	Retain permanently in Archives; notes, duplicate copies, drafts may be discarded 3 yrs. after settlement.
Donor/subscriber lists	Permanent.	Retain permanently in Archives, with restricted access if necessary.
Donor/subscriber schedules	Permanent.	Retain permanently in Archives, with restricted access if necessary.
Estate papers	Permanent.	Retain permanently. File in Archives, with restricted access if necessary.
Every member canvass records	Permanent.	Retain canvass lists and program literature; discard working papers and memoranda (<i>not archival</i>).
Legacies	Permanent.	Retain permanently in Archives.
Memorial gifts register	Permanent.	Retain permanently in Archives.
Pledge envelopes	For life of	Keep for reconciliation or administrative use until after audit.
Pledge records: cumulative journal of weekly stewardship giving	7 yrs. to permanent.	Destroy 7 yrs. after date of last entry OR keep permanently if no annual summary is kept.

Record Title	Maximum Yrs. Retention	Recommendation for Disposition
Pledge registers: summary record of annual steward giving	Permanent.	Retain permanently in Archives.
Receipts for pledges and plate donations (tally sheets and journal entries)	7 yrs.	Destroy after 7 yrs. OR keep current year + 4 yrs. after an audit. <i>Not archival.</i>
Wills, testaments and codicils	Permanent.	Retain permanently in Archives.

PERSONNEL RECORDS RETENTION

Record Title	Maximum Yrs. Retention	Recommendation for Disposition
Applications for employment	<i>Not hired:</i> up to 2 yrs <i>Hired:</i> up to 7 yrs after end of employment.	<i>If not hired,</i> keep current year. + one year; <i>if hired,</i> move to Personnel files and keep 7 yrs after termination of employment. <i>Not archival.</i>
Attendance records	7 yrs. after end of employment.	Destroy 7 yrs. after termination of employment. Keep confidential the entire time. <i>Not archival.</i>
Earnings and benefits records	Up to 7 yrs. after end of employment.	Keep for period of employment; after termination of employment, keep current year + 6 yrs. <i>Not archival.</i>
Employee contracts	Up to 7 yrs. after end of contract.	Keep for period of contract; after end of contract, keep current year + 6 yrs. <i>Not archival.</i>
Employee files and records for non-current employees, including applications, job descriptions, tax information, evaluations, attendance, etc.	7 yrs after end of employment.	Destroy 7 yrs. after termination of employment. Keep confidential the entire time. <i>Not archival.</i>
Employee salary schedules	6 yrs. after end of employment.	Destroy 6 yrs. after termination of employment. Keep confidential the entire time. <i>Not archival.</i>
Employee withholding statement, Form W-2 and	7 yrs.	Destroy after 7 yrs. Keep confidential the entire time. <i>Not archival.</i>

Record Title	Maximum Yrs. Retention	Recommendation for Disposition
Employee withholding certificate Form W-4	6 yrs. after end of employment.	Destroy 6 yrs. after termination of employment. <i>Not archival.</i>
Employment status history	7 yrs. after end of employment.	Destroy 7 yrs. after termination of employment. Keep confidential the entire time. <i>Not archival.</i>
Employment taxes, contributions and payments, including taxes withheld and FICA	7 yrs.	Destroy after 7 years; keep confidential during that time. <i>Not archival.</i>
Evaluations	7 yrs. after end of employment.	Destroy 7 yrs. after termination of employment. Keep confidential the entire time. <i>Not archival.</i>
Form I-9: Immigration and Naturalization Service Certification	6 yrs. after end of employment.	Keep during employment. Destroy 6 yrs. after termination of employment. <i>Not archival.</i>
Immigration and naturalization certifications Form I-9	6 yrs. after end of employment.	Destroy 6 yrs. after termination of employment. <i>Not archival.</i>
Injury reports	Up to 7 yrs.	Destroy after settlement of all claims OR after current year + 6 yrs. <i>Not archival.</i>
Insurance claims (notices of employee claims)	Up to 2 yrs.	Keep current year + 1 yr. Keep confidential the entire time. <i>Not archival.</i>
Insurance election records, employees'	6 yrs. after end of employment.	Keep for 6 yrs. after termination of employment. <i>Not archival.</i>

Record Title	Maximum Yrs. Retention	Recommendation for Disposition
Insurance plans	For life of administrative use.	Retain for life of policy. <i>Not archival.</i>
Insurance policies, inactive	Up to 7 yrs. cancellation, etc.	Keep current year + 6 yrs. after after cancellation, redemption or termination. Verify and retain documentation for life of policy. <i>Not archival.</i>
Job descriptions	7 yrs. after end of employment.	Destroy 7 yrs. after termination of employment. Keep confidential the entire time. <i>Not archival.</i>
Journals for payroll	7 yrs.	Destroy after 7 yrs. <i>Not archival.</i>
Leave time schedules and accruals	7 yrs. after end of employment.	Destroy 7 yrs. after termination of employment. Keep confidential the entire time. <i>Not archival.</i>
Manuals, procedural	Permanent.	Retain in working files until superseded; transfer older versions to Archives.
Medical insurance notices	Up to 2 yrs.	Keep current year + 1 yr. Keep confidential during the time. <i>Not archival.</i>
Medical reports	7 yrs. after end of employment.	Destroy 7 yrs. after termination of employment. Keep confidential the entire time. <i>Not archival.</i>
Payroll registers, checks, history and records	7 yrs.	Destroy after 7 yrs. <i>Not archival.</i>
Pension plans and literature	For life of administrative use.	Keep for life of plan or until superseded.

Record Title	Maximum Yrs. Retention	Recommendation for Disposition
Pension records for retired employees (contribution schedules, vesting records, certificates of enrollment)	6 yrs. after termination of benefit.	Keep 6 yrs. after termination of benefit or payments; destroy when administrative use ceases after the 6 yrs.
Personnel files and records for non-current employees, including applications, job descriptions, tax information, evaluations, attendance, etc.	7 yrs after end of employment.	Destroy 7 yrs. after termination of employment. Keep confidential the entire time. <i>Not archival.</i>
Tax status forms	7 yrs after end of employment.	Destroy 7 yrs. after termination of employment. Keep confidential the entire time. <i>Not archival.</i>
1099 tax forms for individual employees	7 yrs.	Destroy after 7 yrs. Keep confidential the entire time. <i>Not archival.</i>
Time sheets	3 yrs.	Destroy after 3 yrs. <i>Not archival.</i>
W-2 tax forms for individual employees	7 yrs.	Destroy after 7 yrs. Keep confidential the entire time. <i>Not archival.</i>
Worker's compensation claims and filings	7 yrs.	Destroy 7 yrs. after filing or settlement of claim, whichever occurs later. <i>Not archival.</i>

LEGAL RECORDS RETENTION

Record Title	Maximum Yrs. Retention	Recommendation for Disposition
Contracts, active	For life of administrative use.	Retain until termination of contract. See retention for inactive contracts below.
Contracts, inactive	Selective retention, 5 yrs. to permanent.	Construction, new: keep permanently in Archives. <i>Betterments & improvements:</i> keep permanently in Archives. <i>Repairs & maintenance:</i> current year + 6 yrs. (<i>not archival</i>). <i>Employment:</i> current year + 6 yrs. (<i>not archival</i>). <i>Service:</i> current year + 4 yrs. (<i>not archival</i>). <i>Lease agreements:</i> current year + 6 yrs. (<i>not archival</i>). <i>Loans and notes:</i> current year + 6 yrs. (<i>not archival</i>).
Copyright registration	For life of administrative use.	Retain for 50 yrs. OR for life of copyright.
Correspondence, legal	Permanent.	Retain permanently in Archives. Three years after case settlement, non-substantive documents (notes, abstracts, routine duplicate copies, drafts) may be discarded.
Court briefs	Permanent.	Retain permanently in Archives. Three years after settlement, non-substantive documents (notes, abstracts, routine duplicate copies, drafts) may be discarded.
Decrees	Permanent.	Retain permanently in Archives.

Record Title	Maximum Yrs. Retention	Recommendation for Disposition
Judgements rendered	Permanent.	Retain permanently in Archives.
Legal claims	Permanent.	Retain permanently in Archives. Three years after settlement, non-substantive documents (notes, abstracts, routine duplicate copies, drafts) may be discarded.
Litigation papers including claims, decrees, court briefs, etc.	Permanent.	Retain permanently in Archives. Three years after settlement, non-substantive documents (notes, abstracts, routine duplicate copies, drafts) may be discarded.
Memoranda of counsel's	Permanent.	Retain permanently in Archives.
Record destruction logs	Permanent.	Retain permanently in Archives.
Record retention schedules	Permanent.	Retain permanently in Archives.

PROPERTY RECORDS RETENTION

(Includes furnishings and real estate)

Record Title	Maximum Yrs. Retention	Recommendation for Disposition
Acquisitions	Permanent.	Retain permanently in Archives; notes, duplicate copies, drafts may be discarded 3 yrs. after settlement.
Appraisals of property	Permanent.	Retain in working files for administrative use until superseded, then archive permanently for historical information.
Blueprints	Permanent.	Retain permanently in Archives.
Building permits	Permanent.	Retain permanently in Archives.
Capital asset records	Permanent.	Retain permanently in Archives.
Certificates of title to property	Permanent.	Retain permanently in Archives.
Conveyances	Permanent.	Retain permanently in Archives.
Correspondence regarding real estate	Permanent.	Retain permanently in Archives; notes, duplicate copies, drafts may be discarded 3 yrs. after settlement.
Covenants	Permanent.	Retain permanently in Archives.
Deeds	Permanent.	Retain permanently in Archives.
Depreciation schedules	Permanent.	Retain permanently in Archives.
Easements	Permanent.	Retain permanently in Archives.
Fixed asset records.	Permanent.	Retain permanently in Archives.
Insurance policy statements	Permanent.	Retire to Archives after revision or relapse.

Record Title	Maximum Yrs. Retention	Recommendation for Disposition
Inventories of equipment	Permanent.	Retain in working files until superseded by new version. Transfer previous versions to Archives.
Inventories of property	Permanent.	Retain in working files until superseded by new version. Transfer previous versions to Archives.
Invoices and paid bills for major building construction and structural alterations	Permanent.	Transfer to Archives for permanent retention.
Lease correspondence	Permanent.	Transfer to Archives for permanent retention.
Leases and lease abstracts of contract	6 yrs. after life	Keep for life of contract; destroy 6 yrs. after expiration. <i>Not archival.</i>
Maintenance records	For life of administrative use.	Keep for administrative life of equipment. Keep longer if equipment is sold and there are concerns about liability. <i>Not archival.</i>
Manuals, operating	Permanent.	Retain in working files until superseded; transfer older versions to Archives.
Mortgage deeds	Permanent.	Retain permanently in Archives after discharge of mortgage.
Mortgage payments	7 yrs.	Destroy after 7 yrs. OR keep current year + 4 yrs. after an audit. <i>Not archival.</i>

Record Title	Maximum Yrs. Retention	Recommendation for Disposition
Motor vehicle records	For life of administrative use.	Keep for administrative life of equipment. Keep longer if equipment is sold and there are concerns about liability. <i>Not archival.</i>
Office improvement files	For life of administrative use.	Keep for administrative life of configuration. <i>Not archival.</i>
Office layouts	For life of administrative use.	Keep for administrative life of configuration. <i>Not archival.</i>
Permits	Permanent.	Retain permanently in Archives.
Plans (real estate)	Permanent.	Retain permanently in Archives.
Plots (real estate)	Permanent.	Retain permanently in Archives.
Property sold	Permanent.	Retain substantive documents permanently in Archives. Notes, drafts and duplicates may be discarded 3 yrs. after sale.
Real estate plans, plots,	Permanent.	Retain permanently in Archives.
Repair history	For life of administrative use.	Retain during life of equipment. Transfer to Archives if property is sold to another organization. Destroy if equipment is also destroyed.
Schedules of property	Permanent.	When superseded, transfer old versions to Archives.
Specifications for building	Permanent	Retain permanently in Archives.
Specifications for property upkeep and minor repairs	7 yrs.	Destroy 7 yrs. after completion of transaction. <i>Not archival.</i>

Record Title	Maximum Yrs. Retention	Recommendation for Disposition
Specifications for service and sales contracts.	7 yrs.	Destroy 7 yrs. after completion of transaction. <i>Not archival.</i>
Surveys (real estate)	Permanent.	Retain permanently in Archives.
Title papers	Permanent.	Retain permanently in Archives.
Title search papers and	Permanent.	Retain permanently in Archives.
Warranties	For life of administrative use.	Destroy after expiration of warranty. <i>Not archival.</i>
Zoning permits	Permanent.	Retain permanently in Archives.

OFFICE FILES RETENTION

Record Title	Maximum Yrs. Retention	Recommendation for Disposition
Alphabetical subject files	Selective retention 1 yr. to permanent.	Review annually. Selectively retain for Archives those items that document church administration, lay or clerical ministry, and activities of the congregation as a community of worship and fellowship. Destroy resource materials, duplicate copies, vendor reference files. See also specific record titles in these guidelines for retention periods by form and genre.
Catalogs	For life of administrative use.	Keep until superseded or until administrative use ceases. Review annually. <i>Not archival.</i>
Chronological events files	Selective retention 1 yr. to permanent.	Review annually. Selectively retain for Archives those items that document church administration, lay or clerical ministry, and activities of the congregation as a community of worship and fellowship. Destroy resource materials, duplicate copies, vendor reference files. See also specific record titles in these guidelines for retention periods by form and genre.

Record Title	Maximum Yrs. Retention	Recommendation for Disposition
Clippings and articles	Selective retention 1 yr. to permanent.	Review annually. Selectively retain for Archives those items that document church administration, lay or clerical ministry, and activities of the congregation as a community of worship and fellowship.
Name files	Selective retention 1 yr. to permanent.	Review annually. Selectively retain for Archives those items that document church administration, lay or clerical ministry, and activities of the congregation as a community of worship and fellowship. Destroy resource materials, duplicate copies, vendor reference files. See also specific record titles in these guidelines for retention periods by form and genre.
Non-church publications	For life of administrative use.	Keep until superseded or until administrative use ceases. Review annually. <i>Not archival.</i>
Office files	Selective retention, 1 yr. to permanent.	Review annually. Selectively retain for Archives those items that document church administration, lay or clerical ministry, and activities of the congregation as a community of worship and fellowship. Destroy resource materials, duplicate copies, vendor reference files. See also specific record titles in these guidelines for retention periods by form and genre.

Record Title	Maximum Yrs. Retention	Recommendation for Disposition
Professional literature	For life of administrative use.	Destroy when superseded by later edition. <i>Not archival.</i>
Project files	Selective retention yr. to permanent.	Review annually. Selectively retain for Archives those items that document church administration, lay or clerical ministry, and activities of the congregation as a community of worship and fellowship. Destroy resource materials, duplicate copies, vendor reference files. See also specific record titles in these guidelines for retention periods by form and genre.
Resource files	For life of administrative use.	Destroy when superseded by later edition. Not archival.
Sales brochures	For life of administrative use.	Destroy when superseded by later edition. Not archival.
Topical administrative files	Selective retention 1 yr. to permanent.	Review annually. Selectively retain for Archives those items that document church administration, lay or clerical ministry, and activities of the congregation as a community of worship and fellowship. Destroy resource materials, duplicate copies, vendor reference files. See also specific record titles in these guidelines for retention periods by form and genre.
Vendor files	For life of administrative use.	Destroy when superseded by later edition. <i>Not archival.</i>

CORRESPONDENCE RECORDS RETENTION

Record Title	Maximum Yrs. Retention	Recommendation for Disposition
Administrative policy statements	Permanent.	Retire old statements to Archives after revision.
Correspondence, chronological	2 yrs.	Destroy after 2 yrs. if alphabetical subject file exists.
Correspondence, courtesy (thank-yous, appointment confirmations, Christmas cards, other routine letters)	5 yrs	Destroy after 5 yrs. <i>Not archival.</i>
Correspondence, legal (regarding tax, real estate, litigation and probate issues)	Permanent.	Retain permanently in Archives.
Correspondence, name files	Selective retention 5 yrs to permanent	Retain substantive correspondence permanently in Archives. Destroy routine items after 5 yrs.
Correspondence, subject files	Selective retention 5 yrs to permanent	Retain substantive correspondence permanently in Archives. Destroy routine items after 5 yrs.
Correspondence, transactional (regarding payments, receipts, transmittals, credits, etc.)	5 yrs.	Destroy after 5 yrs. <i>Not archival.</i>
Policy statements (administrative)	Permanent.	Retire old statements to Archives after revision.

ELECTRONIC RECORDS RETENTION

Record Title	Maximum Yrs. Retention	Recommendation for Disposition
Accounting data	Up to 5 yrs.	Keep current year + 4 yrs. after an audit. Otherwise, destroy obsolete formats after conversion and verification of data. Also refer to retention schedules for specific accounting records. Retain current information in hard copy, making an archival copy of permanent files where necessary. Make backup copies of all active disk files and store in separate location.
Other business data	Up to 5 yrs.	Keep current year + 4 yrs. after an audit. Otherwise, destroy obsolete formats after conversion and verification of data. Also refer to retention schedules for specific accounting records. Retain current information in hard copy, making an archival copy of permanent files where necessary. Make backup copies of all active disk files and store in separate location.
Hardware documentation	For life of Administrative use.	Retain until hardware is replaced.
Software documentation	For life of Administrative use.	Retain until software is upgraded.

Chapter 5: Keeping electronic records in your institution

Two critical issues pertain to the safety of records stored electronically. Can the current information be restored in the event of a system failure? Can the electronic records be migrated to the newer generations of hardware and software that seem to be developed almost every year?

Saving permanently-valuable information

The best advice regarding electronic records is to print out any data you need to save permanently on acid-free paper. Treat all your electronic data the same way you would a newsletter produced with computer software. Consider the computer your publishing medium not your storage medium, and create a permanent hard copy.

Security

There are certain measures you can take to ensure the safety of your electronic versions. Back up your hard drive at least once a week and save the backup disks in a place away from the computer itself. Limit access to computer files by means of password protection.

Computers as search engines

Computers can be a valuable tool in the Archives, especially for creating and updating finding aids and policies. If you have a computer expert in your congregation, you might want to consider something similar to the experiment St. Michael and All Angels' Episcopal Church is conducting. St. Michael's already has some of its recent church vestry minutes in word processing files. To convert the rest of its paper minutes, a computer expert on the church archives committee is using inexpensive scanning software to scan them into a software file in the computer. Once these scanned documents are cleaned up, he hopes to combine them with the existing word processed files to create a master file, which can easily be searched for specific subjects, dates, names, and events by using one of the inexpensive software packages with built in search capabilities.

This program taps into the true power of the computer, for it can find in seconds selected topics that are scattered throughout the many years of church minutes—a search that would take someone far longer to complete manually. St. Michael's is considering the feasibility of the project—how much disk space will be required, how long it will take to scan over forty years of minutes, how easy it will be to upgrade the software over time, how versatile the search engine is in terms of recognizing synonyms and alternative versions of words, and so on. Still, it is a worthwhile project to consider.

Chapter 6: Sharing the stories in your Archives

The life of a congregation, like that of an individual, includes important milestones. One of the most important is its anniversary—a special time to celebrate faith and the ministry of the dedicated members who have served the congregation in the past.

When a church wants to gather material to celebrate an anniversary, it will find no better source than its archives. In fact, many churches establish archives in anticipation of an anniversary. The event provides a perfect opportunity to underscore the significance of an Archives, for its treasures can be shared during the series of special activities that many congregations hold to lead up to it.

Writing a congregational history

An effective history accurately tells the stories of the congregation and appeals to readers. It builds the history around anecdotes and personal memories, good quality photographs, helpful timelines, and lists that at a glance show milestones and key persons. A typical outline might include:

- profile of the membership—past and present
- organization of the congregation
- buildings and other property
- pastoral and lay leadership
- organization and subunit activities
- worship and music
- special occasions
- service and mission
- finances
- ecumenical and community relations

Conducting oral histories

When there is no written record of events in an organization, archivists often fill in the gaps and collect memories to share by using oral histories given by people who were there. This practice can be a wonderful way to supplement your church archives. Start by gathering stories from the older members of your congregation. Be sure to ask the kind of questions that will encourage answers that would elicit answers more extensive than just a “yes” or “no.” Some samples of questions you could ask are given below.

How to record the oral history

Two people should work with the interviewee. One will operate equipment and take pictures; the other will ask questions and take brief notes. Most people like to use a video recorder, but this medium is *not*

archival. Even if you choose to use a camcorder, the interviewee should also be recorded on a standard size audio cassette—not a mini-cassette—and the equipment operator should take some black and white photos during the interview.

Sample questions for oral interviews

You might ask the first question; and then, if necessary, use others to follow up and get more details

1. Describe your earliest memories of the _____ Church. (How old were? What did you do at church?)
2. Who are some of the pastors you remember, and what stands out about them? (Do you recall names? dates?)
3. Did you go to Sunday school? Who are some of the Sunday school teachers you remember? What were the names of your Sunday school classes?
4. Have you been an officer in the church, a Sunday school teacher, committee member? Tell us about this.
5. Was or is your family local and also active in _____ Church? Tell us about any other relatives who are _____ Church members—parents, brothers, sisters, spouse, children, grandchildren, etc.
6. What do or did your family members do for a living in the community?
7. Who are some of the other families that your family has socialized with through the church?
8. Would you describe for us any homecoming events you remember or any other church social activities that were important occasions to you?
9. Were you married in the church? What was the ceremony like? Can you tell us about baptisms or funerals you family has had in the church?
10. What kind of changes have taken place to the church building itself?
11. How does the _____ Church differ today from the way it was fifty years ago?
12. What has the _____ Church meant in your life to you personally?
13. Briefly tell us what it has been like to live in this community.

Spotlighting heritage moments in worship services

Heritage moments are brief stories that highlight events from different eras or individuals in the congregation. They help members learn applications for today. Even seemingly negative events like financial hardships can testify to the faith and perseverance of the church. It is not an appropriate time, however, for recalling major traumatic events in the congregation's life.

Highlighting history in the newsletter or bulletin

For a number of weeks leading up to your major celebration, you can include in your regular membership newsletter or Sunday bulletin feature stories about historic congregational events and people. This is a place to share facts about your church and its members that can be fun, surprising, and interesting. You may even receive information from members for future columns.

Conducting the major anniversary worship service

This should be one of the most special services in the life of your congregation. In thanksgiving of those who went before, some congregations—in denominations where it is acceptable—use an old style liturgy, perhaps in the language of founding members. To include everyone, it is important to provide translations. Sharing some of the early ways or customs is a wonderful way to acknowledge ethnic diversity, especially for churches that now have a mix of ethnic backgrounds.

Despite the historical components, the anniversary service should emphasize looking forward and moving into the future.

Many congregations incorporate an event centered around a meal in their anniversary. This is an especially good fellowship occasion to reminisce; tell stories; display old documents, photographs, and memorabilia; and demonstrate the Archives room. The theme should be festive and celebratory, and, of course, should be videotaped for inclusion in the Archives.

Chapter 7: When a congregation disbands

Congregations ebb and flow. Often, when members become geographically dispersed, a congregation will decide to shut its doors. It is important that its permanent records go to a safe place so former members will have access to their baptism, marriage, membership, and other vital records in the future.

If the congregation is merged or consolidated with another one, then the new congregation takes ownership of the records of its predecessor organizations and has the responsibility for maintaining them for as long as it exists.

If this is not the case, officials closing the disbanded congregation have several choices for a permanent repository for the records. Listed below in order of preference are repositories for archival records for most denominations. Consult a church authority regarding your denomination.

- Transfer them to an appropriate regional, synodical, or diocesan archives of the church, after appropriate consultation with the archivist in charge.
- Transfer them to the churchwide national archives, after appropriate consultation with the archivist in charge
- Transfer them to a neighboring church, after appropriate consultation with that church's governing body
- Transfer them to a local history society or other archival repository that serves the geographic area and has the resources to care for them. You might also consider transferring them to the South Caroliniana Library (Columbia), South Carolina Historical Society (Charleston), or Clemson University's Special Collections Department.

What to keep

The officials in charge of the closing should not attempt to box all the congregation's office records and transfer them to another repository. Instead, records should be selectively sorted and retained according to the following guidelines.

- Membership records or parish registers of baptisms, confirmations, marriages, burials, and transfers
- Charter, articles of incorporation, constitutions, and bylaws
- Minutes and reports of regular and special congregational meetings
- Minutes of the church board, vestry, or council and its executive committees
- Minutes and other records of committees and auxiliary organizations for men, women, and youth
- Congregational newsletters
- Other significant publications like directories and anniversary history booklets
- Correspondence of historical significance
- Worship and music materials, including selected Sunday bulletins
- Original entry ledger and annual audit reports
- All insurance policies
- Property documents including deeds, titles, surveys, mortgages, easements, and blueprints
- Parochial reports and other statistical information
- Photographs and negatives, films, videotapes, sound recordings, preferably identifying persons, dates, events

Chapter 8: Sample religious Archives policies

You should adopt a policy to establish the responsibilities and limits of your church Archives. In this example, separate policies cover collection management, user access, and preservation practices.

Archives Collection Management Policy*

St. Michael and All Angels' Episcopal Church
Columbia, South Carolina
March 30, 1999

Authority of the Archives Collection Policy Document. This document establishes the framework within which the Archives program of the St. Michael and All Angels' Episcopal Church functions. Archival practices and procedures will be in accordance with its provisions. The St. Michael and All Angels' Episcopal Church Archives Committee is responsible for developing and amending the policy.

Authority of the Archives. The St. Michael's Church Archives was organized by the Church Vestry in 1998. Charles Wickenberg, a former editor of The State newspaper and founding member of the congregation, was appointed chair. The archives framework consists of an archives committee which sets the goals and regularly meets to organize material as it comes to the Archives. The Church has provided a separate locked room for housing the archives and an annual supply budget. In 1998 the Archives obtained the assistance of a professional archivist in a consulting position through grant funding by the State Historical Records Advisory Board. Jeanette Bergeron is helping the Archives Committee carry out in-depth processing, arrangement and description of the collection and at SHRAB's request is utilizing the St. Michael's collection to develop a records management manual for use by congregations of various denominations throughout the state.

Archival Program Objectives. St. Michael and All Angels' Episcopal Church is a parish located in Columbia's Trenholm Road area in the Upper Episcopal Diocese of South Carolina. It was founded in 1957.

The St. Michael and All Angels' Episcopal Church Archives has four major objectives:

- 1) To document, in so far as possible, the activities of the St. Michael and All Angels' Episcopal Church in order to acknowledge its contributions to our heritage and society.
- 2) To document, in so far as possible, the watershed events and decisions affecting the Church and its members.
- 3) To restore and preserve the permanent (archival) documents of the Church for posterity.
- 4) To assist in the use of the archival records for genealogical research, educational programs, commemorative events, decision making, and other activities deemed appropriate by St. Michael and All Angels' Episcopal Church.

*Based on Ellis's *Keeping Archives*, 2nd ed., 27–30.

Responsibilities of the Archives Committee. The Archives Committee is delegated with authority for the following responsibilities:

- 1) To decide which records have permanent value. Records include paper records, photographs, artifacts, and audiovisuals.
- 2) To locate and acquire all records of permanent value.
- 3) To organize, describe and catalog all permanent records and provide a copy of the description in Machine Readable Cataloging (MARC) format to the Library of Congress.
- 4) To institute proper preservation techniques for all materials, including where possible, microfilming the most valuable records. As a preservation backup, a copy of the film will be housed at South Caroliniana Library.
- 5) To maintain custody of all archival materials, to control use and security of all records, and to provide disaster protection, in so far as possible, for the records.
- 6) To assist in the use of the records for historical research in response to requests from church members and other authorized persons.
- 7) To provide assistance to members of the public requesting access to the vital statistical records (births, marriages, deaths) and other historical information of the church.
- 8) To organize displays of archival materials or artifacts for special promotional events of the church.
- 9) To order and maintain equipment, supplies, etc. that are needed by the Archives.
- 10) To conduct oral history interviews as needed to document the story of the church.
- 11) To document the ongoing operations of the Archives itself and its practices and policies.

Obligations of the Church Officers to Cooperate with the Archives Program. Church officers shall cooperate with the Archives Committee to ensure 1) that no archival records are destroyed or disposed of without proper authorization and 2) that the advice of the Archives Committee is sought in matters involving the quality and quantity of archival records collected.

Scope and Nature of Archival Requirements

Acquisition: The Archives Committee has responsibility to acquire the permanently valuable records of the St. Michael and All Angels' Episcopal Church, and the obligation to care for them indefinitely and to commit resources to their continuing care. Material acquired for the Archives becomes the property of the St. Michael and All Angels' Episcopal Church to be administered as it sees fit, which includes the right to deaccession or dispose of material deemed non-archival and to assign the collection for safekeeping in a recognized archival repository if the Church is unable to maintain the Archives.

Acquisitions shall be consistent with the purposes of the Archives, possess potential research or exhibition purposes, be in good condition, and fit within the storage space capabilities of the Archives. At most, only two copies of the same material will be retained due to space limitations. Loans to and from the Archives will be discouraged. It is the Archives' objective to maintain permanent physical custody of its own materials.

Deaccession, or removal from the collection, will occur if the material does not meet the criteria of the acquisitions policy, imperils the well-being of the collection, duplicates material the Archives already has, or is irrelevant to the purpose of the Archives.

Arrangement and description. All records brought into archival custody shall be arranged and described according to archival principles to the extent necessary to make them available for research. This includes registration of an overall MARC (machine readable catalog) record for the entire collection with the National Manuscripts Collection of the Library of Congress, maintenance of an in-house Archives catalog database, and production of written finding aids.

Preservation. Because the preservation of the archival materials is the basis for the Archives program, every effort shall be made to provide the proper facilities, environment and resources to prolong the life of the records in custody. A detailed preservation policy follows.

Access to Archives. The Archives is available for use by the officers and parishioners of the St. Michael and All Angels' Episcopal Church. Use by other researchers is encouraged but must be coordinated with the Archives Committee. Archival materials will be available for research under conditions that ensure their preservation and which comply with the requirements to respect confidentiality, privacy and any specific legal conditions. The Archives Committee will administer access to the Archives collection in accordance with sound archival principles, the available resources, their legal and ethical obligations, and the physical integrity of the materials. A detailed access policy follows.

User Education. The Archives Committee has a commitment to promote an awareness and appreciation of the materials in its collection to its church members and the public at large.

Management and Administration. In addition to its responsibility to manage the Archives, the Archives Committee also has an obligation to document its archival work carefully, for the purpose of sharing with other church, state, regional and federal organizations.

Major Activities of the Archival Program.

- 1) Identification of the permanently valuable St. Michael and All Angels' Episcopal Church records.
- 2) Transfer of these records to the church Archives.
- 3) Detailed sorting, arrangement, description and cataloging of archival materials for the purpose of identification and retrieval.
- 4) Identification and preservation of photographs and artifacts which document the history of the church.
- 5) Repair of damaged or deteriorating materials, including mending, cleaning and removal of acid.
- 6) Preservation of all archival materials, including removing harmful substances (tape, glue, staples, dust, rubber bands, metal clips), copying materials onto safety formats and placing materials in clean, acid-free containers which provide proper support to the weight of the documents.
- 7) Research of information in the Archives in response to requests.
- 8) Interpretation of the archival materials for the benefit of future users, via exhibits and appropriate publications.

Archives Access Policy

St. Michael and All Angels' Episcopal Church

Columbia, South Carolina

March 30, 1999

Access to the St. Michael and All Angels' Episcopal Church Archives.

The Archives is available for use by the officers and parishioners of the St. Michael and All Angels' Episcopal Church and by other researchers. Access is by appointment only and must be coordinated with the Archives Committee through the Chair. Members of the Archives Committee who are familiar with the contents of the records and are trained in the procedures for handling them will assist anyone using the Archives.

Archival materials will be available for research under conditions that ensure their preservation and which comply with the requirements to respect confidentiality, privacy and any specific legal conditions. The Archives Committee will administer access to the Archives collection in accordance with sound archival principles, the available resources, their legal and ethical obligations, and the physical integrity of the materials.

No smoking materials, food or beverages will be permitted in the Archives.

The Archives Committee reserves the right to inspect all research materials and personal articles before a patron leaves the premises.

The Archives Committee may refuse access to any archival item in its collection due to condition, value, staff limitations or sensitivity of contents.

Photocopying services at St. Michael and All Angels' Episcopal Church are limited and may entail a minimal fee.

Archives Preservation Policy

St. Michael and All Angels' Episcopal Church

Columbia, South Carolina

March 30, 1999

Preservation Practices in the St. Michael and All Angels' Episcopal Church Archives.

Because the preservation of the archival materials is the basis for the Archives program, every effort shall be made to provide the proper facilities, environment and resources to prolong the life of the records in custody.

The Archives Room

The Church Archives is housed in a separate room on the upper floor of the Parish Hall. The door is locked, and keys are restricted to Archives Committee members and selected church officers. The record shelving has been positioned to minimize light exposure from the single window in the room.

In addition, all records are stored in boxes, offering them further protection from UV damage. There are no exposed pipes in the room. Temperature control is maintained 24 hours a day, year-round. The humidity in the room is monitored by a wall strip indicator so that heating and dehumidifier devices can be used in times of extreme conditions.

Storage Boxes and Folders

All storage materials used in the Columbia Church Archives have been obtained from a reputable archival supplier and have been spot-tested for pH authenticity.

All documents are stored in acid-free boxes or document cases. Paper documents are also housed in acid-free folders. Photographs are stored in archival polyethylene print envelopes and kept separate from other documents. The combination of boxes and folders is intended to protect the documents from most of the potential damage caused by light, water and dust (which is highly acidic). All boxes are kept closed when not in use.

Looseleaf documents are stored upright in folders within boxes, with spacer items employed to fill in slack space. Scrapbooks, albums, journals and certificates are stored flat in flat document cases. Series descriptions on file folders are written in No. 2 pencil, the preferred archival labeling method. Special film marking pens were used to label the photo envelopes so that the descriptions are permanent and waterproof.

Other Preservation Steps

The Archives Committee has attempted to remove all staples, paper clips, rubber bands and similarly harmful fastening materials from its archives. Where it is necessary to link together documents for future usage, methods such as archival plastiklips have been used.

Parts of the collection which are on highly acidic paper or contained in fragile journal books have been transferred to acid-free paper.

Absorene cleaning material has been used to clean dirt, finger oils and other long-term accumulations from the covers and end-sheets of ledger journals, certificates and similar materials. Archival Filmoplast mending tape has been used to make some minor repairs to journal bindings and torn pages.

A selection of the Archives' most valued certificates have been cleaned and encapsulated in mylar sleeves.

Acid-free tissue paper has been employed as a buffer between pages of albums as well between the covers and inside pages of journals.

The collection has been backed up on microfilm, copies of which are housed both at St. Michael and All Angels' Episcopal Church and at South Caroliniana Library.

Disaster Preparedness Supplies

A disaster supply kit is stored inside the Archives for use in case of a water disaster or other emergency.

Chapter 9: Disaster preparedness & recovery

Disasters happen. It is a fact of life in the American South that we will be visited by hurricanes, tornadoes, dangerous electrical storms, high humidity nearly year round, and occasional insect infestation. The secret to coping with disaster is to plan ahead. Have supplies, resources and recovery procedures organized and spelled out in writing. Even the calmest heads among us may have trouble focusing on a church emergency when our families and personal property may also be affected. If your church does not have a facility disaster plan, then the following policy, with modifications, may be helpful.

Archives Disaster Plan Policy*

St. Michael and All Angels' Episcopal Church
Columbia, South Carolina
March 30, 1999

General Disaster Recovery Plan for St. Michael and All Angels' Episcopal Church Archives.

*Components are based on advice from a variety of expert sources including Munter's Moisture Control Services, Toronto Area Archivists Group Education Foundation, PALMCOP, Solinet and the Northeast Document Conservation Center.

NOTIFICATION LIST

1. Archives Committee members to be contacted in case of disaster:

Name	Phone Numbers:	Who calls this person
------	----------------	-----------------------

a.

b.

c.

d.

e.

f.

2. Designated church leader for disaster recovery effort:

Name _____ Phone Numbers: _____

RESOURCE LIST

3. Off-site services to be called (if needed) in the event of a disaster:

	Name of contact	Phone Number:
Fire department	_____	_____
Sheriff	_____	_____
Ambulance	_____	_____
Insurance agent	_____	_____
Legal advisor	_____	_____
Utility company	Light: _____	_____
	Gas: _____	_____
	Water: _____	_____
Electrician	_____	_____
Heating & air conditioning	_____	_____
Plumber	_____	_____
Carpenter	_____	_____
Exterminator	_____	_____
Mycologist (mold expert)	_____	_____
Janitorial service	_____	_____
Contractor of choice	_____	_____
Commercial freezing facility	_____	_____

4. Archival experts to be contacted for backup assistance

Name	Title, Phone Number
<i>Pat Morris</i>	<i>Deputy Coordinator, State Historical Records Advisory Board, 803-896-6112, Columbia, SC</i>
<i>Sharon Bennett</i>	<i>Archivist (preservation consultant), Charleston Museum, 803-722-2997, Charleston, SC</i>

EMERGENCY SUPPLY LIST

Item	Location	Qty	Date Checked
Plastic buckets (for rinsing water-damaged photos and film)			
Duct tape (for sealing damaged boxes)			
Freezer/wax paper (for packing water-damaged documents)			
Plastic garbage bags (for packing, for debris disposal)			
Mop			
Paper towels (for interleaving wet documents)			
Plastic crates (for packing and transport)			
Plastic sheeting (to protect from potential water damage)			
Broom with squeegee			
Clothesline (for hanging wet photos and documents to dry)			
Plastic clothes pins			
Lysol disinfectant (for mold removal)			
Extension cord			
First aid kit			

Item	Location	Qty	Date Checked
Flashlight & batteries	_____		
Portable light & batteries	_____		
Waterproof ink pens (for marking contents of boxes)	_____		
Protective masks	_____		
Rubber gloves	_____		
Heavier gloves	_____		
Twine	_____		
Retractable tape measure	_____		
Sponges	_____		
Scissors	_____		
Adhesive labels	_____		
Sharpened pencils	_____		
Notepads	_____		
Tool kit	_____		
Disposable flash camera (for insurance evidence)	_____		
Portable fan	_____		
Portable fire extinguisher	_____		
Wet vac (if funds available)	_____		
Dehumidifier (if funds available)	_____		

DAILY CHECK LIST

1. Locks on Archives doors and windows are secure and all keys are accounted for.
2. No pipes, faucets, toilets or air-conditioning units are leaking on the Archives.
3. Electrical equipment is unplugged and no frayed wiring is evident.
4. There are no signs of structural damage.
5. There are no burning materials in ashtrays or wastebaskets.

PERIODIC CHECK LIST

1. Emergency numbers are accurate and posted near every telephone.
2. Fire extinguishers are operable.
3. The local fire service is familiar with the location of the Archives within the Church structure.
4. Church staff knows how to reach members of the Archives Committee in case of emergency in the Archives.
5. Church staff and Archives Committee members know where and how to cut off switches and valves for electricity, gas and water.
6. Church staff and Archives Committee members are familiar with the location of the Archives disaster supply kit, the disaster procedures manual, and backup keys to the Archives.
7. Copies of this manual are stored in various accessible locations which are not all likely to fall victim to the same disaster.

ARCHIVES FLOORPLAN

The following diagrams show the location of the Archives within the St. Michael and All Angels' Episcopal Church and the arrangement of records within the Archives itself.

[NOT SHOWN HERE FOR SECURITY REASONS]

PRIORITY SALVAGE LIST

In case of an emergency, the priority order for saving items in the Archives is:

1. Bound journals and ledgers (one-of-a-kind, irreplaceable)
2. Photographs (one-of-kind, irreplaceable)
3. Board Minutes (backed up on microfilm)
4. Annual financial reports, budgets, balance sheets (backed up on microfilm)
5. Bulletins (backed up on microfilm)
6. Deeds, etc. (backed up on microfilm)
7. Other archival records
8. Non-archival records (recent invoices, tax returns, etc.)

Questions to ask:

Is the item available elsewhere?

Can the item be replaced? At what cost?

How important is the item to the collection?

DISASTER RESPONSE CHECK LIST

1. Notify the Fire Department in case downed power lines or damaged gas mains could further endanger the church and the public.
2. Notify the Sheriff's Department, particularly for crowd control and to prevent looting, vandalism and theft.
3. Notify church disaster coordinator to facilitate on-site disaster containment.
4. Notify designated contractor of choice to preserve and protect as much as soon as possible.
5. Notify the insurance carrier.
6. Remove loose debris and excess water to make the premises tenable.
7. Put furniture up on blocks or boards to minimize water damage.
8. Secure building from outside invasion by people or the weather.
9. With the contractor, determine what can be restored economically and what needs to be replaced.
10. Take extensive notes of the damage and also take photographs to further document the damage.
11. Stabilize the environment.
12. Separate the damaged from undamaged, and by degrees of damage.
13. It is almost impossible to recover charred items or remove the smoke odor from burned paper. Contact the State Archives (c/o Pat Morris at 803-734-8602) to see if any steps can be taken.
- 14. Consult the following pages for further details on recovering water damage items.***

WATER RECOVERY CHECK LIST

1. As soon as it is safe to enter the flooded area, use mops or wet vacuums to remove water.
2. To have any chance of recovering water damaged materials, it is important to accomplish as much as possible within the first 48 hours.
3. To retard the growth of mold and mildew, the temperature and humidity must be low. To do this:
 - a. Turn the heat off in winter and the air conditioning up in summer.
 - b. Use open doors and windows and fans to maximize air circulation.
 - c. Remove wet debris and wet carpet from the area.
4. Carefully remove damaged materials to a work area that also has low temperature, low humidity and good air circulation.
5. Freeze soaked books and documents* as soon as possible.
 - a. Wrap them loosely in freezer paper or wax paper.
 - b. Pack them spine down in the freezer unit.
 - c. Although a home freezer will work for small quantities, large amounts should be transported to a commercial freezing facility.
 - d. Records with blurred inks should be frozen immediately.
 - e. Inventory the items placed on frozen storage.
6. Separate paper documents on coated (shiny) paper to prevent adhesion. Place them flat or use paper towels between them.
7. *In lieu of freezing, small quantities of paper documents and books can be air- dried.
 - a. Select a clean, dry work environment with a large amount of work surface.
 - b. Use fans to keep the air circulating; keep the fans tilted into the air.
 - c. Cover the worktables with paper towels and lay the documents out on them.
 - d. Or instead of tables, suspend clotheslines in the air close together and lay documents across them.
8. To recover wet photographs and slides, air-dry them on clotheslines (this time, using clothespins).
9. To air-dry books or journals:
 - a. Place paper towels between the front and back covers and adjacent flyleaves.
 - b. Stand books on head end (upside down).
 - c. Change the towels frequently.
 - d. As the books dry, interleave paper towels or newsprint at intervals of 50 pages starting at back of book.

Chapter 10: Resources for more information

All these resources would make a great addition to a small archival resource center, regardless of the denomination. Some were used as a touchstone in the development of this manual to ensure the coverage of certain major topics. Also available are the over 150 tapes and books purchases by the South Carolina State Library with a grant from the SHRAB. You can get these through interlibrary loan, through your local public library from the South Carolina State Library. A listing of these titles is on the SHRAB's web page at: www.state.sc.us/scdah/shrab1.htm

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Appendix A

*Definitions**

The following definitions have been adopted by the St. Michael and All Angels' Episcopal Church Archives Committee to describe its specific archival activities and responsibilities. They are presented in alphabetical order.

Accession. The process of formally accepting and recording the receipt of records into custody of the St. Michael and All Angels' Episcopal Church Archives.

Acidity. That quality in paper that causes its chemical degradation to the point that it becomes discolored and brittle and will ultimately fall apart. Usually expressed as a pH value. A pH value of 7-10 is the objective.

Appraisal. The process of determining which records are to be retained as archives and which are not.

Archival quality. Term designating records media (paper, microfilm) and related supplies (containers, inks, ribbons, fasteners) as suitable materials for creating permanent records or archives. Such materials must be chemically stable (non-reactive) and physically durable.

Archival value. The values that justify the indefinite or permanent retention of records as archives.

Evidential value. The value for providing evidence of the origins, structure, functions, policies and operations of the people who created the records.

Administrative value. The value of records for the conduct of current and future administrative business.

Fiscal value. The value of records for the conduct of current and future financial business.

Legal value. The value of records for the conduct of current and future legal business.

Informational value. The value of records for reference or research deriving from the information the records contain, as distinct from their evidential value. Records and archives often contain information that has research uses not envisioned by their creators.

Historical value. The value of records arising from age and/or connection with notable events or persons.

Archives. Those records that have been selected for permanent preservation because of their value. Also, the room which houses the archives collection.

*Based on Ellis's *Keeping Archives*, 2nd ed., 460-79.

Archives Committee. The unit of parishioners responsible for ongoing development and maintenance of the Archives.

Archivist. A person professionally trained in organization and administration of an archives.

Arrangement. The process of putting archives and records into order in accordance with accepted archival principles, particularly those of provenance and original order (defined below). If there is no original order, the archivist may impose an order that presents the records objectively and facilitates their use.

Artifact. Objects, not being records, retained in the archives because of their informational value or their relationship with the records or archives. Example: Bibles.

Conservation. The physical aspects and processes of preservation of original archival materials. Preventative conservation (such as acid-free storage) prevents or delays future degradation. Restorative conservation repairs or restores damaged or deteriorated material to its original condition.

Creator. The person who creates or brings into existence documents and records.

Custody. The responsibility for the care of archives based on their physical possession.

Deacidification. The process of eliminating acidity in documents and other materials, or reducing acidity to a more acceptable level.

Description. The process of recording information about the nature and content of materials in archival custody. The description identifies such features as provenance, arrangement, format and contents, and presents them in a standardized form.

Disposal. The final decision concerning the fate of records, i.e. destruction or transfer to archives.

Document. The smallest complete unit of a record material that is accumulated to form a file—i.e. a letter or photograph.

Encapsulation. The process of encasing a document in a polyester envelope, the edges of which are sealed. The aim is to provide support for a fragile document that needs to remain visible.

File. An organized unit of documents, accumulated during current use and kept together because they dealt with the same subject, activity or transaction.

Finding aids. The descriptive media created by the Archives to establish control over records and other holdings. Basic finding aids include guides, descriptive inventories, accession registers, card catalogs, shelf and box lists and indexes.

Format. The physical medium in which information is recorded or carried, e.g. paper files, computer printouts, photographs, machine-readable records, etc.

Holdings. The whole of the archival materials in the custody of the Archives.

Inactive records. Those records no longer required for the conduct of activities and which may therefore be transferred to archival custody.

Intellectual control. The control established over the informational content of archives resulting from ascertaining and documenting their provenance, and from the processes of arrangement and description.

Original order. The order in which records were kept when in active use. The principle of original order requires that the original order be preserved or reconstructed, unless it is absolutely clear that there was no original order and that the records had been accumulated haphazardly.

Provenance. The person or office of origin of records, i.e. the entity that created or accumulated and used the records. In archival theory, the principle of provenance requires that the archives of one organization or person not be intermingled with the archives of another.

Records. Documents containing data or information of any kind and in any form, created or received for use.

Reference. The range of activities involved in providing information about or from records and archives.

Register. A log or list of brief descriptions usually in a sequence that serves as a finding aid to the things listed.

Series. Those archives having the same provenance that belong together because they are part of a discernible filing system, have been kept together because they result from the same activity, or are of similar format and relate to a particular function. Series contain files that contain documents.

Appendix B

Examples of archival documents in a church

The following examples are typical of the archives that St. Michael and All Angels' Episcopal Church Archives Committee will save and preserve. (*Note: For other denominations, there will be modifications in this list.*)

Acolyte records

Anniversary celebration records

Annual reports of the parish

Audiovisual tapes of church activities

Baptism records

Bulletins of services

Burial records

Cemetery records

Clergy biographies, sermons and correspondence

Committee minutes and membership information

Communicant records

Confirmation records

Day care operation records

Directories of church members

Episcopal Church Women minutes, directories and membership information

Financial records (general ledgers, budgets, audit reports, major expenses)

Histories of the Church

Inventories of works of art, church silver, linen, hangings, furnishings

Lay reader applications

Marriage records

Membership lists

Memorial records (donors, donations and uses)

Mission activities—local and foreign

Newsletters of the parish

Officer lists (vestry and other committees)

Orders of service

Organization minutes, reports & membership information

Parish register

Photographs of church members and activities

Property records (deeds, titles, mortgages)

Register of church services

Scrapbooks of church activities

Transfers of membership (in and out)

Vestry minutes

Youth activity records

Appendix C

Standard Archival Supplies

The following supplies are typical of those used in the development of the Archives of St. Michael and All Angels' Episcopal Church. For \$500 or less, your church can purchase an initial selection of the basic supplies you will need for preservation work. You will eventually need to purchase more document cases and file folders as the size of your collection grows.

Acid-free document cases (*also known as Hollinger boxes*)

Acid-free storage cartons (*1-cubic-foot size*)

Acid-free flat storage boxes with drop-fronts (*for oversize ledgers and documents*)

Acid-free spacer boards (*for taking up slack space in cases*)

Acid-free filing folders

Polyethylene envelopes (*for photograph, artifacts & news clipping storage*)

Acid-free case labels

Acid-free file-out cards (*for marking the place for records in use*)

Acid-free tissue paper (*for wrapping artifacts and protecting end-sheets of journals*)

Number two pencils (*for labeling folders*)

Film marking pens (*for labeling polyethylene envelopes*)

Archival plastic clips (*to replace staples, standard paper clips*)

Mylar tabs (*to be placed under paper clips on brittle paper*)

Unbleached cotton typing tape (*to replace plastic notebooks, binder clips*)

Absorene paper and book cleaner

Filmoplast mending tape (*for mending paper*)

Mylar encapsulation units (*for encapsulating precious documents*)

Desiccant canisters (*for absorbing moisture in display cases*)

Humidity indicator card (*for observing room humidity*)

Acid-free bond paper (*for photocopying damaged documents*)

pH testing pen (*for testing acidity of paper*)

Appendix D

Archival Supply Sources

Conservation Resources International
8000-H Forbes Place
Springfield, VA 22151
1-800-634-6932
www.conservationresources.com

Demco
Box 7488
Madison, WI 53707
608-241-1201

Gaylord Archival Supplies
PO Box 4901
Syracuse, NY 13221
1-800-448-6160
<http://www.gaylord.com/archival>

Highsmith (furniture/shelving)
W5527 Highway 106
PO Box 800
Fort Atkinson, WI 53538
1-800-558-2110

Hollinger Corporation
PO Box 8360
Fredericksburg, VA 22404
1-800-624-0491

Light Impressions
439 Monroe Ave.
PO Box 940
Rochester, NY 14603
1-800-828-6216
www.lightimpressionsdirect.com

Metal Edge, Inc.
6340 Bandini Blvd.
Commerce, CA 90040
1-800-862-2228
www.metaledgeinc.com

University Products
517 Main St.
PO Box 101
Holyoke, MA 01041
1-800-628-1912
www.universityproducts.com

Appendix E

Sources for help in South Carolina

Several archival institutions in South Carolina have staff who can be contacted for help or advice. You can network with these individuals, and you can get some good training for very modest fees if you join one or several of the related organizations.

South Carolina Archival Association

\$15 a year, annual meetings, newsletter, directory, and workshops

Contact: Beth Bilderback, Archivist

South Caroliniana Library

University of South Carolina

Columbia, SC 29208

Bilderbackb@gwm.sc.edu

PALMCOP (Palmetto Archives, Libraries, and Museums Council on Preservation)

\$20 a year, annual meetings, workshops, preservation consultants available, newsletter

Contact:

Pat Morris

SC Department of Archives and History

8301 Parklane Rd.

Columbia, SC 29223

Morris@scdah.state.sc.us

CALM (Charleston Archives, Libraries and Museums)

\$20 a year, semi-annual meetings and workshops

Contact:

Marie Hollings, Director of Special Collections

Robert Small Library

College of Charleston

Charleston, SC 29402

Hollingsm@cofc.edu

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