

All church courts collect and use personal information in the course of their work. Some of this personal information—i.e., baptismal, marriage, and burial records—is created and must be retained for legal purposes, while other personal information is generated only to only fulfill immediate tasks, such as mailing lists of potential donors.

Regardless of the purpose or use, it is important to identify what contains personal information and how this information should be used and managed to protect people's privacy. Proper care of personal information should not be seen as a hindrance but as a commitment to respect others.

United Church of Canada's Commitment to Privacy

In 2004, The United Church of Canada recognized the importance of protecting personal information by implementing its own Privacy Standards Policy (www.united-church.ca/local/privacy).

This policy allows for the collection, use, management, retention, protection, disclosure, and disposition of personal information held at church offices in compliance with all applicable federal and provincial legislation. This includes, but is not limited to, the federal *Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act* (PIPEDA) (2000, c.5).

For more information on applicable federal and provincial legislation, see the website of the Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada (www.priv.gc.ca).

What Is Personal Information?

Personal information includes information such as:

- home address and phone number
- age
- race, national or ethnic origin
- religion
- sexual orientation
- marital status
- mental or physical disability
- family members' names
- social status
- employee files, including evaluations, disciplinary actions, existence of a dispute, and related opinions
- income, credit and bank records
- donation information
- loan records
- medical records

Certain records that contain, or may contain, personal information:

- baptismal, marriage, and burial records
- employee records (ministry personnel and lay employees)
- pension and benefits records
- directories and mailing lists of church members, committees, and church groups
- stewardship and donor information
- records of committees that focus on personnel and pastoral relations
- records of disputes, hearings, and commissions

Personal information does **NOT** include:

- name, job title, business address, and contact information
- information that could otherwise be found publicly, i.e., phonebook, published obituaries

Use of Personal Information

Records containing personal information, whether in paper or electronic form, can be used only for the purposes for which they were created.

For example, employees of the United Church provide contact information so they can be reached in case of emergency. The contact information cannot be used to generate mailing lists for stewardship campaigns because the information was not collected for that purpose.

