

Sample Records Schedule: Congregations

A **records retention schedule** identifies the types of records created by a congregation and its officers and governs their retention and disposition. This schedule is intended to provide an example that your congregation can use to manage your records and prepare records for transfer to your Conference Archives. If your congregation creates types of records not listed in this schedule and you are uncertain how long to keep them, contact your Conference Archives for more information.

All record types with **permanent** retention are archival and should be transferred to the Archives when the records are no longer actively used in church work. It is best to send such records every three to five years. Only one copy should be deposited to the Archives. Record types that are not permanent should be disposed after the designated retention period.

Record Type: Administrative	Retention Period	Comments
Agendas	7 years	
Annual reports	Permanent	
Ballots	Retain until results are confirmed	
Bylaws/constitution	Permanent	Retain all historical versions
Correspondence and memoranda: general	3 years	
Correspondence and memoranda: substantive (e.g., dealing with legal or other important matters; potential value for historical research on policy or issues)	Permanent	
Legal documents (e.g., deeds, titles, mortgages, bills of sale, memorandums of agreement for disposition of cemeteries when churches close)	Permanent	
Minutes of congregation: all boards, committees, organizations of the congregation	Permanent	
Minutes of other church courts/committees: e.g., presbytery, Conference	While current	
Organization charts	Permanent	Unless included in reports or other documents
Planning documents (e.g., goals and objectives, priorities)	Permanent	
Policy statements and procedure manuals	Permanent	Maintain all historical versions; includes all written policy statements, procedures, standards, protocols, and practice guidelines and directives
Reports (generated by board/organization/committees of congregation)	Permanent	
Record Type: Membership	Retention Period	Comments
Communion rolls	Permanent	
Directories: members and staff	While active	
Historic rolls: permanent	Permanent	
Mailing lists	While current	
Registers: baptism, marriage, burial	Permanent	

Record Type: Finance/Property	Retention Period	Comments
Audited annual financial returns	Permanent	
Bank statements, pass books, reconciliations, and cancelled cheques	7 years	A requirement of the <i>Income Tax Act</i>
Budget planning documents	Retain until budget approved	
Capital construction records, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • survey and title searches • contracts (incl. change orders) • funding approvals • testing reports and certificates • “as built” drawings 	Permanent	
Cash receipts	7 years	
Contracts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • supplies • service • maintenance 	Permanent	
Deposit books/slips	7 years	
Donor files (e.g., objective files)	While active	
Donor receipts	While active	
General ledgers	Permanent	
Inspection reports (including fire, elevator)	Retain until next inspection	
Insurance policies: liability	Permanent	
Insurance policies: other (including property, boiler and machinery, travel, accident, course of construction)	7 years	
Invoices: construction	Permanent	
Invoices: other capital	5 years	
Invoices: operating	5 years	
Journals and subsidiary ledgers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • accounts payable • accounts receivable • cash receipts • misc. & other • payroll 	7 years	
Plans, drawings, and specifications (i.e., architectural, engineering)	Permanent	
Property records: deeds, titles, leases	Permanent	
Subscription files (e.g., The Observer)	7 years	
Tax returns <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • charitable • GST/HST 	7 years	
Tax bills: property, municipal	7 years	
Utility contracts	7 years	
Weekly offering envelopes	2 years	

Record Type: Personnel	Retention Period	Comments
Payroll records: time cards/sheets	2 years	
Payroll records: T4s	7 years	
Payroll records: T4As	7 years	
Payroll records: deductions CPP, EI	7 years	
Personnel policies (re lay personnel hired by congregation)	Permanent	
Personnel records: ministry personnel	While active	Contact Conference Archivist
Personnel records: lay personnel	Permanent	Contact Conference Archivist
Record Type: Other	Retention Period	Comments
Bibles/hymnals	Copied information permanent	Photocopy significant historical information written in margins, etc., if not available elsewhere
Biographical material of key members and clergy who have served congregation	Permanent	
News clippings of congregational activities	Permanent	Only if newspaper is named; dated; photocopied on acid-free paper
Newsletters	Permanent	
Bulletins/orders of service	Permanent or selective retention	Contact Conference Archivist
Histories of congregation (published or unpublished)	Permanent	
Film/videotape produced by congregation/of historical importance; identified	Permanent	
Oral history: tapes/transcripts	Permanent	
Press releases: issued by congregation	Permanent	
Publications: by congregation	Permanent	
Publications: non-congregation	While in use	
Photographs (identified and dated)	Permanent	Contact Conference Archivist
Scrapbooks (historical contents identified and dated)	Permanent	Contact Conference Archivist
Slide/tape shows (subjects identified and dated)	Permanent	
Sound recordings (of congregational event/activity; key speakers identified; date of event)	Permanent	
Speeches (congregation: clergy, officers, guests; dated)	Permanent	

For more information, contact your
[Conference Archives](#)