

Archives and Records Management Guidelines for Synods & Presbyteries

The minutes, reports, correspondence and other select records generated by both Presbyteries and Synods act as evidence of the life and work of these courts: documenting their actions, decisions, activities, responsibilities and financial position. They therefore have important legal and administrative value, as well as long-term historical value.

What records need to be kept?

There are certain records that have to be kept. The original, signed, attested minutes of the Presbytery or Synod are considered "vital records" and so are the most important to maintain and preserve.

Other records of importance include:

- Minutes of Sub-committees of the Presbytery/Synod
- Reports to or from the Presbytery/Synod
- Significant Correspondence of the Clerk
- Legal documents and any insurance policies
- Financial Statements
- Records of Commissions



What can be sent to the Archives?

- Minutes (the original, signed and attested copy)
- Special Committee and Commission records
- Photographs
- Records of closed congregations/missions

The Archives storage vault is available to Presbyteries and Synods as a place to store their original minutes and the *in retentis* records of Special Committees and Commissions. As mentioned above, these minutes are considered to be "vital records". Their preservation is therefore extremely important. Once deposited in the Archives, these records remain the property of the Presbytery or Synod. You can always have them sent back to you if needed, or view them at anytime when at 50 Wynford Dr. *In retentis* documents remain closed. The Archives is the storage repository of the records of Special Committees and Commissions of the General Assembly as well. Security and preservation of these items is extremely important.

Synod and Presbytery Photographs

Photographs are extremely valuable in documenting the life of a special gathering. So many of our researchers, whether they are from the church or not, find our photographic collection helpful and valuable.

If the Presbytery or Synod is holding a special worship service, workshop or outreach program, then please make a point of taking photographs. Use a camera to help document the life and work of the Church. It may seem like a small thing now, but in future years, these are the pictures which will bring our story, and our work, to life.

The Archives has approximately 27,000 photographs, with storage space for significantly more. We encourage every Presbytery and Synod to take more pictures, describe them in some way, and send them to the Archives.

Quick Tips for Clerks

1. Do an inventory of the records in your possession. List them according to type and date, i.e. "Minutes (originals), 1965-1975", or "Correspondence, 1988-1990".
2. If there are gaps in the records (especially the minute books) try to locate the missing ones. Contact previous clerks if necessary. Contact the Archives if you would like a listing of what has previously been deposited with us.
3. Place each book or series of documents in a file folder and label the folder with the type of record(s) and the date range.
4. Keep all the records together and find a suitable location to store them.
5. Original minutes and special commission files can be deposited with the Archives at 50 Wynford Dr. for storage and safe-keeping. They remain the property of the Presbytery/Synod and can be returned to the Clerk at any time if needed.
6. Please also put us on your mailing list and send us copies of the "current" minutes. We keep these as reference until the originals (or microfilm copies of the originals) are deposited with us.
7. Feel free to discard the following: routine correspondence; duplicate copies of records; resources, publications, pamphlets etc. that were sent to you from other organizations; draft copies of reports or other documents; copies of outdated resources from the National Office of the PCC (preservation copies of these are kept in the Archives)
8. Treat email the same as "snail" mail. Make printouts of those which are significant and reflect the work of the Presbytery/Synod, or your work as Clerk.
9. Records with confidential or personal information should be clearly identified and should ideally be maintained separately in a locked filing cabinet.
10. If the original minutes are not going to be stored in the Archives at 50 Wynford Dr., give serious consideration to having them microfilmed. Microfilming is a form of insurance. These records are unique and irreplaceable. If anything should happen to them and they were not microfilmed, the evidence they contain will be gone forever.
11. Gather together photographs that document the life and work of the Presbytery or Synod through the years. These can also be deposited in the Archives and accessed at any time.

For more information, please visit our website at:

www.presbyterianarchives.ca