

# ARCHIVES

Step Into Your Archives

January 2016

## Update on Church Records Management Policies

**Active congregations:** Please look at our website [www.presbyterianarchives.ca](http://www.presbyterianarchives.ca) for topical records information sheets. They collectively provide a brief outline on what to keep, why records management is important, and how to realize good records practices at your local church. There is also a sheet titled *Records Retention Schedule for Congregations* which provides a full list of the various types of records you might possibly find at your church – both historical, and also contemporary and administrative in nature. A records schedule provides the type of record/file or register, and also the corresponding length of time that item should be kept. For example, session minutes are classed as a permanent record, and so, kept forever. But statistical information forms need only be kept as long as needed by the local church, so, perhaps only for two years. We hope you find this guide useful.

**Dissolved congregations:** Should the difficult decision be made to close a church, this is often met with much sadness and confusion in terms of the steps involved. We can help you with the process of gathering up your records and selecting those that are to come to the Archives upon dissolution. Please look at our website for a new handy resource sheet titled *Dissolved Congregations – What Records Should be Transferred to the Archives?* The determination for most categories of records is straight forward, but when it comes to deciding if certain

miscellaneous items might be of historical significance and deemed archival, we encourage you to e-mail us or give us a call to discuss.

## The Book of Forms, Appendix G

Changes are ahead for Appendix G! At present the first draft of edits by Archives staff has gone forward to the clerks of the General Assembly for their review and comment. It is hoped that a final presentation will be ready for the 2016 General Assembly. Our goal is to streamline and clarify the information provided to the record keepers of the church in order for this to be a user-friendly resource.

## Archives Website

Look for some new features and additions in the coming months! As well, two new web exhibits are in the process of being launched. These will feature the 2015 anniversary year for the building of Knox College, Toronto and for Presbyterian College, Montreal as an educational entity.

Our web exhibits provide the opportunity to highlight specific collections and unique topical areas that are reflective of the wide range of subjects our documents cover. This is also reflective in other topics currently covered in our web exhibits, including: interesting Presbyterian vignettes through time, spirituality, the Rev. D.G. McQueen of Edmonton, church camps, residential schools, the Rev. William King and the Buxton Mission, missionary Lillian Dickson in Taiwan, and the 100th anniversary of the First World War as

viewed through our church periodicals. The year 2016 will mark the 50th anniversary of the ordination of women (as an Elder or as Minister of Word and Sacrament in The Presbyterian Church in Canada). Watch for an upcoming Archives web exhibit that will offer some historical background relating to this important event in the life of our denomination.

## **The National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (NCTR)**

Another big step forward on the long road of healing and reconciliation occurred on November 4, 2015. This was the day of the official opening ceremony for the new NCTR, located in Winnipeg on the campus of the University of Manitoba. Stephen Kendall, Principal Clerk, attended on behalf of the Presbyterian Church in Canada.

Many do not realize that Indian Residential Schools in Canada existed for over a century, finally closing in 1996. Schools and residences numbered 139 across the country and saw over 150,000 First Nations, Métis and Inuit students in that time.

Creating the Centre was one of the key goals the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), 2009-2015, was charged with in their mandate. Those agencies involved with the schools over time – that is, the church- and government-related signatories to the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement – were required to submit all their relevant records to the TRC for historical and evidential purposes. Please see [www.trc.ca](http://www.trc.ca) for further details relating to the overall work of the Commission.

Scanning all of the multi-media records in our Archives that related to this legacy and providing them to the Centre was one of the Archives' major contributions to the healing and reconciliation process. The Presbyterian Church in Canada Archives provided approximately 100,000 scanned images (including photos and textual records) to the TRC and these are now held at the NCTR. The Centre's collective holdings also include the audio and video personal testimonies

of over 7,000 survivors. All told, these records offer the "truth determination" that Chief Justice Murray Sinclair stated was necessary before we could move forward.

The Centre, located in the historic building known as Chancellor's Hall, is designed to be a public gathering place as well as a research centre. One could also consider this a place of commemoration and pilgrimage. Survivors of the schools, their families, as well as members of the general public are welcome to access the vast array of records that document the Indian Residential School history in Canada and those persons directly involved. Please see [www.nctr.ca](http://www.nctr.ca) to access their extensive records database.



The following sentiment underlines how records can truly impact the lives of others. Honorary Witness, Patsy George, offered "reconciliation is not about closing a sad chapter of Canada's past, but about opening new healing pathways of reconciliation that are forged in truth and justice. Without truth, justice is not served, healing cannot happen".

~~~ **Remember: As a reforming church we must take into account the past as it provides us with the knowledge needed to better understand and discern the future.** ~~~

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