

Starting a Congregational Archives

*“Remember the days of old; consider the generations long past.
Ask your father and he will tell you, your elders, and they will explain to you”
(Deut 32:7)*

Your archive will hold the “collective memory” of your congregation’s history. That you want to preserve its history is a worthwhile goal.

Parish archivist

- needs time and patience and a love for the history of the congregation
- needs the sanction of your pastor and/or parish council

Space and budget for supplies

ideally with a lock, and large cupboards for odd size and large objects

Archival environment

67 F (= or - 2 degrees)

50% humidity (= or - 5%)

away from outside walls and windows

shelves - top shelves for seldom used materials

file cabinets

work table and chair

Supplies

- Acid-free storage cases, legal-sized, 11" x 16" x 6"
- Storage cases, 17" x 24" x 3"
- Acid-free file folders, legal-sized
- Transparent, acid-free, Mylar sleeves of varying sizes: 4" x 6", 5" x 7", 8" x 10"
for old documents and photographs
- Acid-free white storage envelopes of varying sizes: 6" x 9", 9" x 12"
- Acid-free negative (and photograph) envelopes, 5" x 7"
for photographs and negatives
- Acid-free writing paper, 8.5" x 11"
- Acid-free pens
- Acid-free document repair tape
- White plastic paper clips of varying sizes: small, medium, and large
to be used sparingly - in general, avoid paper clips, staples, tape, etc.

Method of organization

You'll need a filing system and method of organizing collections. You could place everything in chronological order by years or decades, or by categories of records, such as:

- Official Acts
 - “Baptisms”
 - “Marriages”
 - “Burials”
- Pastors
- Parish Council
- Teachers
- Building & Grounds
- Annual Financial Reports
- Small groups and committees
- Bulletins & Newsletters
- Audio-Visuals
- Member cards/photo directories
- Congregational Histories
- Oral Histories
- etc.

List of Holdings and Locations

Make a list of the records in each collection box or cabinet and place a copy of the list with the collection. Keep a notebook with each list and label each so people can find where the box or file is stored.

“I remember the days of old, I meditate on all thou hast done.”
(Psalm 143:5)

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