



## Historic Roll: Frequently Asked Questions

### What is the historic roll?

The historic roll is a complete record of the names of all people who have been confirmed members of your local congregation throughout its history.

### What physical format does the historic roll take?

The historic roll is usually a handwritten listing of names recorded in a bound book or ledger. If your church was organized many years ago, a complete listing of all people who had ever been confirmed members would likely encompass several books. [UCRD \(United Church Resource Distribution\)](#) sells bound historic roll volumes with ledger paper, which you can purchase online.

### How can we include the names of all people who have ever been members? Our records don't go back that far.

Including all names is the ideal; many congregations can't do this because a formal recording system was not followed from the founding of the congregation, or because records have been lost. A historic roll of members can be started at any time by recording all those who are currently members of the church. The historic roll is maintained by adding the names of all new members as they join the congregation.

### What does "member" mean?

When a person is baptized in your congregation, usually as a child, the person becomes a baptized member of the church universal. A United Church person who affirms as a teenager or adult through a public profession of their faith their baptismal vows becomes a confirmed member of your congregation, and thus of The United Church of Canada.

### Is the historic roll the same as the current membership roll?

No, and one should not confuse the two. The names that appear on your current membership roll will include only those names from your historic roll that have no indication of removal recorded beside them. The two rolls are separate records and should not be used interchangeably.

### Who is responsible for maintaining the historic roll?

Membership records have traditionally been under the jurisdiction of the session. In earlier years it was customary for congregations to have one person in charge filling the position of Roll Clerk. Most congregations have now changed to a board or council structure, many of which no longer have a Roll Clerk as a distinct position. Maintenance of membership records now tends to be supervised either by the administrative person in the church office or by the minister.

### Sample Roll Entries (partial)

HISTORIC ROLL														
CHECK	ROLL NO.	NAME	RESIDENCE	RECEIVED				REMOVED						
				Month	Day	Year	FROM WHERE CERTIFIED	Month	Day	Year				
	1	Moose, Minnie					T							
✓	2	de Vil, Cruella					R							D
	3	Flintstone, Fred					C							
✓	4	Diller, Phyllis					T							T
✓	382	Burns, George					T							D

**Isn't it easier to find a name if we organize the roll alphabetically by surname?**

An alphabetical roll is too difficult to maintain neatly over time. To facilitate finding a name, use an alphabetic index arranged by surname, giving the corresponding Roll Number.

Name	Roll No.
Burns, George	382
de Vil, Cruella	2
Diller, Phyllis	4
Flintstone, Fred	3
Mouse, Minnie	1

*Sample Alphabetic Index*

**When removing someone from the roll by death, should we use the date that they died, the date the name is recorded in the session minutes, or the date we learned of their death?**

When a member dies, the date of death is the proper date to put in the Removed column. Death automatically removes the person from active membership. However, their name is never actually removed from the Roll.

**What if the date of death is unknown?**

If that date is unknown, record it as the date the session removed the name. Include a footnote, if possible—e.g., “Pre-deceased”—so the date of removal in this case isn't mistaken for the death date.

**We regularly do membership transfers both to and from other United Church congregations. But if someone is coming from or going to another denomination, is it still a transfer?**

Yes, it is a transfer within the Christian church to or from another denomination.

**If a member becomes a clergy person, their membership will rest with their presbytery until they retire. How is that handled on the historic roll?**

Note in the roll that the individual has been ordained/commissioned and transferred to presbytery roll.

**When a member is transferred out and at a later date transfers back in, do they get a new roll number or do they keep their original roll number?**

They get a new roll number, mainly because there will be no room to fill out the new information in the original spot. Also, the new number itself indicates that the person had left. However, it's important to include a cross-reference between both numbers (in EACH entry) so the individual's history can be tracked.

**Can we keep the historic roll in an Excel spreadsheet or a database?**

Always keep the roll in hardcopy form; electronic versions (Word, Excel) are not acceptable.