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 Regional Council Archives. If your congregation creates types of records not listed in this schedule and you are uncertain how long to keep them, contact your Regional Council Archives for more information.

All record types with **Permanent** retention should be transferred to your respective regional council 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. Sensitive records such as records that contain personal or financial information should be confidentially destroyed (shredded), other paper records can be recycled.

Record Type: Administrative	Retention Period	Disposition	Comments
Advertising and marketing materials	5 years	Destroy	Includes flyers, brochures, posters, photographs, audio-visual material.
Agendas	5 years	Destroy	
Annual reports	Permanent	Archives	
Annual statistics	Permanent	Archives	
Ballots	Retain until results are confirmed	Destroy	
Bylaws/constitution	Permanent	Archives	Retain all historical versions.
Correspondence and memoranda: general	3 years	Destroy	
Correspondence and memoranda: substantive	Permanent	Archives	Dealing with legal or other important matters; potential value for historical research on policy or issues.
Email accounts	2 years	Destroy	Save emails that detail business decisions in relevant files.
Legal documents	Permanent	Archives	e.g.: deeds, titles, mortgages, bills of sale, memorandums of agreement for disposition of cemeteries when churches close.
Minutes of congregation	Permanent	Archives	All boards, committees, organizations of the congregation.
Minutes of other church courts	5 years	Archives	e.g.: Regional Council, General Council.
Organization charts	1 year	Destroy	Retention begins when org. chart is superseded.
Strategic planning documents	Selective retention	Archives	Final published strategic planning documents with goals, objectives, priorities to be sent to archives.
Policy statements and procedure manuals	Selective retention	Archives	Includes all written policy statements, procedures, standards and guidelines. Archives will

			review for policies with long-term historical value.
Reports	Permanent	Archives	Generated by board/organization/committees of congregation.
Social media	3 years	Destroy	Contact Regional Council Archivist for guidance.
Website / web content	5 years	Destroy	Contact Regional Council Archivist for guidance.
Record Type: Finance/Property	**Retention Period**		**Comments**
Audited annual financial returns	Permanent	Archives	Those included in Annual Report are sufficient.
Bank statements, pass books, reconciliations, and cancelled cheques	7 years	Destroy	A requirement of the *Income Tax Act.*
Budget planning documents	10 years	Destroy	
Capital construction records	Permanent	Archives	Including: survey and title searches; contracts (incl. change orders); funding approvals; testing reports and certificates; "as built" drawings.
Cash receipts	7 years	Destroy	
Contracts	7 years	Destroy	Retention begins when contract is no longer in effect. Renewed service contracts: retention begins when full relationship terminated. Supplies, service, maintenance.
Deposit books/slips	7 years	Destroy	
Donor files	7 years	Destroy	
Donor receipts	7 years	Destroy	
Equipment and supplies: general	5 years	Destroy	Includes office supplies, hardware, software.
Equipment and supplies: assets	7 years	Destroy	Includes furniture, permanent fixtures, buildings.
General ledgers	7 years	Destroy	
Inspection reports	5 years	Destroy	Retain begins after next inspection. Including fire, elevator.
Insurance policies	Permanent	Archives	Including property, boiler and machinery, travel, accident, course of construction.
Insurance documentation (not policies)	3 years	Destroy	
Invoices: construction	Permanent	Archives	
Invoices: other capital	7 years	Destroy	
Invoices: operating	7 years	Destroy	

Journals and subsidiary ledgers	7 years	Destroy	Accounts payable, accounts receivable, cash receipts, misc. & other, payroll.
Architectural plans, drawings, and specifications	Permanent	Archives	"As built" drawings. Send to archives only once the building is closed or if superseded by new drawings.
Property records	Permanent	Archives	Deeds, titles, leases.
Subscription files	7 years	Destroy	e.g., *The Observer.*
Tax returns	7 years	Destroy	Charitable, GST/HST.
Tax bills: property, municipal	7 years	Destroy	
Utility contracts	7 years	Destroy	Retention begins when contract is no longer in effect.
Weekly offering envelopes	7 years	Destroy	

Record Type: Membership	**Retention Period**		**Comments**
Communion rolls	Permanent	Archives	
Directories: members and staff	1 year	Destroy	Retention begins when directory or list is obsolete.
Historic rolls	Permanent	Archives	
Mailing lists	1 year	Destroy	Retention begins when directory or list is obsolete.
Registers: baptism, marriage, burial	Permanent	Archives	
Transitory membership records	When no longer needed	Destroy	Includes membership transfer certificates, burial permits, marriage licenses, baptism certificates. Contact regional council archivist with any questions about transitory records.

Record Type: Personnel	**Retention Period**		**Comments**
Payroll records: time cards/sheets	2 years	Destroy	
Payroll records: T4s	7 years	Destroy	
Payroll records: T4As	7 years	Destroy	
Payroll records: deductions CPP, EI	7 years	Destroy	
Personnel policies	Permanent	Archives	Re. Lay personnel hired by congregation.
Personnel records: ministry personnel	7 years	Destroy	Retention begins at end of employment. Ministry and Personnel committee keep all active records.
Personnel records: lay personnel	7 years	Destroy	Retention begins at end of employment. Ministry and

			Personnel committee keep all active records.

Record Type: Other	Retention Period		Comments
Bibles/hymnals	Copied information permanent	Archives	Photocopy significant historical information written in margins, etc., if not available elsewhere.
Biographical material of key members and clergy who have served congregation	Permanent	Archives	
News clippings of congregational activities	Permanent	Archives	Make sure newspaper is named, dated, photocopied on acid-free paper.
Newsletters	Selective retention	Archives	Contact Regional Council Archivist for guidance.
Bulletins/orders of service	Selective retention	Archives	Contact Regional Council Archivist for guidance. Special occasions such as Covenanting services will be selected for permanent retention.
Histories of congregation	Permanent	Archives	Published or unpublished.
Film/videotape	Selective retention	Archives	Produced by congregation/of historical importance; identified.
Oral history: tapes/transcripts	Selective retention	Archives	
Press releases: issued by congregation	Permanent	Archives	
Program planning and operations	5 years	Destroy	e.g. program and event planning, registration
Program documentation	Selective retention	Archives	e.g. photographs, program materials or publications, reports
Publications: by congregation	Permanent	Archives	
Publications: non-congregation	While in use	Destroy	
Photographs	Selective retention	Archives	Identified and dated. Contact Regional Council Archivist.
Residential school	Permanent	Archives	Transfer copy to NCTR.
Scrapbooks	Selective retention	Archives	Historical contents identified and dated. Contact Regional Council Archivist for guidance.
Slide/tape shows	Selective retention	Archives	Subjects identified and dated. Contact Regional Council Archivist for guidance.
Sound recordings	Selective retention	Archives	Of congregational event/activity; key speakers identified; date of event. Contact Regional Council Archivist for guidance.
Speeches	Permanent	Archives	Congregation: clergy, officers, guests; dated.

For more information, contact your Regional Council Archives:

https://www.unitedchurcharchives.ca