



LIVING SKIES REGIONAL COUNCIL

The United Church of Canada



Guide to Transferring Records to the Living Skies Archives

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Contact Info

Contact person: Erin Acland and Leanne Templeton, Acting Archivists

Email (preferred): livingskiesarchives@united-church.ca

Phone (via Bev Diebert, Administrative Support for Living Skies): 639-396-0200

Our mailing and delivery address is:

Living Skies Archives
Grace-Westminster United Church
505 10th Street East
Saskatoon, SK S7N 0E3

Websites:

- <https://memorysask.ca/united-church-of-canada-saskatchewan-conference-archives>
 - An online database of some, **but not all**, of our finding aids
- <https://livingskiesrc.ca/resources/archives/>

A note from your archives staff: Please reach out if you want to transfer records and you have any questions! We are here to help you, and are very happy to do so. Please do not leave your request until the last minute as we are part-time, and have other obligations. More time leads to more help and less frustration for everyone.

Introduction

The goal of the Archives is to keep our United Church records-- and through them the stories of the United Church of Canada-- safe and accessible indefinitely. This Guide provides an overview of how to transfer archival records to the United Church Archives located in Saskatoon. It will be most relevant to Communities of Faith in Saskatchewan (Living Skies Regional

Council), but should also be helpful to folks donating personal papers, or transferring records of presbyteries, conferences, and regional councils.

The Archives preserves the records, as best we can, by storing them in a well-maintained and monitored building, and in archival boxes and folders. Whenever possible, we avoid and minimize the impacts of “agents of destruction.” Some examples include: light, water, smoke, pest, and fire damage; major temperature and humidity swings; vandalism and theft (which is sometimes well-intentioned, but still very harmful); and technological obsolescence.

Our ability to archive digital records is still in its infancy. Digital records can make access easier, but are very expensive and time-consuming to preserve. A good box of paper records in a good building will be fine for a hundred years (although disasters still could happen), a digital record could be unreadable in no time at all as software and hardware become obsolete, proprietary, or decay. The transfer of physical records, like paper and photographs, are preferred. Digital records may be transferred with the caveat that their long-term



preservation is not guaranteed.

The Archives serves hundreds of researchers a year, and strives to connect researchers with the records that are most likely to answer their questions.

Researchers are welcome to make an appointment and come in-person to access the records. The Archivist can do some research on behalf of researchers and/ or can “digitize” and send a sampling of records to the

researcher. The Archives aims to limit our research and digitization time to one hour per request.

The Archives holds thousands of boxes, and contains way more information than anyone could memorize. The archives staff, with help from the records creators (such as the Community of Faith that created and transferred the records), creates “finding aids” that describe the records. Not all finding aids have the same level of depth. Sometimes we know “some” records have been transferred to the Archives, but not much more than that. Often, we’ll have a file list, which will name the types of records and dates (ex. Baptisms, 1979-1990; Annual Reports, 1956-1972).

While a file list is helpful, the Archives’ goal is to more fully describe and “process” the records. This involves: intentionally keeping records with archival value and deliberately discarding records that should not be kept indefinitely; arranging the records into an order that makes sense; putting the records into archival file folders and boxes, getting rid of rusty staples, binders, and non-archival plastic sleeves, and labelling the file folders; and describing the records at least at a file level and creating a history of the creator of the records (such as a Community of Faith). This description, or finding aid, is then added to our online database, and updated as more records are received from the record creator (ex. Community of Faith).

With limited resources, not all records get “processed,” and many stay in our “backlog” for years and years. The staff of the Archives have an idea of what’s there, but it is harder to help people find what they’re looking for. If, before transferring the records to the Archives, the Community of Faith creates a good “file list,” and discards transitory records, duplicates, and other items that don’t belong in the Archives, then it is much easier for the records to be accessible even if they haven’t been fully processed. Depending on capacity, much of the work of processing the records can be done by volunteers at the Community of Faith before the records arrive at the Archives.

If you are transferring records to the Archives and think that they are “a mess,” but your Community of Faith does not have the capacity to do more work with them, then please drop them off as is. It is better to have “messy” records, than none at all. Records are easily lost. A Community of Faith closing is an especially vulnerable time.

If you have the means, then please consider donating a financial gift along with the archival records. Preserving and providing access to the archives comes at an ongoing financial cost, and your generosity makes a big difference in our ability to care for the records.

Let’s work together to make sure that our records, and the stories told through these records, are preserved and accessible indefinitely.

How to Ready Records for Physical Transfer

Please refer to the Guidelines at the end of this document for additional information

A note from your archives staff: Do your best, but don’t make the perfect the enemy of the good. Doing some of these steps is better than doing none, and having the records safe in the Archives is better than having them unsafe elsewhere. This is a big job, and sometimes the capacity is not there, and that’s okay.

- Review your records and discard duplicates, transitory records, and non-archival records (beware of confidentiality and shred when necessary). If you have questions, email or call the Archivists with a list of the records that you are unsure about
- If your records are disorganized, then group like records together. Recommended groupings are included at the end of this Guide, for your information

- Active financial and related records that should be kept for 7 years should be kept at the Church. **If your Community of Faith is closing, active financial records should be sent to a neighbouring United Church for secure storage and should be destroyed only as a set and 7 years after the latest date;** the Archives, or as a last resort they should be stored in the home of a Trustee. These records should be kept and destroyed as a set, so the oldest records will be retained for 14 years total. Let Living Skies Regional Council staff know where these records are located, so that if they are needed for CRA or personnel purposes, then they can be found
- When possible, take records out of binders or plastic enclosures and put them into labelled file folders
- If you are transferring photos, please select the ones that best capture the spirit of your Community of Faith (and are in focus, and unique). We do not need multiple angles of a single event. Please describe the photos following the 5w's- Who? What? Where? When? And, if it's helpful, Why?
- Label each file folder containing archival records with a brief description and date range (ex. St. Andrew's (Schreiber) United Church Official Board Minutes 1987-1998)
- If material is soiled (mould, smoke damage, etc.), please bag it in a Ziploc bag, and include a note on what you think the contaminant may be. Some contaminants, like smoke, we can work with, but others, such as mould, may result in us scanning the record (if possible) and disposing of the original. Contaminated covers can be removed and discarded.

- Transfer files in clean, strong banker's boxes with lids. If a different container is used (such as an amazon box), avoid boxes that were previously used for food storage or are damaged/dirty. The banker's boxes should be labelled and numbered (ex. St. Andrew's (Schreiber) United Church Box 1 of 8).



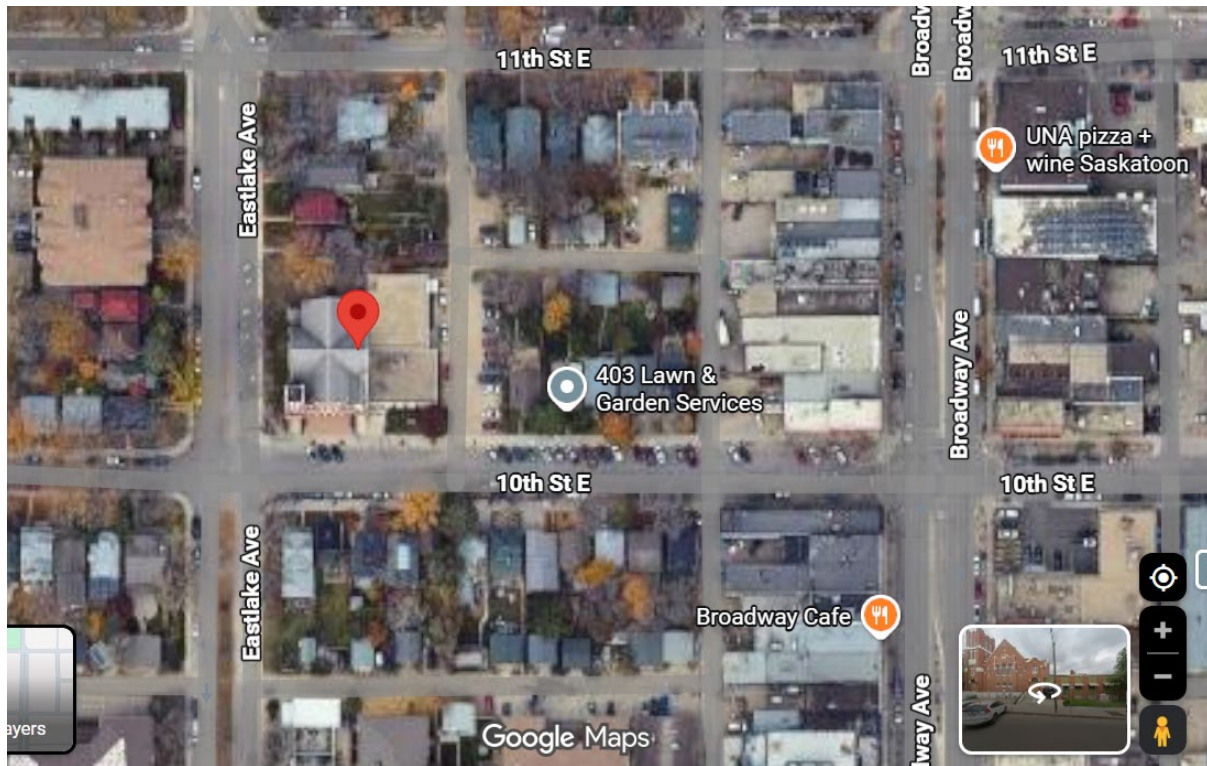
Labelling and numbering the boxes is the most important step in this Guide as it helps us track the boxes and ensure than none are missing!

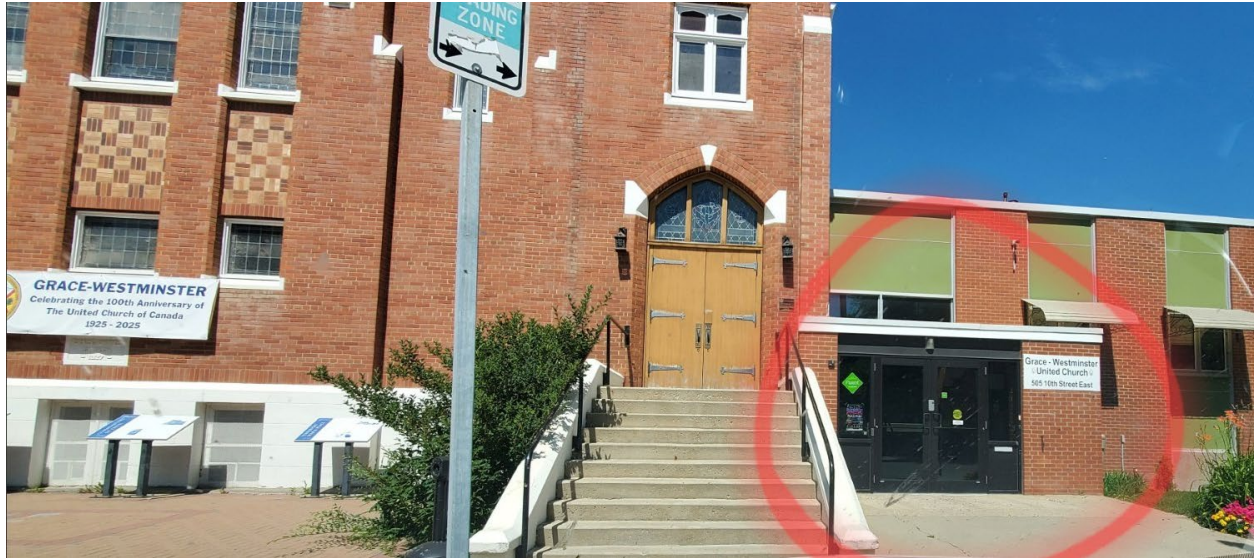
- Each box should contain a complete and signed Archives Transfer Form (included in this Guide). Do your best to include as much of the information as possible. For the donation of personal papers, a Deed of Gift will need to be signed
- Each box should contain a file list that contains a brief description of each file (or ledger, register, etc.) that is in each box. This can be done in word or excel, and usually includes, who created the record (ex. UCW, CGIT, Sunday School), what is it (ex. minutes, annual reports, historic roll) and the first and last date noted in the record. **A digital copy of the file list should also be emailed to the Archives.** If known, please note any files that should have restricted access. A Preliminary Inventory Sample and Template is included in this Guide.

Drop-Off Info

The Archives is located at 505 10th Street East in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan (the basement of Grace-Westminster United Church)

- The Community of Faith or other donor of the records must arrange the physical drop off of the records at the Archives. Volunteer drivers or using a courier service are options. If mailing the records, please ensure the records are securely packaged and trackable. The archives staff do not have the capacity to pick up records
- Plan ahead and contact the Archives at least 3 weeks ahead of time with any questions you might have, and to let them know to expect a records transfer. **You must have a confirmed date and time for drop-off before dropping off any records.**





- Please use the entrance circled in red in the above photo
- There you will meet the archives part-time staff at the scheduled time. Staff will accept the records, and will bring the materials to the Archives.
- In an urgent situation, if the archives staff are unavailable, the staff of Grace Westminister United Church may be able to help you drop off the records. Their contact information is 306-653-1766 or gracewest@sasktel.net, and their office hours are 9am to 4pm Tuesday to Friday.

The United Church of Canada has long recognized the importance of an archives program for preserving the record of the church's achievements and meeting its administrative needs. The records of congregations held at The United Church of Canada Archives constitute an important research collection for church workers and those studying the church's history. By adhering to the regulations detailed in *The Manual* and adopting a common sense approach to records administration and preservation, fulfilling records responsibilities can be relatively easy and rewarding.

Below are some guidelines for what should and should not be transferred to the Archives.

What records should be transferred to the Archives?

- ✓ Baptismal, marriage, and burial registers
- ✓ Historic rolls and communion rolls and registers
- ✓ Official minutes and correspondence of church courts and annual congregational meetings
- ✓ Board and committee manuals and organizational charts
- ✓ Official minutes, correspondence, and reports of standing, sub-, and ad hoc committees
- ✓ Property records, including plans, deeds, titles, leases, mortgages, bills of sale, and construction and maintenance contracts and invoices
- ✓ Records and correspondence of all groups and associations, including:
 - women's groups (Ladies' Aid Society, Woman's Missionary Society, Woman's Association, and United Church Women)
 - men's groups (AOTS, Men's Club)
 - Sunday schools, youth groups
 - choirs, mission bands, Bible classes, etc.
- ✓ Correspondence files
- ✓ Special church bulletins (i.e. anniversaries and dedications). Selected bulletins can be saved over a year to provide an overview of a congregation's activities per decade.
- ✓ Sample of church newsletters
- ✓ Annual reports and audited financial records
- ✓ Clearly identified and dated photographs of personnel, executive, boards, buildings, properties, and special events

What records should stay with your congregation?

- ✗ Duplicate congregational materials (photocopies of minutes)
- ✗ Records created by presbytery, Conference, or national office (i.e., photocopies of presbytery or Conference minutes)
- ✗ Invoices, receipts, or cancelled cheques
- ✗ Conference or national church publications
- ✗ Pulpit or family Bibles unless they contain important historic information not obtainable elsewhere

What about scrapbooks and photo albums?

- Scrapbooks can hold interesting collections of memorabilia, but it takes careful planning and investment in proper materials to ensure such collections are long-lasting. Many of the materials used in scrapbooks deteriorate over time. If it is necessary to prepare a scrapbook, use acid-free paper and archival adhesive. Otherwise, keep the scrapbooks on-site for congregational use.
- Photo albums face the same preservation considerations, so use archival materials. It is best to choose clearly identifiable images to send to the Archives. Make sure photographs include names, dates, and locations.

For detailed records retention schedules, see "Sample Records Schedule: Congregations" (www.united-church.ca/local/archives/resources).

A network of United Church Archives exists across the country to preserve the archival records of all courts of the United Church, including the records of congregations.

Congregational records should be routinely transferred to the appropriate Conference Archives for permanent preservation. However, before preparing to transfer your records, you may be wondering: *Why should these records be sent to the Archives?*

The Manual and Archives

Section 090(a) of *The Manual, 2010*, clearly identifies the need to archive church records:

- Church records “have an historical and legal value that necessitates their being correctly kept and carefully preserved.”
- Church bodies should use the “utmost diligence to secure the accuracy and the safety of their records.”
- Church records are the property of The United Church of Canada; “ministers, officials, or other individuals may not alienate them or in any way assume personal control of them.”

Because church records are the property of the United Church, all inactive records should be centralized in an archival repository and not scattered among various local archives, libraries, and research centres.

To accommodate the geographical size of the country, each Conference has its own Archives (the Central Ontario Conferences—Bay of Quinte, Toronto, Hamilton, London, and Manitou—share the same facility with the General Council Archives) to house the archival records of Conference, presbyteries, and pastoral charges.

The advantages of sending your records to your Conference Archives are many

- Staff are trained and follow professional archival standards to acquire, arrange, describe, preserve, and make material available to researchers.
- The Archives are secure, environmentally controlled spaces suited to storing archival material.
- Records are placed in acid-free folders and boxes for further protection.
- Outdated records stored in churches are susceptible to fire, water, damage, mould, silverfish, being misplaced or stolen, etc.
- Records are made more accessible to potentially more researchers.
- Church records serve as a source of information for church histories and celebrations, community histories, and genealogical research.
- Records are our memory, not only of facts or evidence of activities and decisions but also of our collective story as a church.

“The Archives belongs not to me, not to the church... It is the corporate memory of our life with God, in all its beauty and tragedy and wonder.”

Bob Stewart, Past Archivist, BC Conference

For more information, contact your
Conference Archives:

www.united-church.ca/contact/archives

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

All record types with **permanent** retention are archival and should be transferred to the 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.

Record Type: Administrative	Retention Period	Comments
Agendas	7 years	
Annual reports	Permanent	
Ballots	Retain until results are confirmed	
Bylaws/constitution	Permanent	Retain all historical versions
Correspondence and memoranda: general	3 years	
Correspondence and memoranda: substantive (e.g., dealing with legal or other important matters; potential value for historical research on policy or issues)	Permanent	
Legal documents (e.g., deeds, titles, mortgages, bills of sale, memorandums of agreement for disposition of cemeteries when churches close)	Permanent	
Minutes of congregation: all boards, committees, organizations of the congregation	Permanent	
Minutes of other church courts/committees: e.g., presbytery, Conference	While current	
Organization charts	Permanent	Unless included in reports or other documents
Planning documents (e.g., goals and objectives, priorities)	Permanent	
Policy statements and procedure manuals	Permanent	Maintain all historical versions; includes all written policy statements, procedures, standards, protocols, and practice guidelines and directives
Reports (generated by board/organization/committees of congregation)	Permanent	
Record Type: Finance/Property	Retention Period	Comments
Audited annual financial returns	Permanent	
Bank statements, pass books, reconciliations, and cancelled cheques	7 years	A requirement of the <i>Income Tax Act</i>

Budget planning documents	Retain until budget approved
Capital construction records, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • survey and title searches • contracts (incl. change orders) • funding approvals • testing reports and certificates • “as built” drawings 	Permanent
Cash receipts	7 years
Contracts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • supplies • service • maintenance 	Permanent
Deposit books/slips	7 years
Donor files (e.g., objective files)	While active
Donor receipts	While active
General ledgers	Permanent
Inspection reports (including fire, elevator)	Retain until next inspection
Insurance policies: liability	Permanent
Insurance policies: other (including property, boiler and machinery, travel, accident, course of construction)	7 years
Invoices: construction	Permanent
Invoices: other capital	5 years
Invoices: operating	5 years
Journals and subsidiary ledgers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • accounts payable • accounts receivable • cash receipts • misc. & other • payroll 	7 years
Plans, drawings, and specifications (i.e., architectural, engineering)	Permanent
Property records: deeds, titles, leases	Permanent
Subscription files (e.g., <i>The Observer</i>)	7 years
Tax returns <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • charitable • GST/HST 	7 years
Tax bills: property, municipal	7 years
Utility contracts	7 years
Weekly offering envelopes	2 years 6 years
Record Type: Membership	Retention Period Comments
Communion rolls	Permanent
Directories: members and staff	While active
Historic rolls: permanent	Permanent

Mailing lists	While current	
Registers: baptism, marriage, burial	Permanent	
Record Type: Personnel		
Payroll records: time cards/sheets	2 years	
Payroll records: T4s	7 years	
Payroll records: T4As	7 years	
Payroll records: deductions CPP, EI	7 years	
Personnel policies (re lay personnel hired by congregation)	Permanent	
Personnel records: ministry personnel	While active	Contact Conference Archivist
Personnel records: lay personnel	Permanent	Contact Conference Archivist
Record Type: Other		
Bibles/hymnals	Copied information permanent	Photocopy significant historical information written in margins, etc., if not available elsewhere
Biographical material of key members and clergy who have served congregation	Permanent	
News clippings of congregational activities	Permanent	Only if newspaper is named; dated; photocopied on acid-free paper
Newsletters	Permanent	
Bulletins/orders of service	Permanent or selective retention	Contact Conference Archivist
Histories of congregation (published or unpublished)	Permanent	
Film/videotape produced by congregation/of historical importance; identified	Permanent	
Oral history: tapes/transcripts	Permanent	
Press releases: issued by congregation	Permanent	
Publications: by congregation	Permanent	
Publications: non-congregation	While in use	
Photographs (identified and dated)	Permanent	Contact Conference Archivist
Scrapbooks (historical contents identified and dated)	Permanent	Contact Conference Archivist
Slide/tape shows (subjects identified and dated)	Permanent	
Sound recordings (of congregational event/activity; key speakers identified; date of event)	Permanent	
Speeches (congregation: clergy, officers, guests; dated)	Permanent	

For more information, contact your Conference Archives:

www.united-church.ca/contact/archives



Living Skies Region The United Church of Canada

Phone: 639-396-0200

www.livingskiesrc.ca

UCC Living Skies Archives

livingskiesarchives@united-church.ca

www.livingskiesrc.ca/resources/archives/

How to Prepare and Submit Records to the Region Archives

1. Determine which records should be transferred. For assistance, you can consult the “What do the Archives Want?” document and/or contact the Region Archives.
2. Gather the records to be transferred into appropriate boxes and identify each box on the outside with a number out of the total (e.g. “Box 1 of 3”), as well as the name of the source (e.g. the group, congregation, or organization the records are coming from).
3. From what you can see, are there any imminent threats to the safety and integrity of the records? For example, is there visible water damage or mould on the records or their boxes or containers?
If there are any serious and imminent risks to the records which cannot be solved where they are, please contact the Archivist to discuss options and possible solutions.
4. Once you have identified the records you plan to transfer, create a preliminary list – spreadsheets or word-processed documents are preferred but a clear handwritten list is also acceptable.

The inventory does *not* require every page to be accounted for, but rather an overview, organized by file, book/volume (e.g. minute books), or similar units. (See page 2 for example.) To create the inventory, you can fill-in or follow the template or create your own, including the following:

- a. BOX or CONTAINER – the number will need to match the numbers on the boxes;
- b. BOOK/VOLUME, FILE or ITEM (number), if possible;
- c. PRIVATE INFORMATION, where appropriate – for records you can identify as containing personal or otherwise private information (you can use a “P” to indicate these);
- d. TITLE or brief DESCRIPTOR – e.g. “Official Board Minutes” or “Pastoral Charge Meeting Minutes” (please include what group/individual created them, as much as possible);
- e. DATE(S) RECORDS CREATED – at least the year or range of years, in which the records were created (estimated, if necessary);
- f. ADDITIONAL NOTES – as needed for relevant information (e.g. water damage).

Tip: If you have a series of related records (e.g. 5 volumes of minutes), you can mark them as such, e.g. “Vol. 1-5, minutes of xyz committee, 1920-1946.” However, if volume dates are not continuous (missing years in between, for example), please record volumes individually.

5. *Contact the Archives* to let the archivist know what you have (e.g. congregation records, camp records), how many boxes there are and whether there are any serious concerns (e.g. damage).
6. Send the Archives a copy of the inventory prepared (by email, or regular mail).

How to Contact Us

The Archives can be reached by email, at livingskiesarchives@united-church.ca, or by phone, at 639-396-0200. Mailing Address: Living Skies Regional Council Office, 423 Main St. N., Moose Jaw, SK S6H 0W5.

For additional guidance and forms, you can also visit www.livingskiesrc.ca/resources/archives/.



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The United Church of Canada

Phone: 639-396-0200

www.livingskiesrc.ca

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www.livingskiesrc.ca/resources/archives/

Do you have records ready to be submitted to the archives? Please review the Guidelines, fill in the information requested below and contact the archives before sending records.

If you have any questions, please feel free to email us, at livingskiesarchives@united-church.ca.

SAMPLE INVENTORY

Source/Donor of Records: _____

Date: _____

Box / Container Number	Book / File / Item Number (or sequence in box/container)	Private or personal info? (mark "P")	Title or Brief Description	Date(s) Records Created	Additional Notes (e.g.: damage to records, fragile items, mould/water concerns)
Box 1	1-5 (of 6)	P	Baptism, Marriage, Burial Registers (Church of X)	2008-2015	
Box 1	6 (of 6)		Minute Book, committee of XYZ	2014	Fragile pages (with water damage).
Box 2	Photos 1-23		Photographs from church fundraiser, circa 1971? [possibly around spring 1970, 1971 or 1972]	ca. 1971	Colour in many photos appears faded.

Guide to Organizing Records into Groupings or “Series”

- Baptism, Marriage, and Burial Records
- Membership Records
 - Circuit Registers
 - Historic Rolls
 - Communion Rolls
 - Membership Records (Volumes, Stubs)
- General Administration
 - Annual Reports
- Board Records
 - Session
 - Board of Stewards
 - Official Board
 - Congregational Board
 - Trustees
- Committee Records
- Financial Records
- Women’s Organizations
 - WFMS
 - WMS
 - Women’s Association
 - Ladies Aid
 - United Church Women
- Men’s Group Records
 - AOTS
- Outreach Program Records
- Sunday School Records
- Music/ Choir Records
- Youth Group/ Young Adult Records
 - CGIT
 - Explorer’s
 - Young Men’s Club
 - Young People’s Union
- Building Maintenance
- War Memorial
- History Series
 - Anniversary Material
 - Historical Material
- Orders of Service
 - Bulletins and Orders of Service
- Photo Series



The United Church of Canada Living Skies Region

Records Transfer Authorization

Transfer of Congregational Records to Archives

Place one copy of this form in each carton shipped; a copy should be appended to the minutes of the session and official board.

Archival records are unique and irreplaceable. Transfer to the Archives in person. If records must be shipped, use courier or registered mail.

Always contact the Regional Archivist before transferring material.

Title of Records: _____

Control No.:
(from Archives)

Records Date(s): _____

Total # Containers:
(e.g. boxes)

Date of Transfer: _____

List enclosed? Y / N

Congregation Name: _____

Contact (Name): _____

Phone Number: _____ E-mail address: _____

Has the transfer been approved in the minutes? Y / N

Date of Minutes: _____

Session: _____

Official Board: _____

Carton (#): _____ of _____

Records not retained by the archives should be (pick one):

___ RETURNED to the Congregation ___ DESTROYED

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Secretary of official board: _____

Please list all volumes or files on an attached sheet.

Records may be arranged in the following order: minutes of boards and church courts, financial records, building and property files, registers, historic and communion rolls, correspondence, reports of groups and committees, photographs, and other media. File folders must be labelled.



Maintaining a Legacy: Archival Transfers for Closing Congregations

When a Community of Faith has determined that it is no longer possible to continue operating, it is an immense loss to its members, the United Church, and the broader community. An issue often faced by the members of a closing congregation is “What do we do with all of our stuff?” This sheet is meant to provide guidance for those facing this dilemma, specifically for those whose congregations are **closing** or **amalgamating with another congregation**.

Please read the guide below if your congregation is closing/amalgamating, as well as the special considerations depending on your situation. If you have any questions throughout the process, please contact the Archives for assistance.

Establish an Archives Committee

Form a group of congregation members to determine which records should be sent to the archives. This is best done before the congregation closes or amalgamates. This group will work with the minister or administrative assistant to ensure all relevant records are gathered, and will coordinate the transfer of the records to the archives. This group should contact their regional council office early in the process to seek input and guidance on records transfers.

Compile and Assess the Congregation’s Records

Work with your church administration to collect all records to be considered for transfer to the archives. **Please consult the other included Guides for a more detailed listing of records to be sent to the archives.** This listing should inform your decisions.

Managing Electronic Records

Determine whether there are any electronic records that need to be transferred to the archives as well. If a record exists both digitally and physically (e.g., minutes which have been printed), please only send the physical copy. Records in a Church Management Software may need to be exported from the software for transfer to the archives. **If there are electronic records to be sent to the archives, please contact us immediately.**

Prepare Records for Transfer

Once you have determined which records are to be transferred, please package the records into banker boxes. Create a listing of the materials in each box. This listing should be printed out and placed on top of the materials, within the box. Print out and complete the *Communities of Faith Transfer Form*. Please enclose a completed form in each box being sent to the archives. **Note: please place mouldy materials in a closed bag within a banker box, and inform the archives of their existence prior to transfer.**

Contact the Archives

Prior to sending records, please contact the archives at livingskiesarchives@united-church.ca In your email, please include the name of the congregation, inform us that you are closing/amalgamating and the date this is occurring (if possible), and attach a copy of the box listing, so we can verify that the appropriate records are being sent. **Please do not send materials to the archives without contacting us.**

Transfer the Records

Once you have received confirmation from the archives, please arrange for the records to be transferred. This can be done by either a member of the congregation, or through the use of a courier service (Purolator, UPS, FedEx) to pick up and deliver records.

Special Considerations for Amalgamating Congregations

If your congregation is amalgamating with another, there are some additional factors to consider:

- 1) You may wish to send historic/membership rolls to the new congregation, so that the names of congregants can be transferred to a new historic roll. Once this is complete, the old historic roll should be transferred to the archives as soon as possible.
- 2) Financial records from the closing congregation which are not yet 7 years old should be sent to the new congregation until they fulfill this retention period.
- 3) The archives should be advised of the amalgamation, and provided with the contact information for the new congregation.
- 4) For the congregation that is remaining open, it is highly encouraged to conduct a transfer to the archives as well. This will provide more space for your growing congregation!

Special Considerations for Closing Congregations

When your congregation is closing altogether, and is not amalgamating with another, there are some additional factors to consider:

- 1) Financial records which are not yet 7 years old must be kept until they have fulfilled their retention requirements. Practices vary across regional councils, so please contact your regional council office to determine next steps.
- 2) The archives should be informed of the closure, and be provided with the contact information for the trustee responsible for the transfer of records, and confirmation that a plan has been established to maintain these financial records.

Below are some guidelines for what should and should not be transferred to the Archives.

Determining What the Archives Wants

Adapted from "What do the archives want?" by The United Church of Canada Archives Circle

What records should be transferred to the Archives?

- ✓ Baptismal, marriage, and burial registers
- ✓ Historic rolls and communion rolls and registers
- ✓ Official minutes and correspondence of church courts and annual congregational meetings
- ✓ Board and committee manuals and organizational charts
- ✓ Official minutes, correspondence, and reports of standing, sub-, and ad hoc committees
- ✓ Property records, including plans, deeds, titles, leases, mortgages, bills of sale, and construction and maintenance contracts and invoices
- ✓ Records and correspondence of all groups and associations, including:
 - women's groups (Ladies' Aid Society, Woman's Missionary Society, Woman's Association, and United Church Women)
 - men's groups (AOTS, Men's Club)
 - Sunday schools, youth groups
 - choirs, mission bands, Bible classes, etc.
- ✓ Correspondence files
- ✓ Special church bulletins (i.e., anniversaries and dedications). 4 bulletins per year, to a maximum of 40 per decade
- ✓ Sample of church newsletters
- ✓ Annual reports and audited financial records
- ✓ Clearly identified and dated photographs of personnel, executive, boards, buildings, properties, and special events

What records should NOT be transferred?

- ✗ Duplicate congregational materials (photocopies of minutes)
- ✗ Records created by Regional Councils, or national office (i.e., photocopies of Regional Council minutes)
- ✗ Invoices, receipts, or cancelled cheques
- ✗ National church publications are rarely kept. Please provide a listing of any in your church, which we will compare against our holdings
- ✗ Pulpit or family Bibles unless they contain important historic information not obtainable elsewhere
- ✗ Plaques, trophies, or other artifacts should NOT be brought to the archive. For unique artifacts please contact the archive to discuss the best method of preserving the record.

What about scrapbooks and photo albums?

- Scrapbooks can hold interesting collections of memorabilia, but it takes careful planning and investment in proper materials to ensure such collections are long-lasting. Many of the materials used in scrapbooks deteriorate over time. If it is necessary to prepare a scrapbook, use acid-free paper and archival adhesive.
- Photo albums face the same preservation considerations, so use archival materials. It is best to choose clearly identifiable images to send to the Archives. Make sure photographs include names, dates, and locations.

For detailed records retention schedules, please review the [Sample Records Schedule: Congregations](#)

A network of United Church Archives exists across the country to preserve the archival records of all courts of the United Church, including the records of congregations.

Congregational records should be routinely transferred to the appropriate Regional Council Archives for permanent preservation. However, before preparing to transfer your records, you may be wondering: *Why should* these records be sent to the Archives?

The Manual and Archives

Section A.5 of *The Manual, 2022*, clearly identifies the need to archive church records:

- Church records “have historical and legal value.”
- Church bodies are responsible for “making sure the records and accurate and complete” and “keeping the records safe, secure and under their control.”
- Church records are the property of The United Church of Canada; “they may not be taken or kept by any member, minister, or other person.”

Because church records are the property of the United Church, all inactive records should be centralized in an archival repository and not scattered among various local archives, libraries, and research centres.

To accommodate the geographical size of the country, each Regional Council has its own Archives (the Ontario Regional Councils share the same facility with the General Council Archives) to house the archival records of Regional Councils and communities of faith.

The advantages of sending your records to your Regional Council Archives are many

- Staff are trained and follow professional archival standards to acquire, arrange, describe, preserve, and make material available to researchers.
- The Archives are secure, environmentally controlled spaces suited to storing archival material.
- Records are placed in acid-free folders and boxes for further protection.
- Outdated records stored in churches are susceptible to fire, water, damage, mould, silverfish, being misplaced or stolen, etc.
- Records are made more accessible to potentially more researchers.
- Church records serve as a source of information for church histories and celebrations, community histories, and genealogical research.
- Records are our memory, not only of facts or evidence of activities and decisions but also of our collective story as a church.

“The Archives belongs not to me, not to the church.... It is the corporate memory of our life with God, in all its beauty and tragedy and wonder.”
Bob Stewart, Past Archivist, BC Conference

For more information, contact your [Regional Council Archives](#)