

CHAPTER IX: RECORDS MANAGEMENT

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Introduction

This manual of records management guidelines is designed for parish officers and administrators, including the custodian of records and archives or the parish archivist. It includes a general records retention schedule that may be modified and adopted by congregations for their particular situations. In all cases, the vestry or equivalent body of the parish should approve policy guidelines on records management, including schedules for retention and destruction. Legal counsel should also be consulted, especially in the context of potential or ongoing litigation.

This chapter is an abridged version of a manual created by The Archives of the Episcopal Church and approved by the Board of the Archives of the General Convention. To obtain a copy of the full manual, or for other advice on records related matters, contact The Archives of the Episcopal Church, PO Box 2247, Austin, TX 76768, 800-525-9329, email the Archives at research@episcopalarchives.org, or visit the Archives website at: https://www.episcopalarchives.org/Records_Manual_For_Congregations.

Custodial Responsibility for Records

The vestry, officers, and employees of a congregation have a fiduciary and custodial responsibility to create and maintain an adequate record of the parish or mission's activities. Some basic competencies in managing recorded information include:

- Being aware of what constitutes a record in the context of the parish;

- Familiarity with practices that ensure information is recorded accurately, using a standard file format, intuitive naming conventions, and reliable storage media;
- Identifying and supporting key person(s) who are responsible for managing the inactive records (e.g., parish administrator, parish archivist);
- Retaining and storing records and archives safely and securely.

Records are defined as documents, papers, and data created in the normal course of parish business concerning events, projects, personnel, physical plant, and routine transactions that may have ongoing importance to the legal and financial activities of the parish. They are the property of the parish and should not be considered or treated as an individual's "personal files." Records created by all employees, officers, agents, and volunteers fall within the scope of their fiduciary responsibility. Records should be prepared and kept at the principal place of business. Normally, they should be kept in a secure area within the confines of the parish property.

Accessibility and Ownership. Records should be properly labeled and secured. Confidentiality should always be respected, but it is also important to keep key financial and administrative data retrievable for operational purposes. Appropriate members of the vestry, finance committee, and the rector should be apprised of the location of financial and business records, as well as the written procedures for accessing computer files, safety deposit boxes, and records kept off site as data back-up. While access to current parish records and archives should be controlled on a need to know basis, an ethic of openness and accessibility should prevail for reasons of administrative accountability, internal audit, and historical inquiry.

Authenticity. Records should be recorded on fixed and durable media and internally documented (with dates, versions and authorship). When properly created and maintained, records serve as reliable evidence of the activities and transactions of an organization and its paid and volunteer agents. Records have many features, but the most important aspects of original records is that they must have physical integrity, be complete and accurate, and be trustworthy representations of the information they claim to document.

Choose quality recording materials to save important corporate records. Be careful not to alter, or create at a later time, information that is not part of the original record. Be alert to the fact that some records (e.g., a copy of a vote, or a monthly financial statement) are extracts of more complete records (minutes, general ledger) and should be treated as separate documents for retention purposes. Version control (using the file name) is a high priority in managing electronic records. Be sure to clearly identify the final copy of a record and delete or remove earlier versions to a separate "temporary" directory if they are being kept for short term reference purposes.

Custody and title to parish records should never be alienated from The Episcopal Church. Off-site deposit of records, if deemed necessary for their protection, should be arranged so that the parish retains title, ownership and priority access. Closed church records should be transferred to the succeeding congregation or (as is required by many diocesan canons) relinquished to the diocese.

Records and Litigation

A congregation's records and archives may be relevant to future litigation and are subject to legal discovery. Should litigation or an investigation appear to be approaching, all relevant records should be carefully preserved and must not be destroyed or altered in any way.

Electronic records and email are recognized as legally admissible evidence. In a legal action, the validity of the church's documents and records will be evaluated by their authenticity (i.e., how original, complete, and reliable they are in accurately reflecting the processes and events that they claim to document). Poorly kept or altered records can harm the parish in the event that they are called into evidence or relied upon to reconstruct some past event. Records that cannot be found or easily retrieved can expose the parish to liability, unnecessary expenses for data recovery, and public embarrassment. Retention and destruction practices that do not follow a standard policy may be perceived as an obstruction to justice.

Special Classes of Records

Records of Financial Accountability and Audit

As tax exempt organizations, religious bodies are obligated to maintain records that demonstrate compliance with their tax status and acceptable business practices and standards. Most congregations engage in activities that generate questions regarding tax reporting or liability. These include:

- Employee payroll, withholding, and related compensation records for consulting, travel, scholarships, etc;
- Income on rent, purchase and sale of real estate;
- Income from operation of gift and bookstores, thrift shops, and other concessions;
- Fund raising and solicitation of charitable gifts;
- Unrelated business income from rents, retail sales, parking, and use fees.

Financial records and supporting administrative documentation should be kept in detail to demonstrate the critical accounting distinction between income that is related to Church activities and income generated from activities that are unrelated to church business. These activities should be flagged and documented such that one could easily re-create historical data during a tax inquiry or audit.

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) requires taxpayers to retain, "permanent books of account or records, including inventories as are sufficient to establish...any return of such tax or information" (26 CFR 1.6001-10). By "permanent," the IRS refers to the treatment and format of the record for its period of legal usefulness. Minimum retention of financial transaction and reporting documents is strongly implied by tax law.

Employment and Personnel Records

Administrators should give special attention to personnel and employment-related records, including records outsourced to a vendor or specialist. Several legislative acts and statutes apply in this area, including the Civil Rights Act, Equal Pay Act, Family Medical Leave Act, Fair Credit Reporting Act, Fair Labor Standards Act, the Immigration Reform and Control Act, Federal Unemployment Tax Act, Privacy Act, Americans with Disabilities Act, Occupational Safety and Health Act, and, for some parishes, the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) may apply. New laws, such as the Lily Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, should be monitored for record keeping impact. State laws often place further regulatory controls in these areas.

Personnel files should be kept on all individuals, who act in an agent capacity for the parish, which includes paid (full and part-time) staff members, and unpaid volunteers who have official duties and responsibilities. The files for each of these groups may look different as volunteers generally do not generate earnings, benefits, or medical information. All personnel files should be kept together. Separating employee folders from volunteer folders within the personnel files or using color coding techniques is recommended.

Personnel files should be organized into folders or file directories that hold data verifying:

- (1) Employment history (hiring information, job description, earnings history, promotions, required training, etc.);
- (2) Benefits enrollment information (pension, health and life insurance, disability and worker's compensation, medical leave, etc.); and
- (3) Performance evaluation (annual reviews, employee replies, and disciplinary inquiries).

Be aware that employees have rights to access and review their personnel files. Supervisors should be extremely careful not to introduce irrelevant or unsubstantiated material into the personnel file. Confidentiality should be observed, especially in using computer files to document employee activity. Personnel files should be kept locked and secure at all times, even after the file is retired from the office to an Archives/Records Center. If you do not have a reinforced vault-type room, important paper records should be kept in a four-hour rated, fire-proof file cabinet. Before making this decision consider the floor load requirements, especially in wood framed buildings, and the cost of rated file cabinets. The cost of multiple fire proof cabinets may well exceed the cost of reinforcing walls and ceilings in a records room.

Should a question or complaint arise about an individual's performance, the memoranda and records surrounding the inquiry should be secured and maintained as a separate, personnel-like file. This measure will help to prevent unauthorized access while confirmation or investigation takes place. Once an inquiry reaches the level of a performance action, however, separate files should not be kept or hidden. All extraneous records not related to the inquiry or action taken as a result of an inquiry should be destroyed before the action file is made part of the individual's personnel file. Such records should also be sealed from browsing eyes and inadvertent disclosure within the personnel file.

Volunteers. Personnel records should be kept on all volunteers serving in key ministry areas such as governance, property oversight, education and youth work, outreach social ministry, stewardship, and financial management. These records can be less elaborate than employee personnel files. In lieu of individual folders, an annual, up-to-date "leadership file" could be created to include volunteers' biographical and contact information, history of service with job descriptions, and signed acknowledgment of policy statements and special training required by the diocese or parish to ensure safe work and community space. Records on volunteers should be designated for long-term retention in the Records Center or Archives.

Retention of Employment Records. Retention of employment records should be systematic

to avoid legal exposure. Recent legislation and case law in such areas as child abuse and sexual misconduct have greatly extended the time periods by which individuals may seek recourse for past harms. Personnel and payroll records should be retained long enough for reasonable future retrieval or discovery of vital employment data. Following standard retention policy and practices are the best tools to achieve both due diligence and good data management.

The IRS, the Department of Labor, and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission require that employers keep certain payroll and benefits records. In order to maintain a complete employment record, parishes should temporarily keep and retain records that:

- Verify employment, (I-9 and W-4 forms; position descriptions, salary schedules);
- Enumerate hours (time sheets, payroll journals);
- Document recruitment and hiring, (applications/resumes, search records);
- Substantiate retirement plans, (pension plan documents, enrollments, payments);
- Detail injury and illness (worker's compensation claims, disability leave).

Personnel Records: What is a Prudent and Enforceable Retention Practice?

Keeping every personnel or payroll-related record permanently is a storage, management, and security challenge. Ordinarily, all personnel files should be retained for a minimum of 6 full years after termination of employment, *provided* that two other permanent records are kept: the **Employee History and Earnings Record Summary** – typically a comprehensive summary form kept on each employee; and the year-end **Payroll Registers**, which document hours, exact duration of service, and key identifying data (SSN, DOB, bank deposit numbers, etc.). Saving summary records and registers allows for the scheduled destruction of source files such as notifications, change forms, and time sheets.

How can one be sure that good management controls will prevail in the future? Saving summary history sheets, computerized payroll registers, or third party vendor reports, is fraught with uncertainty. Building in some redundancy is surely reasonable. Individual **Personnel Files** are the fall-back permanent documents. Maintaining a lean but complete personnel file is advisable. Parishes that have secured their Personnel Files in a Records Center or Archives should consider retaining basic employment history and service records for a minimum of 30 years after termination of employment, or for the life of the employee if that can be determined.

Administrators should be alert to keeping records that demonstrate due diligence in verifying past employment of hired staff, and ongoing training of employees and volunteers. A permanent file should be kept that can demonstrate a consistent history of required training of individuals who are in contact with minors. A separate personnel file or cumulative **Service Files** on volunteers should be retained for a minimum of 30 years. (See also the recommendations of the Church Pension Fund in *Human Resources Practices for Lay Employees, 2005.*)

Operational and Administrative Records

Several other categories of canonical and operational records are vital and contain information on the Church in its capacity as a membership body, a corporation, a physical plant, and participant in the wider community. Parish administrators and other officers should exercise a big picture view of their responsibility for the ongoing life and story of the congregation. The following groups of records should be retained and stored carefully. (More detailed

information on these records is available on the Archives' website at https://www.episcopalarchives.org/Records_Manual_For_Congregations.)

- **Sacramental Records/Parish Registers:** Including communicant and membership records
- **Corporate Administration Records:** Minutes, reports, charters, bylaws, deeds, and governance documents
- **Property and Building Management Records:** Plans, specifications, contracts, paid bills on major construction
- **Business and Legal Records:** Contracts, agreements, insurance papers, and trust fund records
- **Historical Records:** Older records and supporting documents on events, internal projects and programs, and mission activities in the community

Electronic Records Management

Computer data – or electronic record keeping systems – present special concerns for long-term storage and access to records. Governmental legislation such as the Electronic Signature (E-Sign) Act, the Uniform Electronic Transactions Act, IRS Revenue Procedure 98-25, and the Sarbanes-Oxley Act offer industry standards and guidelines, which, if not directly applicable, are pertinent models, even for the operations of a small congregation. The management of computer records should be directed by administrative policy and practice, not by the technical skill of the computer user or outside technical consultant.

The "record copy" of operational information that is kept in electronic form should be periodically "fixed" as a snapshot of the data and stored on a read-only medium to guarantee an archive file for a system that is constantly being updated and revised. High quality external storage drives, tape systems, or cloud back-up systems will serve this requirement. Regular periodic (monthly or quarterly) snapshots of electronic content should be stored on a device other than the user's hard drive or the file server. The fixed, archived copy should be kept in a separate, secure physical location. Documentation on legacy and snapshot files should be extracted and recorded in a manual that identifies the named files, and briefly describes the content of computer databases and other records. Redundancy is a key concept in being able to recover from a disaster or data failure. Consider also the value of storing one version of the data capture off-site.

Parish data may be stored and kept remotely by third-party vendors who perform vital operations such as payroll or accounts payable. The trade off in using hosted (cloud) applications is that in-house computer expenses are reduced but responsibility for data protection is transferred to an outside vendor. One will want to take precautions not to relinquish too much responsibility. Common concerns include:

- Security of data in a shared environment outside of firewalls
- Ownership and control of the data

- Difficulty moving data in and out of cloud environments into other systems
- Guarantee of availability and service performance when 24/7 access is required
- Data privacy and protection especially for sensitive information
- Compliance with canonical and governmental regulations for data retention

If employees access records through an Internet-based service company (e.g., bank data, payroll services), they will expect that the vendor and the parish are keeping a record copy in an electronic archive. There is risk in the proposition that a vendor will always be in business and have the parish's data in a ready format when it is needed. Administrators should be diligent to create a periodic archive copy of business data. The vendor should be asked to provide an assurance of data migration, and the parish should test their ability to transfer usable data to their local network to ensure business continuity. For further guidance on selecting software for data protection, especially remotely accessed applications, see "Selection of Software for The Episcopal Church" on the Archives website at: http://www.episcopalarchives.org/DFMS_Software_Selection_06-15-2011.pdf.

Using physical records (paper) to back up or supplement *vital* electronic records remains a good rule of thumb and prudent management approach. Some redundancy is a good idea for vestry minutes, trust fund registers, contracts, reports, manuals, and similar key documents. The viability of computerized media is one concern, but more practically, managing the data over time is very difficult. Parishes generally do not have this layer of management and for that reason a dual paper and digital strategy is advisable. Consult the full version of this chapter for more information on electronic records, including file naming conventions and data organizing techniques at: https://www.episcopalarchives.org/Records_Manual_For_Congregations.

Websites as Electronic Publications. Websites are typically used to distribute information and statements to the public. As with other publications, they should follow in-house standards for appropriate content and review. Web managers and parish administrators should be alert to maintaining continuity when website content is retired or links are intentionally broken. If the webserver is the sole location of the data, a retention routine will need to be worked out for holding onto inactive published documents. Identify a technically competent person to monitor website content for key content and to work with the records creators to preserve historical records. Parishes and dioceses that use their websites as a publishing medium for such permanent records as minutes and annual reports should make retention provisions for data in a durable, digitally persistent form (see, for example, see Canons I.6.4, I.6.5(a), and I.7.1(c)). Standard, open source software should be considered whenever possible in the creation of electronic publications (see General Convention Resolution 2006-A049 on open source software).

Electronic Record Keeping and Archiving — A Simple Back-up Approach

- Regularly save a snapshot copy of folders/directories that contain permanent electronic records to external drives, tape, or remote storage.
- Do not rely on flash/thumb drives or cheap external drives to save money as these are inherently weaker; for longevity, research the industry-rated best value for reliability and durability. Use standard equipment rather than the “latest and greatest”.
- Alongside the external drive, place a description of the general drive contents with title of record(s), dates covered, creating office/staff person, and the date of the data backup.
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- Store drives in protective labeled cases in a secure, dust-free, and moderate (< 76° F) environment.
- Back-up disks should be stored in a building or site physically removed from the site of the file server in the event of a localized disaster.
- Retain system documentation such as the name of the software application, version number, file format, operating system, etc.
- Keep an inventory or log of the backed-up data, indicating the record title (e.g., Ledger, Journal Entries, etc.), the date span of the records, the burn date, the electronic file name (e.g., “GenLdg_12312007.xls”), and the file format (see IRS Bulletin 1997-13 Sec. 4 on Electronic Storage System Requirements).
- External drives should be checked periodically for data loss (minimum once a year). The location of external drives should be at the place of business in a well-known but secure location.
- Cloud storage has its own complications. A policy and an audit routine are needed to manage permission layers, passwords, migration options, and risks involving storage of confidential personal information.

Email Communications. Emails are records and should be included in the parish’s records management plan. Email records are subject to legal discovery and must be produced at the request of a court. Because of their quantity, the frequency of trivial content, and a tendency for email to pile up in the “Inbox” and “Sent” mail box, regular housekeeping is advisable. The records creator has to take charge of saving important email. This is largely done by creating folders or directories for filing away important messages. These folders should have names that ideally reflect the active folders in terms of conveying the purpose or function of the communication. Routine, transient correspondence should not be saved or, if saved, should be scheduled for destruction. The planned and scheduled destruction of temporary email messages, carried out as part of the regular conduct of business in accordance with the records management scheme, nullifies an accusation that email has been deleted for purposes of disposing of evidence.

Retaining emails for the long-term presents challenges for most organizations. There is no recognized standard methodology for preserving messages. Different email formats and services, some of them proprietary, require different approaches. The Archives of The Episcopal Church provides guidelines and instructions for Microsoft Outlook 2003-2007 and 2010. Guidelines for IMAP and Gmail are being developed, and the Church Archives is testing for email retention software. Consult the Outlook Guidelines [<http://www.episcopalarchives.org/PSTfiles.pdf>] and the Archives' website for periodic updates to these standards and resources.

Records Retention and Disposition

Records Retention Policy

A records retention schedule is a policy document. It directs the length of time and final retention decisions that will meet the organization's operational, legal, and historical requirements for record keeping. A general records schedule such as the one attached to this chapter can be adopted for this purpose, but large parishes should consider adopting a customized retention schedule to satisfy their specific operations.

A records retention policy may include the guidelines recommended in this chapter. It should also include the fresh input of employees and leadership about how to make the policy practical and enforceable. The parish should adopt its own version of a standard records retention policy after consulting with counsel whenever possible. The retention policy should be accessible both in the office and in the parish archives. Applied consistently and regularly, it will be recognized as part of normal business practice by the courts.

Regulatory Requirements for Records Retention
<p>Record keeping requirements are assigned by statutory legislation, administrative law, professional standards, and best practices. Some of the more important legislative requirements are defined within the Civil Rights Act, Equal Pay Act, Fair Credit Reporting Act, Fair Labor Standards Act, Federal Unemployment Tax Act and the Uniform Rules of Evidence Act, the Immigration Reform and Control Act and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act. Administrative regulations are also defined by the IRS, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and the Wage and the Department of Labor and published in the Code of Federal Regulations.</p> <p>The sample retention schedule in this manual takes into account the record keeping requirements defined by the above mentioned legislation and agencies. The individual States impose record keeping requirements in certain areas, especially labor law, privacy, worker's compensation, health, and safety. These should be researched by parish counsel before implementing a records retention schedule.</p>

For the sake of simplicity, retention periods are usually measured in annual accumulations.

Some records can be discarded when they are superseded and all administrative use ceases (AU). These files, and others designated for "selective retention" (SR), should be discarded after review by the administrator and/or archivist for any documents that may have long-term administrative or historical value. Selective retention (SR) is the careful separation of permanent records from complex collections of obsolete material. It is a review step that applies particularly to filing systems (paper or electronic) where material is arranged by subject or as an undifferentiated mass. Again, the parish should have a competent person assigned to conduct this aspect of records and archives management. Retention periods for most records are usually expressed as "CY+__", i.e. retain for the current year, plus a number of succeeding years. Thus, a three-year retention (CY+3) period for a record dated January 1, 2013 indicates a destruction date no earlier than January 1, 2017.

Retirement and Disposition of Inactive Records

Active records are the documents still in use in the office, stored in either an electronic directory structure or a filing system. Records that have become inactive are often stored in a separate storage area (Records Center) or moved to an "archived" section of the organization's file/data server. When physical records are moved to inactive storage, a list of the contents of every box (which can be a range of dates or alphabetical groupings) should be prepared to facilitate occasional retrieval of records. One copy of the list should be placed in a standard size box with the records. A complete set of numbered box lists should be kept in an active file in the Parish Archives and/or in the active administrative office files.

Retiring, archiving, and destroying electronic records is challenging outside of an electronic record management system. In lieu of a system, archival records may be moved to a designated "archive" section, typically a separate drive on the organization's file server. Archive directories should always be configured as "read only" to preserve the authenticity of the records. Simple "read me" text (.txt) files should be created by the custodian of the record and included in each directory with brief explanation of what was moved and when. Well-ordered directories, organized by date, will facilitate data transfer routines and may help future users to locate legacy data. See also the Archives' resource pages or FAQs for more information on archiving electronic records: http://www.episcopalarchives.org/e-records_faq.html.

There are two basic ways to designate records when they are being retired from active use: temporary or permanent. Temporary records make up the bulk of the accumulation. After retention periods have been met, these temporary records can be properly destroyed. Mark temporary records with an end date for final review (e.g., "Review for destruction 01/2010"). This label can be used for e-records as well, or placed in a "Read Me" file alongside the temporary files stored in the electronic Records Center Directory.

Permanent Records are kept indefinitely as archival records because they contain information of long-term administrative, legal, or historical value to the parish. These records should be clearly marked while held in a Records Center to ensure they will be moved to the archives (e.g. "Permanent-Send to Archives Jan. 2010"). Once transferred to the archives, the appointed archivist can review them to eliminate duplicates and non-record material mixed in.

Destruction of Temporary Records

An appropriate person should be designated to destroy obsolete records after a careful review process. Keep the following points in mind:

1. **Log the Destruction.** (See sample destruction log sheet attached.)
2. **Destroy Systematically.** The person authorized follows policy and seeks advice when necessary.
3. **Verify Content and Value.** Verify that the labels and contents match by checking inside boxes.
4. **Reevaluate if Necessary.** The value of information can change over time. This includes records that were originally thought to be “permanent.” When in doubt, obtain a second opinion.
5. **Isolate Obsolete Records.** Physically separate and clearly label the boxes marked for destruction.
6. **Protect Confidential Data.** Destroy confidential records by shredding.
7. **Destroy Electronic Data Thoroughly.** Re-format the hard drive or delete data using special software that prevents recovery of deleted electronic data.
8. **Be Mindful of Pending Litigation.** Never destroy records in anticipation of pending litigation. Never remove records from the parish's place of business.
9. **Revise and Update.** Modify the retention schedule as needed, but follow a process and avoid making unilateral decisions for new records.
10. **Finish the Job.** After destroying obsolete records, follow-up by preparing for newly retired records and moving permanent records to the Parish Archives.

Secure Storage in a Parish Archives and Records Center

Every congregation should attempt to set apart its archives. The Parish Archives is a room that is a secure, supervised, structurally reinforced, and stable environment. (A stable environment is one in which the average temperature does not fluctuate seasonally more than 5 degrees from a norm of about 68 F and relative humidity changes of no more than 5-7% from a norm of about 55%.) Physical access to the archives room should be limited to persons designated by the vestry. For many parishes, it may be practical to combine the Archives and the Records Center storage in one place. A Records Center is used for storing inactive records – records that are still too current to transfer to the Parish Archives. If combined in one room, the temporary records should be strictly shelved apart from permanent records and labeled. Vital and important corporate records should be placed in the more secure Parish Archives for safekeeping as soon as they can be retired.

When parish resources and oversight are seen to be inadequate and risky for maintaining historical records, arrangements can be made to place the records in an off-site facility or deposit the archives in a secular repository. In either case, a congregation should never alienate, remove, or transfer title to its records without the informed consent of the vestry and a written agreement on title and ownership with the outside agency. Consult the diocesan or Episcopal Church archivist for alternative, cost effective means of protecting parish archives. A sample agreement to deposit

archives and records with an external agency can be found on the Church Archives website at: http://www.episcopalarchives.org/parish_sample_deposit_agreement.pdf.

General Records Retention Schedule for Congregations

The following retention schedule is provided as a general guide to the adoption of local standards. It is neither comprehensive nor tailored to fit the specific requirements of particular congregations; but it may be useful as a congregation reviews and develops its own schedule. In conducting the review, seek the advice of those who are generating records in the parish. For updates to entries, see:

https://www.episcopalarchives.org/Records_Manual_For_Congregations.

These definitions apply in the Records Schedule that follows:

P = permanent retention for purposes of indefinite legal, administrative or historical use

AU = retain the record for its current administrative use and destroy only after all use ceases

SR = selective retention of individual files after review: transfer permanent records to archives and destroy obsolete records.

Record Title or Series	Minimum Retention	Retention Recommendation
A		
Accounts Payable Files, Operational Accounts	7	Destroy after 7 years. <i>See also</i> Invoices and Paid Bills on Capital Expenses.
Act of Incorporation	P	Transfer to Archives.
Agreements, Contractual		See Contracts.
Annual Financial Reports		See Financial Statements, Annual.
Applications for Employment, Unsuccessful	1	Destroy after CY + 1 year, federal; CY+3 in some states.
Applications for Employment, Successful	P	Retain for life of Personnel File.
Appraisals, Property	AU	Retain until superseded.
Assessment/Quota Apportionment Data	5	Destroy after 5 years.
Audio and Video Recordings	P	Permanent. Transfer to Parish Archives for final review.
Audit Working Papers, including back-up	4	Destroy after CY + 4 years with audit.
Audit Reports	P	Transfer to Archives.
B		
Balance Sheets, Annual	P	Transfer to Archives.
Balance Sheets, Monthly/Quarterly	2	Destroy after 2 years.
Bank Deposit Books	7	Destroy after 7 years or CY + 4 years after audit.
Bank Deposit Slips	4	Destroy after 4 years.
Bank Statements	7	Destroy after 7 years.
Bank Reconciliations	2	Destroy after CY + 2 years.
Bequest and Estate Papers	P	Transfer to Archives.
Bonds, Canceled	2	Destroy after CY + 2 years from date of cancellation.
Budgets, Approved and Revised	P	Transfer to Archives.
Budgets, Proposed and Worksheets	AU	Destroy after administrative use ceases.
Building Plans and Drawings	P	Retain as-built drawings, architect's renderings, and renovation drawings. Transfer Mylar copies or e-copies of all original drawings to Parish Archives and make duplicate use copies. <i>See also</i> Specifications for Building and Design.
Bylaws	P	Transfer to Archives. Retire previous versions after every revision or amendment.

Record Title or Series	Minimum Retention	Retention Recommendation
C		
Camp and/or Conference Center, Health and Safety Records (Including Health Treatment Procedures, Health Logs, Safety Incident Reports, Permission and Treatment Forms, Operations Manuals)	7	Destroy after 7 years unless action pending. <i>See also</i> Personnel Records and related business records for operation of camps and conference centers. Note: some state guidelines advise retention of forms for minors until the participants reach the age of 23.
Canceled Checks	7	Destroy after 7 years or CY + 4 years after audit.
Cash Journals, General Receipts and Disbursements	7	Destroy after 7 years. Retain permanently if used as primary book of entry in lieu of General Ledger.
Cash Journals, Receipts on Plate and Pledge Offerings	7	Destroy after 7 years. <i>See also</i> : Pledge Registers.
Cashbooks, Discretionary Accounts	7	Destroy after 7 years. <i>See also</i> Discretionary Account Checkbooks.
Cashbooks, Special Fundraising Subscriptions	P	Transfer to Archives.
Certificates of Deposit, Canceled	2	Destroy CY + 2 years after redemption.
Certificates of Title to Property	P	Transfer to Archives.
Certificates of Incorporation	P	Transfer to Archives.
Cemetery and Columbarium Interments	P	Transfer to Archives.
Chart of Accounts	P	Transfer to Archives. Retain superseded copy with date of retirement substantive revisions.
Check Registers	7	Destroy after 7 years.
Check Book/Stubs	7	Destroy after 7 years.
Checks, Canceled		See Canceled Checks.
Committee Minutes and Records	P	Transfer to Archives.
Compensation Schedules, Salary and Benefit Guidelines	AU	Destroy after use ceases.
Computer Records		See Electronic Records, Legacy Files.
Consecration Certificates for Episcopal Church Buildings	P	Transfer to Archives. Keep authentic copy in Parish Archives if original is on display.
Constitution and Bylaws with Revisions	P	Permanent. Retire previous versions after every revision or amendment.
Contracts, Active	P	Retain in active files. <i>See also</i> Contracts, Inactive.

Record Title or Series	Minimum Retention	Retention Recommendation
Contracts, Inactive	SR	Transfer to Archives for selective retention. Retain contracts on: New construction: P Betterments and major improvements: P Repairs and maintenance: CY + 6 years. Service: CY + 6 years. Lease agreements: CY + 6 years. Loans and bank notes: CY + 6 years. Employment contracts: see under Personnel Files and Records; <i>See also</i> Consultants Contracts.
Consultants Contracts	6	Destroy CY + 6 years after termination of contract for non-staff consultants.
Contracted Staff and Employees		See Personnel Files and Records.
Conveyances	P	Transfer to Archives. <i>See also</i> Deeds.
Copyright Registrations	P	Transfer to Archives; retain for life of copyright protection (90 yrs. from publication or 120 from creation for works performed for hire by parish).
Correspondence Files , subject and name arrangement	SR	Transfer to Archives for Selective Retention. Retain substantive correspondence permanently; destroy routine courtesy correspondence after 5 years.
Correspondence Files , chronological arrangement	2	Destroy after 2 years if duplicative of central correspondence file by topic or subject; otherwise retain for review if used as primary filing system.
Correspondence, Transactional , including payments, receipts, transmittals, credits, etc.	4	Destroy after CY + 5 years.
Correspondence, Legal , including tax, real estate and probate issues	P	Transfer to Archives. <i>See also</i> Litigation Papers.
D		
Deeds : including conveyances, covenants, and easements	P	Transfer to Archives.
Development and Fundraising Campaign Records	SR	Transfer to Archives for selective retention. Retain donor lists, case statements, correspondence, minutes, and planning documents; destroy receipts, letters of acknowledgment.
Disability Claims	AU	Retain indefinitely against future claims.
Discretionary Account Checkbooks	7	Destroy after 7 years.
Directories and Yearbooks	P	Transfer to Archives.
Employment Taxes, Contributions and Payments , including taxes withheld and FICA/Social Security contributions	7	Destroy after 7 years; a confidential record.
E		
Earnings and Benefits Records		See Employee History and Earnings Records; Personnel Files and Records.
E-mail Correspondence (Email) : Executive Administration and Finance	SR	Transfer to Archives server space for selective retention. Review message batches for permanent email with the following guidelines in mind.

Record Title or Series	Minimum Retention	Retention Recommendation
<p>Policy and program planning, official communication and statements, minutes, press releases, etc.</p> <p>Executive Program Planning and Administration,</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Exchanges relating to strategic initiatives or mission program activities</p> <p>Administrative Support Messages, including travel, meeting appointments, acknowledgments, ordering correspondence, etc.</p> <p>Routine Courtesy Email,</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Transmittals, reminder notices, cover letters, forwarded mail, confirmations, announcements, etc.</p> <p>Circulars/Broadcast Messages</p> <p>List Services, Bulletin Boards, and Online Forums</p>		<p>Transfer to Archives.</p> <p>Destroy after 2 years.</p> <p>Destroy after use.</p> <p>Destroy after use. Review for historical value; if parish forum, secure for Parish Archives.</p>
<p>Electronic Records, Legacy Data and files of accounting systems and other business records</p>	SR	<p>Transfer to Archives for selective retention. Retain legacy records after review of data set, software source code, and other descriptive metadata. Keep all permanent record series not printed, labeled, and verified. <i>See also</i> individual record titles in this schedule.</p>
<p>Employee Contracts</p>		<p>See Personnel Files and Records for contracted employees. <i>See also</i> Consultants Contracts.</p>
<p>Employee Files and Records</p>		<p>See Personnel Files and Records; <i>See also</i> Volunteers Files.</p>
<p>Employee History and Earnings Records, a summary record</p>	P	<p>Transfer to Archives. Retain long term for purposes of risk management. In the absence of the Employee History and Earnings Record, retain individual Personnel Files for 30 years. A confidential record series. <i>See also</i> Personnel Records and Files; <i>See also</i> Service Files for volunteers.</p>
<p>Employee Manuals and Policies</p>	30	<p>Transfer to Archives. Date and retire previous versions upon revision.</p>
<p>Employee Training Certificates, required sexual misconduct prevention and anti-racism training</p>	P	<p>Place with Personnel Files and Records, and keep indefinitely.</p>
<p>Employee Withholding Statements, Form W-2, and State Withholding</p>	7	<p>Destroy after 7 years; confidential record. <i>See also</i>: Tax Forms, Individual Employees.</p>
<p>Employee Withholding Certificates: Form W-4</p>	7	<p>Destroy after 7 years; confidential record.</p>
<p>Estates and Bequests</p>		<p>See Bequest and Estate Papers.</p>
<p>Every Member Canvass Records</p>	P	<p>Transfer to Archives. Retain canvass lists and fair copy of program literature; discard working papers and memoranda.</p>

Record Title or Series	Minimum Retention	Retention Recommendation
Event Files	SR	Selective Retention. Transfer to Archives for final review. <i>See also</i> Office Files.
F		
Financial Statements, Annual	P	Transfer to Archives.
Financial Statements, Monthly	2	Destroy after CY + 2 years.
Form I-9: Immigration and Naturalization Service Certifications	6	Destroy CY + 6 years after termination of employment. Retain original copy in Personnel File for period of employment.
G		
Grant Proposals: Successful Applications	SR	Transfer to Archives for selective retention. Retain proposal, final report and substantive correspondence.
Grant Proposals: Denied Applications	1	Destroy after CY + 1 year.
H		
Human Resources Policies, manuals and handbooks		See Employee Manuals and Policies.
I		
Immigration and Naturalization Certifications: Form I-9		See Form I-9: Immigration...Certifications above.
Incorporation Papers	P	Transfer to Archives. Keep in safe or comparable secure location.
Injury Reports	6	Destroy CY + 6 years after settlement of all claims.
Instruments of Donation of Episcopal Church Property	P	Transfer to Archives. Keep authentic copy in Parish Archives if original is on display.
Insurance, Notices of Employee Claims, including employer's copy of statement of benefits	1	Destroy after CY + 1 year; a confidential record.
Insurance Policies and Plans: Descriptions, Liability	P	Transfer to Archives. Retain inactive policies indefinitely for protection against future claims against employees, volunteers, and other agents.
Insurance Policies and Plans: Descriptions, Employee Medical and Life	AU	Retain indefinitely for protection against future claims.
Insurance Policies and Plans: Auto, Equipment, and Personal Property, Inactive	6	Retain for life of policy; destroy CY + 6 years after termination.
Insurance Policies and Plans: Property, Fine Arts, and Extended Risk Coverage	6	Retain for life of policy; destroy CY + 6 years after termination. <i>See also</i> Inventories of Property.
Insurance, Employee Medical Benefit, Election of Coverage	6	Maintain in separate section of Personnel File; retain for CY + 6 years after termination of employment. Confidential record.

Record Title or Series	Minimum Retention	Retention Recommendation
Inventories of Property and Equipment , with photographs	P	Retain until superseded by new version. Place a back-up copy in separate buildings or sites. Retain old versions and photographs in Parish Archives.
Invoices and Paid Bills on Capital Expenses (Major Building Construction and Alterations)	30	Transfer to Archives for minimum long-term retention period against future liability claims. Review for archival retention thereafter. <i>See also</i> Accounts Payable, Operational Accounts.
Invoices and Paid Bills , General Operating Accounts	7	Destroy after 7 years or CY + 4 years after audit. <i>See also</i> Invoices and Paid Bills on Capital Expenses.
J		
Journals , General and Special	P	Transfer to Archives.
Journal Entry Sheets	7	Destroy after 7 years.
Journals, Payroll	7	Destroy after 7 years.
L		
Lay Ministry and Leadership Files , annual accumulation of service record	P	Transfer to Archives.
Leases	6	Destroy CY + 6 years after expiration.
Ledgers, General and Special Parish Funds	P	Transfer to Archives.
Ledgers, Subsidiary	10	Retain 10 years and transfer to Parish Archives for review.
Legacies	P	Transfer to Archives.
Lists and Schedules of Subscribers/Donors	P	Transfer to Archives.
Litigation Papers , including claims, decrees, court briefs, substantive correspondence, judgments rendered, memoranda of counsel's opinion	P	Transfer to Archives. Remove and discard non-substantive documentation 3 years after settlement: notes, abstracts, routine duplicate copies and drafts. <i>See also</i> Correspondence, Legal.
Loan Schedules	AU	Retain for life of loan.
M		
Manuals , Operations	AU	Retain until superseded; transfer old version to Parish Archives for review.
Medical Insurance Policies and Claims		See under Insurance.
Memorial Gifts Registers	P	Transfer to Archives.
Minutes of Meetings : Vestry or Council, Official Committees, Agencies, and Organizations	P	Transfer to Archives. Keep on permanent paper or in redundant electronic record keeping systems. Records kept in books should be post bound for efficient retirement. Transfer permanent copy of annual proceedings to Parish Archives after 3 years.
Monthly Reports , Financial	2	Destroy after 2 years.
Mortgage Deeds	P	Transfer to Archives. Keep in safe or comparable secure location.

N		
Newsletters and Bulletins	P	Retain 2 fair copies and transfer to Parish Archives. <i>See also</i> Service Leaflets.
O		
Office Files or Administrative “Central Files” arranged by Subject, Topic, Name, Project Title, or Event)	SR	Transfer to Archives for selective retention. Review annually. Retain for Parish Archives records that document administration, lay and clerical ministry, mission programs, and parish activities. Destroy resource materials, duplicate files, redundant reference files, vendor reference files. <i>See also</i> specific record titles herein for retention periods.
P		
Paid Bills	7	Destroy after 7 years.
Parish Sacramental Registers	P	Transfer to Archives. <i>See also</i> Sacramental Records.
Parochial Reports, National/Diocesan Returns	5	Destroy after 5 years.
Payroll Journals	7	Destroy after 7 years.
Payroll Registers , summary schedule of earnings and deductions and accrued leave time	P	Transfer to Archives. Retain year-end, cumulative, inclusive report on all employees.
Pension Records , Retired Employees, including contributions, schedules, vesting records, and certificates of enrollment	6	Retain for CY + 6 years after termination of benefit payment; destroy thereafter when administrative use ceases. Keep with Personnel Files.
Pension Plans and supporting benefit detail	P	Permanent. Retire previous or superseded plans and retain one copy of the current plan in Archives or a comparable place of safe keeping.
Personnel Files and Records. File arrangement includes separate folders or sections for: Employment History & Status File: includes Employee History and Earnings Summary, job application, job descriptions, appointment letter and/or agreements; change of status notices, Form I-9, Forms W-4, annual attendance and leave time, Church's required training certificates, and sealed background check Medical, Life, and Disability Records (Coverage election forms, medical reports, disability and worker's compensation claims, flexible spending claims, drug screening) Performance Records (Formal appraisals, memos and correspondence, sealed complaint resolution file)	30	Keep individual Personnel Files for 30 years after termination of employment. Transfer inactive files to Archives CY + 1 year after termination of employment for secure safekeeping. A confidential record series, personnel records should be kept in a locked archives room or cabinet. <i>See also</i> Payroll Registers; Volunteers' Files. Maintain all medical records in a separate file folder.

Petty Cash Receipts and Accounts	7	Destroy after 7 years.
Photographs: Parish inventory, physical plant, windows, memorials, and other insurable property	P	Transfer to Archives. Label photo images with dates and description before transfer to Parish Archives.
Pledge Envelopes	1	Destroy CY + 1 year after reconciliation for audit.
Pledge and Plate Receipts: Individual Cards, Tally Sheets, and Journal Entries and Listings	7	Destroy after 7 years or CY + 4 years after audit, or retain listings permanently if summary records have not been kept.
Pledge Registers and Journals, cumulative record of weekly stewardship giving	P	Transfer to Archives. <i>See also</i> Cash Journals, Receipts of Pledge and Plate Offerings.
Policy Statements	P	Transfer to Archives. Retire superseded statements after revision. <i>See also</i> Employee Manuals and Policies.
Profiles, Parish	P	Transfer to Archives.
Project Files, Special Programs and Ministries	P	Transfer to Archives. <i>See also</i> Office Files.
Property Files including copies of deed, title papers, construction and repair history, specifications and drawings, permits, contracts, lease arrangements, and correspondence	SR	Retain unique files permanently; destroy duplicate files after administrative use ceases. Retain sufficient back-up data on contractors and major renovations for future liability protection.
Property Inventories and Schedules	AU	Retain until superseded. Place current copy in Parish Archives for safe keeping; transfer previous versions to Archives for final review.
Property Surveys/Plans		See Real Estate Surveys/Plot Plans below.
Publications, Parish	P	Retain 2 fair copies and transfer to Parish Archives.
Purchase Orders	7	Destroy after 7 years.
R		
Real Estate Surveys/Plots Plans	P	Transfer to Archives.
Receipts, General Accounts	7	Destroy after 7 years.
Records Schedules and Destruction Logs	P	Transfer to Archives.
Resource Files, External Relations including catalogs, sales brochures, common publications, professional literature, clippings & articles on non-parish events, vendor files, Episcopal Church resources	AU	Retain until superseded or until administrative use ceases; review annually and remove outdated material for destruction.

S		
Sacramental Records: Registers of Baptisms, Confirmations, Marriages, and Burials , including membership registers, and records of transfer not entered	P	Transfer to Archives. Transfer full volumes to Parish Archives safe or comparable secure location. A confidential record series.
Sales Slips	7	Destroy after 7 years.
Search Records, Employee	SR	Transfer to Archives for selective retention. Integrate final candidate application to Personnel File; destroy unsuccessful applications CY + 1. A confidential record series.
Sermons	SR	Transfer to Archives for selective retention. Retain full sermons for review; keep printed sermons as part of an archival series. Destroy sermon notes and duplicates.
Service Leaflets	SR	Transfer to Parish Archives for review and sampling, especially if Service Books are not kept.
Service Books and Registers	P	Transfer to Archives.
Service Files, Volunteers		See Volunteers' Files.
Shipping and Freight Receipts	3	Destroy after CY + 3 years.
Specifications for Building and Design, new construction	P	Transfer to Archives. <i>See also</i> Building Plans and Drawings.
Specifications for Service and Sales Contracts, and Minor Repairs	7	Destroy 7 years after completion of transaction.
Statistical Analysis and Reports	SR	Retain until administrative use ceases; review membership, financial, and stewardship analyses for archival value.
Subject Files , including central administrative office files	SR	Transfer to Archives for selective retention: review annually and retain permanent records interfiled in office accumulations; <i>See also</i> Office Files.
Subsidiary Ledgers	SR	Selective Retention: retain permanent record series.
T		
Tax Forms , Individual Employees: W-2, 1099	7	Destroy after 7 years; confidential record.
Tax Returns/Filings	7	Destroy 7 years after filing provided no action is pending.
Tax-exempt Certificates/ Form 990	P	Transfer to Archives.
Time Sheets	3	Destroy after CY + 3 years.
Title Certificates and Search Papers	P	Transfer to Archives.
Trial Balances, Closing	7	Destroy after 7 years.
Trust Fund Files	SR	Transfer to Archives for selective retention. Retain copies of conditions, restrictions, legal opinions, and summary distribution history permanently; retain distribution notices and courtesy correspondence for 7 years.
Trust Fund Registers	P	Transfer to Archives.

V		
Volunteers' Files	30	Treat as Personnel Files. Transfer to Parish Archives for long term retention after CY + 1. Volunteer Files are a cumulative record of annual parish service, including positions held, evidence of required training, policy acknowledgment, performance, and incident reports. <i>See also</i> Personnel Records and Files.
Vouchers	7	Destroy after 7 years or CY + 4 years after audit.
W		
Warranties	AU	Retain until expiration of warranty.
Wills, Testaments, and Codicils	P	Transfer to Archives.
Workers Compensation Claims and Filings	7	Destroy 7 years after filing or settlement of claims whichever occurs later.

Appendix-1: Sample Records Destruction Register

**Trinity Episcopal Church
Records Destruction Register**

<p>This register is a log of all records set aside for destruction as previously scheduled in accordance with the approved parish records retention schedule and after final review for legal, administrative and fiscal controls, and archival retention.</p>			Approval Signatures				
			Sr. Warden: _____ Date _____		Parish Administrator: _____ Date _____		
Box Unique Reference No.	Record Title or Series/Content Notes	Box Count	Trash or Shred	Location	Retention Schedule No.	Destruction Date	Initials -- Contents verified
8-9	Treasurer's Paid Bills, 2015, vendor file A-Z	2	T	Basement-Caged Area	2010 ver.- # 2	1/20/22	
12-13	Paid Bills, 2016, copies filed by account number	2	T	Basement-Caged Area	2010 ver.- # 5	1/20/2023	
15	Employee Time Sheets, 06/2017 to 12/2017 (boxes wrapped in duct tape 5 old Banker's boxes)	1	S	Room II - Trash Pile	2010 ver.- # 17	1/20/2021	

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