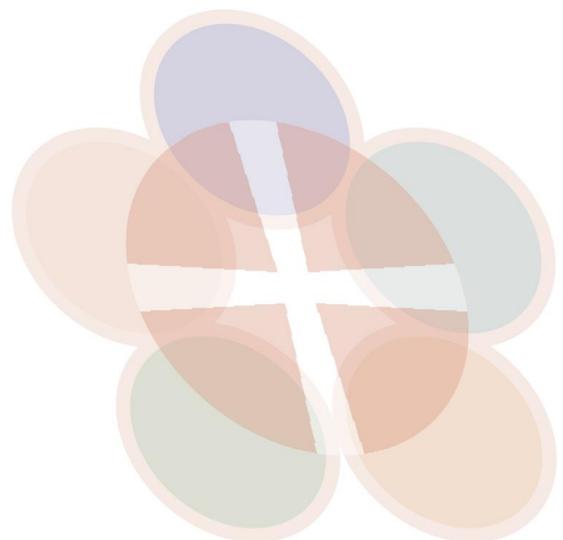




The **Methodist** Church

Guidance of Best Practice in Retaining Records



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The purpose of this document

This short guide is intended to provide churches, circuits and districts with brief practical notes for managing records. The information in this guide has been taken from the National Archives; The Methodist Church's Connexional Archives Liaison Officer and various best practice sources on the internet. We acknowledge the guidance of the Church of England Record Centre on some of the concepts explained in this document. *(Usage is to be confirmed)*

You will be confident to distinguish between records which ought to be kept permanently or safely dispose of the ones that are no longer required for business purposes.



What is a Record?

A Record is information created or received by the Methodist Church that provides evidence of, and information on our activities. In some cases this will be legal evidence. Each individual **document** is not necessarily a **record**. Traditionally, records were held in paper format but are now increasingly created in electronic systems such as word processing, spreadsheets, databases and email software.

Records are also essential for good pastoral care and safeguarding practice and for vital transmission of information to others.

A record will have been used also to form the basis of a decision and are often if practical information and intended for use otherwise we should question the need for retaining it. Examples of useful information likely to be reused: Name/Address/Date of Birth/Health/Qualifications/experience/Salary/NI No/etc some of which is personal and sensitive especially if relating to employment: progress review/performance/financial/and for a Church can be very sensitive i.e. for management and use e.g. children/safety.

"The main point in having records is not that 'they will be interesting to posterity' but that they are of administrative, financial and/or legal relevance to what has been decided; or what has been done in carrying out a decision; or what has been the united exercise of a meeting in attempting to deal with a subject." *"Your meeting's records"* Quaker Books, 2004.

What is Record Management?

Records management is the systematic control of an organisation's records, throughout their life cycle, in order to meet operational needs, statutory and fiscal requirements, and the requirements of society for transparency and the protection of rights. Effective management of information allows fast, accurate and reliable access to records, ensuring the timely destruction of redundant information and the identification and protection of vital and historically important records.

Why is record management necessary?

Information is every organisation's most basic and essential asset, and in common with any other business asset, recorded information requires effective management.

Without proper organisation the sheer volume of records (whether stored in paper or electronic format) can easily become overwhelming. Many Churches are subject to external regulation; for example in areas of safeguarding children and vulnerable adults, finance, and SW/Dec/10

the preservation and maintenance of our historic buildings; which makes it essential to maintain proper records. Good record keeping, particularly in these areas, demonstrates the Church's wider accountability to Society in relation to its activities and does reflect in part the true complexity and diversity of the Church's activities.

The Church also has theological reasons for managing its records as a testimony of its various activities as part of its continuing witness to Christians, those of other faiths and those of none. As outlined in the report *Personnel files for Ministers (for Methodist Conference 2010)* it is essential as part of our care and responsibility for those who serve the church.



Storage

Store all confidential documents in a safe (where possible) but always in a secure, cool, dry place. If you do store documents or computer discs in your home, they must be filed in a lockable cabinet.

Records should not be stored in your car! See point 7 below in the section Data Protection Act.

Contact your local **district archivist** for further information on environmental conditions such as protection, resources, safeguarding and repair for important documents.

All records created by the Methodist Church are the property of the Methodist Church, and should not be kept by office holders once they have relinquished office. Neither should they be sold. They are deposited in, and not donated to, archives or record offices. Consideration should be given to confidential destruction of unnecessary documents once their purpose for compilation/reference has been fulfilled.



Data Protection Act

The use of personal data collected by the Church is covered by the Data Protection Act 1998, and guidance on data protection is available from

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/29/contents>

And http://www.ico.gov.uk/for_organisations/data_protection.aspx

When considering whether it is essential to share information you should consult the 'Seven golden rules of information sharing' (DCSF guidance).

<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/strategy/deliveringservices1/informationsharing/informationsharing/>



Copyright

Copyright protects the physical expression of ideas, in general, it protects, and it protects the maker of a work from appropriation of their labours by another.

As soon as an idea is given physical form, e.g. a piece of writing, a photograph, Music, a film, a web page, it is protected by copyright.

Copyright law grants to copyright holders certain exclusive rights in relation to their works. They have the right to: copy a work, issue copies to the public, perform show or play it, make adaptations or translations. They also have the right to prevent others

communicating a work to the public by electronic transmission, e.g. broadcasting it or putting it on a website; or making available to the public a recording of a performance by electronic transmission, e.g. putting it on a website.

The Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes (TMCP) holds copyright of all records created by any part of the Church.



Safeguarding

You will have records that are likely to be highly confidential. You should ensure that these are disposed of once the matter has been resolved in line with data protection recommendations.

The Church Council or Circuit Meeting must decide the most appropriate officer to keep all documentation relating to recruitment or other child or vulnerable adult protection securely. (If this is not the minister or superintendent then it should be the administrator or the Church Council Secretary.)

These files must be kept in a locked away by the manse or in the Church office. It is essential to keep accurate records of any concerns, disclosures and allegations relating to children and vulnerable adults.

The Church **must keep securely**:

- A short file or record for each lay member of staff and volunteer including the Form A (both parts) and the confidential declaration.
- Letters of criminal record clearances and ISA registration must be retained securely. [*If supplied* criminal record disclosure certificates must never be duplicated and must be destroyed within 6 months of a recruitment decision being made. Usually these are not supplied by CAS. The applicant's disclosure copy must not be photocopied.] ISA registration details must be retained only for the purposes of checking registration status following expiration of their 3 year validity.
- A dated register of those who have been ISA registered and cleared for criminal record checks, for administrative purposes (such as ensuring renewals, registering an interest with ISA¹, or to provide a quick reference).
- Any communication to or from third parties, e.g. reports made under criminal legislation, about complainants on any matter, correspondence with the police or Social Services and any factual records. Including a signed and dated timeline of the actions taken.
- Legal Documents
- All confidential information and information of a sensitive, privileged, or private nature (to include commercially sensitive information)
- Where copies of minutes, etc. are to be circulated to members of a council of committee, any confidential or sensitive minute of discussions should be omitted from the circulated version.
- Any confidential contract or 'Covenant of Care' agreement (re. The Church and Sex Offenders policy) must be retained by the minister or superintendent for the circuit for 75 years.

¹ Including relevant information to enable employers to 'deregistering an interest' if the person moves on.
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- When disposing of information or files nothing should be destroyed that pertains to allegations or information about harm or a risk of harm to anyone.
- Requirements relating to the retention of files, relating to complaints, record keeping, confidentiality, and related matters are set out in Standing Orders SO 1104 and 1121(7) or procedures under SO111(2A).



Retention Guidelines

Some documents held in the office /admin area would not be appropriate to deposit in the local authority record office. Think about the need to store the document. Would this be useful for future clarification, does it hold historical value? Does this record need to be held under legislation? This process of sorting through documents is called weeding. You weed out the ones that can be destroyed immediately.

If you have minutes of meetings and are aware that the chair or administrator also holds the same minutes, only one copy needs to be retained.

When destroying records, always ensure you use a confidential shredder.

The appendix “Retention Schedules for Methodist Records” lists types of documents you may hold and how long you should keep them for.

Please always refer to your **district archivist** for advice. They will have further advice regarding your local record office and how to deposit there. These should be contacted before you make a deposit. Once files are deposited it is worth remembering that they may take some time to be catalogued on to a system.

Start of Retention period - For correspondence files and where records are maintained in some form of ledger, the retention period should start from the date of the last entry.



Emails and electronic records.

It is essential to have virus protection installed on your computer!

When saving files and emails, remember to name them and save them to a folder that can be easily read in the future to enable a newcomer to understand the subject from the folder name and find the information quickly.

As with paper files, you still need to clear them out and weed them in exactly the same way you would a filing cabinet. You need to have a clear policy on what you keep and for how long. Please contact your **district archivist** for advice.

You should make regular back-ups of files that are saved on your computer. One way of doing this is to buy an external hard drive. They are cheap, reliable and easy to use. Most broadband and email providers now also offer free or cheap online storage of documents including back-ups. If possible, avoid saving only onto memory sticks or flash drives – it isn’t safe or secure.

Naming email – always use the “subject” box to give a proper title to the email that describes what it is about and include a date on the format of year, month and day. Do not reply to a previous email to start a new topic, instead start a new email with its own clear subject heading - it makes it easier to find them later.

Saving email – Church related e-mails you need to keep as part of the corporate information of the church should be treated in the same way as any other electronic or paper record and stored in a way that provides security and access to those who need it.

Requirements set out in Standing Orders.

Standing Order 015 Archives

(1) All minute books, account books, and baptismal, burial and marriage and burial registers, and any other records relating to district, circuit and local church affairs which are deemed worthy of permanent preservation by the district archivist and recipient archivists, when no longer needed for current reference in the conduct of business, shall be deposited on permanent loan with a public authority having the appropriate repository facilities, and the connexional archives liaison officer shall be informed.

(1A) Subject to Standing Order 125, connexional records no longer needed for current use and worthy of permanent preservation shall be deposited on similar terms in the connexional archives. In the process of deciding what records should be so deposited the managing trustees or other persons responsible for them shall obtain and take into account the advice of the Archives and History Committee.

(2) The responsibility for supervising and arranging the deposit of church records shall rest with the responsible supervisor.

(2A) For the purposes of this Standing order 'the responsible supervisor' in relation to local church and circuit records means the Superintendent, in relation to district records means the Chair and in relation to connexional records means the relevant secretary or convenor.

(3) Unless the deposited material has already been made public, and subject to clause (3A) below, there shall be a restriction on access of thirty years from the date of the last entry in the relevant document except where the responsible supervisor for the time being otherwise informs the depositee in writing, either on the occasion of the deposit or subsequently. Any variation may lengthen shorten, remove or suspend the restriction otherwise applicable and maybe general or relate to specific documents or categories of documents or to inspection by specific persons.

(3A) A restriction on access of seventy five years from the date of the last entry in the document shall apply to documents of a confidential nature, including correspondence, papers and machine-readable records containing personal details of a sensitive nature relating to individuals in respect of complaints, disciplinary procedures, interviews, invitations, stationing, pastoral matters, case-studies and assessment files, and the relevant supervisor shall inform the depositee accordingly in writing whenever such records are deposited.

(3B) For the avoidance of doubt records deposited before the 1st September 1994 shall be subject to the provisions of clauses (3) and (3A) above.

(3C) Records deposited on permanent loan may be removed temporarily for display purposes or for legal reasons provided that satisfactory arrangements are made for their safe custody.

(4) Nothing in this Standing Order derogates from the rights and duties of the owners of any records or of the managing trustees of any records which are Model Trust property, including their rights of access.

Useful Contacts

Your District Archivist	Please contact Methodist Church House Helpdesk on 020 7486 5502
Methodist Church House	Methodist Church House 25 Marylebone Road London NW1 5JR 020 7486 5502
Connexional Archives Liaison Officer	To be Appointed Interim contact: Historic archives Jo Hibbard hibbardj@methodistchurch.org.uk Modern Archives wadmans@methodistchurch.org.uk
Further Advice	Dr. Gareth Lloyd John Rylands University Library, Manchester. M3 3EH 0161 834 5343
Government advice and information guidance	http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/
Information Commissioner	Information Commissioner's Head Office Wycliffe House Water Lane Wilmslow Cheshire SK9 5AF Tel: 0303 123 1113 Fax: 01625 524510 http://www.ico.gov.uk/

