

ASSEMBLY COUNCIL

(A&P 2016, p. 207–09)

APPENDIX G

ARCHIVES AND RECORDS MANAGEMENT

G–1 Purpose of the Archives

1. The Presbyterian Church in Canada Archives (“Archives”) is the designated records repository for the denomination. The Archives is located at the national office, 50 Wynford Drive, Toronto, Ontario. The policies of the Archives are approved by the Assembly Council and the day to day operations of the Archives are the responsibility of the Principal Clerk through the Archives staff.
 1. The Archives maintains the corporate memory (activities and decisions) of The Presbyterian Church in Canada by acquiring, arranging, describing and preserving the archival records of the denomination, ie. those records, regardless of media, that have significant and enduring administrative, financial, legal and historical value.
 2. Records held in the Archives are accessible to church staff, and the church-at-large, to assist with the ongoing work of The Presbyterian Church in Canada and to the general public as an important historical research collection.
 3. The Archives also provides a direct records management service for the national office of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, and records management advice and resources for the church-at-large.
 4. The Archives will oversee the archival needs, both physical and operational, of the church and to recommend such measures as may be deemed advisable to advance the preservation and use of records of enduring value including advice on approved digital formats.

G–2 Archives Collection Mandate

1. The Archives will consider the following for deposit and retention:
 1. Records of the General Assembly, its boards and committees, and all other national office departments
 2. Records of presbyteries
 3. Records of synods
 4. Records of dissolved congregations
 5. Records of active congregations – in microfilm or approved digital format
 6. Records of persons significant to the history of The Presbyterian Church in Canada (ie. personal papers)
 7. Records of colleges of The Presbyterian Church in Canada
 8. Records of special media, including: photographic materials, audio-visual materials, architectural plans and drawings
2. The Archives reserves the right to accept or decline records transferred to it. Material that is not considered suitable for the Archives will be returned or destroyed at the option of the donor.

G–3 Ownership of Records

1. Records generated by all courts of The Presbyterian Church in Canada remain the property in perpetuity of the said courts, or their legal successors. Records are not the property of individual church officials.
2. When congregations, presbyteries and synods are amalgamated, the records of such bodies become the property of the amalgamated body.
3. When a congregation is dissolved, the presbytery clerk shall assume responsibility for collection of the records and transfer the appropriate records to the Archives for deposit (contact the Archives for a list of these records). The presbytery has the option of depositing these records in an alternate repository (see G–3.4).
4. If church court records are deposited in an alternate repository, a formal deposit agreement must be signed by both parties, with a copy of the agreement sent to The Presbyterian Church in Canada Archives (a sample Deposit Agreement form can be obtained from the Archives). This deposit agreement must ensure that certain conditions are met, including ownership of the records remaining with The Presbyterian Church in Canada. A microfilm or approved digital copy of the records must also be made and sent to The

Presbyterian Church in Canada Archives. In the case of congregational records (including records of dissolved congregations) only the session minutes and church registers are required to be copied.

5. For personal papers to be deposited, a Deed of Gift form must be signed by the donor. This form includes the transfer of ownership of records to The Presbyterian Church in Canada.
6. It is the responsibility of the clerk of the court to make recommendation to the proper court for the safekeeping of all the records of that court. This includes making regular back-ups of digital records to ensure their safety and security.

G–4 Deposit of Records in the Archives

1. The Archives will accept material that complies with its Collection Mandate (see G–2.1). The Archives retains the right to cull material, normally in consultation with the donor in order that only records with archival value are deposited in the Archives.
2. All congregations should arrange for the microfilming and/or digitizing of their session minutes and church registers. The microfilm and/or approved digital copy is deposited in the Archives for preservation and reference purposes as needed, and the originals are returned to the congregation. Additional congregational records may also be copied. The Archivist can provide advice on the preparation of approved digital copies.
3. Presbyteries and synods are encouraged to deposit their minutes (in original, microfilm and/or approved digital format), reports and commission records with the Archives. As well, presbyteries should regularly send their copy minutes to the Archives.
4. A “no mould” policy is in effect in the Archives. This policy addresses records where there is physical evidence of either mould or mildew. In such cases, it is necessary to arrange with Archives staff to have records professionally cleaned at the relevant court’s expense prior to deposit in the Archives. It is imperative that records are consistently well maintained and kept in a secure, stable environment by all respective courts.
5. No records deposited in the Archives from whatever source may be loaned or removed from the premises for any reason without the express permission of the Archivist/Records Administrator.

G–5 Access and Restrictions for Records in the Archives

1. Records deposited in the Archives are normally on open access. For privacy concerns, specific records have access restrictions:
 1. Session minutes less than 50 years old are restricted and cannot be viewed without a letter of permission from the session. Session minutes more than 50 years old are on open access.
 2. Personnel/personal information files are restricted for the most recent 75 years.
 3. Records of special commissions and committees are not restricted unless otherwise specified by the depositing court.
 4. Baptismal records less than 100 years old are restricted. An individual may request a copy of their own baptismal record, as can a parent of the individual if they are noted on the record. Next of kin, ie. spouse, common-law partner, parent, child or sibling, may request a copy of a deceased person’s baptismal record. An authorized representative, ie. an estate trustee, an executor or administrator, a person with power of attorney, or a legal guardian, may also request a copy. Copies will be provided by Archives’ staff in the form of a transcript, or as a photocopy if appropriate. Baptismal records more than 100 years old are on open access.
 5. Marriage records less than 75 years old are restricted. Either bride or groom may request a copy of their marriage record. If either the bride or groom is deceased, then a parent, child or sibling of either the bride or groom may request a copy. An authorized representative, ie. an estate trustee, an executor or administrator, a person with power of attorney, or a legal guardian, may also request a copy. Copies will be provided by Archives’ staff in the form of a transcript, or as a photocopy if appropriate. Marriage records more than 75 years old are on open access.
 6. Death/Burial records less than 75 years old are restricted. Next of kin, ie. spouse, common-law-partner, parent, child or sibling, may request a copy of an individual’s death/burial record. An authorized

representative, ie. an estate trustee, an executor or administrator, a person with power of attorney, or a legal guardian, may also request a copy. Copies will be provided by Archives' staff in the form of a transcript, or as a photocopy if appropriate. Death/burial records more than 75 years old are on open access.

7. The Archivist/Records Administrator retains the right to refuse access to specific material on the authority of the Principal Clerk.
2. In the event that documents are required from any agency of the General Assembly by police or other governmental agencies, the Principal Clerk has final granting authority.

Contact the Archives at presbyterian.ca/archives for further information and assistance regarding your church records.

Recommendation No. 3 (adopted, p. 25)
That Book of Forms Appendix G as presented above be approved.