

Guidelines for Parish and Mission Archives

Parish and mission archives should be kept in a secure space. Registers should be kept in a fire proof filing cabinet or safe. It is recommended that a member of the congregation be appointed as the archivist who is responsible for organizing and maintaining the archives. Acid-free file folders and storage boxes should be used. One excellent source is the Hollinger Corporation (www.hollingercorp.com)

Listed here are the most important types of documents that should be housed in a parish or mission archives. Please consult the document, "Records Management for Congregations: a manual for Episcopal parishes and missions," prepared by the staff of the Archives of the Episcopal Church for a comprehensive description of records management including electronic records.

Vestry/Bishop Committee minutes

Annual meeting minutes

Incorporation papers

Bylaws

Deeds

Instruments of donations (Bequest and Estate papers)

Consecration of church buildings

Building plans

Inventory of property and equipment, with photographs

Personnel files and Records

Correspondence files (retain substantive correspondence permanently; destroy routine correspondence after five years)

Financial:

Audit reports

Balance sheets, annual

Budgets, approved and revised

Special fundraising subscriptions

Cemetery and columbarium internments

Financial statements, Annual

Historical:

Records of parish committees and organizations

Photo images

Newsletters and parish publications

Directories

Audio and video recordings

Special events and project files

Service bulletins (selective: Christmas, Ash Wednesday, Palm Sunday, Good Friday, Easter, Pentecost and fifteen or twenty other Sunday services. Also service bulletins for funerals)

Sermons (selective retention)

Material culture and art objects including stained glass windows, altar vessels and old vestments. These should be catalogued and photographed.

Electronic Records:

As noted above "Records Management for Congregations" includes electronic records. The Archives of the Episcopal Church also has prepared the following document, "E-Records – FAQs and Recommendations for Parishes and Dioceses." It is important for parishes and missions to appoint a qualified person to establish official retention schedules and to maintain a schedule for tracking these records. All records should be backed up on a server. These electronic records should be organized in "directories" or "folders". These directories or folders should be organized the same way the paper files are organized in the parish or mission archives. An archive section for electronic publications should be created on the server.