



Messiah Lutheran Church

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Records Retention Policy

Purpose

Messiah Lutheran Church (hereafter "the congregation") recognizes that most records retained by a congregation for its daily operation, legal protection, financial security, and responsibility to history fit into one of the categories below. For the well-being of the congregation, each type of record has a specific life cycle and needs appropriate care. The purpose of this policy is define those types of records and appropriate care in line with the current edition of the *Records Retention Schedule for Congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*.

The responsibility for maintenance of each type of record is described and bolded in the "Care of Records" columns of this document.

Parish Register

<i>Description</i>	<i>Care of Records</i>	<i>Final Disposition</i>
<p>The Parish Register includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baptisms • Confirmations • Marriages • Funerals • Pastors of the congregation • ELCA-rostered lay workers • Other professional lay workers of the congregation such as choir directors and organists • Roster of officers of the congregation 	<p>The parish register is a permanent record and requires the utmost care. The parish register is a hard- copy record and should be kept in a fire-proof safe. You may use a computer program for managing the parish register in the administration of your congregation. This database itself does not constitute a parish register.</p> <p>According to the <i>ELCA Model Constitution for Congregations</i>, the Pastor is responsible for ensuring the maintenance of the parish register. At Messiah, this means the pastor oversees the Parish Administrator's maintenance of this record.</p>	<p>Place old parish registers in a fire-proof safe in the congregation's archives, or in a bank safe-deposit box.</p>

Legal and Vital Records

<i>Description</i>	<i>Care of Records</i>	<i>Final Disposition</i>
<p>Vital legal and property related documents include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charter or articles of incorporation • Constitution, bylaws, and continuing resolutions • Deeds, titles, surveys, leases, mortgages, easements, and blueprints, construction drawings • Insurance policies (current and retired) • Copies of letters of call to the pastors and ELCA rostered church workers • Documentation creating endowment funds and for bequests, gifts, and endowments 	<p>Secure these documents by placing them in a fire-proof safe or maintaining copies in an off-site location.</p> <p>Keep the constitution current and send a copy to the synod for approval.</p> <p>Responsibility for maintenance of these records lies with the Pastor, the Parish Administrator, Presider and Secretary.</p>	<p>Place in the congregation's archives.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minutes of regular and special congregational meetings • Minutes of the congregation council and its executive committee 	<p>Responsibility for maintenance of these records lies with the Pastor and Secretary.</p>	<p>Place in the congregation's archives.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tax-exempt status reports and documentation or the congregation's nine-digit federal employer identification 	<p>Responsibility for maintenance of these records lies with the Parish Administrator and Budget & Finance Chair.</p>	<p>Place in the congregation's archives</p>

Financial Records

<i>Description</i>	<i>Care of Records</i>	<i>Final Disposition</i>
<p>You may have a financial management database that handles all of your accounting transactions. Retention of financial records refers to hard-copy documents.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual audit reports • Treasurer's annual report to the congregation 	<p>Preserve permanent records in hard copy.</p> <p>The audit report, treasurer's annual report, and the annual budget approved by the congregation should be part of the minutes of the congregation's annual meeting.</p>	<p>Place in the congregation's archives.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budget approved by the congregation 	<p>Responsibility for maintenance of these records lies with the Secretary, the Parish Administrator and the Audit Chair.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investments in asset management Canceled checks or copies of canceled checks Bank reconciliations Payroll administration records such as W-2, W-4 forms and payroll registers Cash receipt journals Record of member giving 	<p>The IRS mandates that you preserve these records for four years. For administrative purposes, you may wish to keep these records for seven years.</p> <p>All records related to congregational spending are open. All records related to member giving are confidential and should be secured.</p> <p>Responsibility for maintenance of these records lies with the Treasurer, the Financial Secretary and when related to personnel matters, the Personnel Chair.</p>	<p>Whether maintained as paper or electronic files, destroy these records at the end of the retention period.</p>

Information on Persons

<i>Description</i>	<i>Care of Records</i>	<i>Final Disposition</i>
<p>Files containing some or all of these documents may exist for the pastor, other rostered persons, employees, registered seminary students, and volunteers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Letters of call Letters of employment Letters of application Job descriptions Resumes Correspondence Honors and clippings Emergency notification forms Health-related documents, such as worker's compensation 	<p>Right to privacy laws dictate that these files must be held in strictest confidence, However, the file must be made available to the employee upon request. Keep this file locked at all times.</p> <p>Responsibility for maintenance of these records lies with Archives Chair and Personnel Chair.</p> <p>1. If information, including background checks and letters of recommendation, attest to the employee or volunteer's fitness to fulfill a responsibility or</p>	<p>Place biographical information and career history for the congregation's staff in the congregation's archives.</p> <p>Shred either upon completion of service or after 50 years, as noted to left</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letters of recommendation • Background and reference checks • Performance appraisals and letters of discipline • Contracts • Continuing education documentation • Documents related to compensation and benefits 	<p>perform a service, it should be retained for 50 years after completion of service.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. If information relates to a worker's compensation or other claim by the employee, this should be retained until the matter is resolved. 3. If the information relates to a possible claim or lawsuit by others involving the employee's conduct or duties, it should be retained in the synod office or under controlled access in the synod or regional archives for 50 years after completion of service. 4. As required, the file for a seminary student is sent to the seminary after he or she has signed for its release. It is not preserved in the congregation. <p>Responsibility for maintenance of these records lies with the Personnel Chair, the Pastor and the Safe Church Team.</p>	
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Pastoral Care Files

<i>Description</i>	<i>Care of Records</i>	<i>Final Disposition</i>
<p>When the pastor, or other authorized staff member, provides pastoral care to parishioners, such as marriage counseling or personal spiritual direction, the pastor may create a file containing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Date and time of consultation • Persons present • Observation notes • Tests, such as personality inventories • Correspondence 	<p>The pastor, or other authorized staff member, must use good judgment in establishing the nature of each relationship and in creating documentation of it.</p> <p>The principle of confessional confidences, which applies to all ordained ministers of this church, is specified by ELCA churchwide constitutional provision (7.45.) These files must be kept locked and in strictest confidence as they involve a relationship at the highest level of trust and are</p>	<p>An understanding of the nature of a particular pastoral care relationship will determine the appropriate disposition of its records.</p>

	<p>usually subject to the clergy and penitent privilege.</p> <p>The parishioner should sign a release if any information is to leave the file at any time.</p> <p><i>In all states, suspected cases of child abuse are required to be reported to the authorities. It is policy at Messiah Lutheran Church that all rostered leaders will act as mandated reporters.</i></p> <p>Responsibility for maintenance of these records lies with Pastor.</p>	
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Correspondence

<i>Description</i>	<i>Care of Records</i>	<i>Final Disposition</i>
<p>The pastor, staff and lay leaders may have important correspondence of various types:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ex-officio as chief executive officer of the congregation • Correspondence to and from officers of the congregation and the bishop of the synod • Personal correspondence 	<p>E-mail is especially vulnerable to loss. E-mail that represents the policies, program, and ongoing life of the congregation should be printed out.</p> <p>Responsibility for maintenance of these records lies with those who have created the records.</p>	<p>Place only letters that describe the program and ongoing life of the congregation in the congregation's archives.</p>

Programmatic Material

<i>Description</i>	<i>Care of Records</i>	<i>Final Disposition</i>
<p>These materials produced by the congregation to assist its programs and promote its activity, document the life of the parish and tell the congregation's story:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Congregation histories • Membership directories, including picture directories on computer disc 	<p>Today, all of these documents are created— and may be used— electronically but are preserved as paper documents. It is inevitable that hardware, software, and file formats will change.</p>	<p>Place in the congregation's archives.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newsletters • News releases • Program and training material produced by the congregation • Audio and visual materials such as photographs of the congregation 	<p>Use quality photographic paper to print out copies of pictures for the congregation's archives.</p> <p>Responsibility for maintenance of these records lies with the Archives Chair, the Pastor and Parish Administrator.</p>	
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