

# Archives and Records Management Policy

The First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ  
444 East Broad Street  
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## **Purpose**

This policy defines principles and standards for the management and retention of records which form the foundation for the archives of The First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, Columbus, Ohio. It provides a framework for other directives, procedures, and retention schedules that pertain to specific types of Church records and record keeping practices.

## **Policy Statement**

The records of the First Congregational Church, UCC are valuable assets that contain information pertaining to the Church's mission, initiatives, activities, operations, heritage, and legacy. This information contributes significantly to the Church's organizational continuity and operational efficiency. Stewardship of information assets is an important responsibility for the congregation and particularly for those who are the Church record-keepers. Records with lasting legal or operational value or those that document the Church's history and accomplishments must be identified, preserved and made accessible. Other records are to be discarded in an orderly manner when no longer needed.

## **Definition of Church Records**

Church records include any and all recorded information that is created, received, or maintained by the Church's ministers, employees, officers, council, commissions, committees, deacons, trustees, delegates, ad hoc committees, and any other organized groups of the Church in the course of Church business that relate in any way to the Church's mission, goals, objectives, organization, initiatives, operations, activities, heritage, or legacy.

This definition of church records encompasses both originals and copies of recorded information in all formats and media, including but not necessarily limited to:

- Paper documents, including office documents, engineering drawings, architectural plans, and maps
- Photographic films and prints
- Microfilm, microfiche, aperture cards, or other microform media
- Computer files and databases stored on magnetic or optical media
- Audio recordings
- Video recordings

This definition of Church records encompasses notes, working papers, and drafts of documents that are created, received, or maintained in any format or media.

### **Ownership of Church Records**

All records created, received, or maintained by the Church in relation to the Church's mission, goals, objectives, organization, initiatives, operations, activities, heritage, or legacy are Church property. No Church employee, officer, or member, has by virtue of their position, any personal or property interest in such records, even though they may be named as the author, recipient, or custodian of them.

Records developed in the course of the church's ministry are the property of the church. This includes material such as lists of members or participants in church programs and letters written by persons acting in an official capacity for the church. Personal information about church members, including their addresses and telephone numbers, is maintained for use in official church functions only.

### **Official Record Copy**

The official record copy, which serves the documentary needs of the church, is, in most cases, a printed copy and often referred to as a "hard copy." This means that the document is printed on paper and filed accordingly. The Church has designated a paper document to be the official record copy for most retention purposes. Electronic media records are expected to become prevalent as official records. Official record copies are not necessarily original records. They may be photocopies, for example. The Church does not always have original records to serve as official copies. As in the case of outgoing correspondence, where the original is sent to the addressee and the writer retains a copy.

### **Retention Standards**

All Church records must be retained and disposed of in accordance with the following standards:

- The Church's Records Retention Schedule for each record series specifies how long specific types of records are to be kept for legal reasons, to satisfy the Church operational requirements, and to document the Church's values, history, and accomplishments.
- The Church's records retention policies and practices will comply fully with all applicable laws and regulations. The Church will make and keep adequate records to document its compliance with all applicable laws and regulations.
- Where the same information exists in multiple copies, the Church's retention schedules designate one copy as the official copy to satisfy the stated retention requirements. The schedule lists records by department or other functional groupings. Unless otherwise specified, the official copy is held by the office that corresponds to the functional group under which the record is listed in the schedule. All other copies are considered duplicate records.

- The Church will never alter or destroy records that must be kept for pending or ongoing litigation, government investigations, tax audits, or other legal actions until those matters are resolved. Under those circumstances, any normally scheduled destruction will be suspended until the Church's lawyer/auditor/accountant/committee has resolved the matter.
- Records will be destroyed promptly when the time periods specified in the Church's retention schedules elapse in order to reduce the cost of storing, indexing, and handling the large quantity of records that would otherwise accumulate. Destruction of all Church records will be arranged through the Archivist and the Archives and Records Management Committee.
- The records will be destroyed in a manner appropriate to the contents of the records and to the media on which the records are made. Safety and security are required elements of the destruction process.
- The Church will take all reasonable precautions and prudent actions to identify and safeguard records that are vital to the Church's mission, goals, objectives, organization, initiatives, operations, activities, heritage, or legacy.
- Privacy and security of Church records must be appropriately assured.

The Church's Records Retention Schedules are completed by the record originator in consultation with the Archives and Records Management Committee and Archivist and may also require review by legal and financial advisors. Records schedules are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure they are current, They may be updated if necessary as new or special conditions arise. The foregoing retention standards apply to any and all records that are created, received, or maintained by office, committees, groups, ministers, and also apply to Church records that may be maintained in the homes of employees or officers or other offsite locations. The Church intends to provide storage for active records so few records are maintained in homes and offsite locations.

### **Responsibility for Records Management Program**

The Archivist and Archives and Records Management Committee are responsible for establishing, implementing and maintaining the Church's Archives and Records Management Program, including comprehensive retention schedules that are based on the standards delineated above. The ultimate authority and responsibility for the Church records management program resides with Church Council which is guided by recommendations of the Archivist and Archives and Records Management Committee, Secretary of the Church, and legal counsel.

## **Compliance**

All Church ministers, employees, officers, council, commissions, committees, deacons, trustees, delegates, ad hoc committees, and any other organized groups of the Church must comply fully and consistently with this policy for all Church records in their custody or under their supervisory control. Retention schedules will be implemented, and obsolete records discarded, at the earliest practical opportunity as outlined in the Archives and Records Management manual and directives.

## **Exclusions**

The following information-bearing objects are not considered records and, as such, are specifically excluded from the Church's retention policy:

- Books, periodicals, catalogs, and other publications or library materials acquired solely for reference purposes
- Memorabilia and museum materials acquired solely for exhibition
- Unused or undistributed stocks of church publications
- Blank business forms
- Unused copies of form letters
- Unsolicited brochures, flyers, advertisements, mass mailings, e-mail messages, or other records that are unrelated to Church business
- Personal papers of Church employees (i.e., papers of a private nature that pertain solely to an employee's personal activities and interests and have no relationship to the employee's assigned duties or to the Church's mission, goals, objectives, organization, initiatives, operations, activities, heritage, or legacy)

## **Interpretation**

Questions about interpretation of this policy or the Church's record retention schedules and any related directives, procedures, or guidelines may be directed to the Archivist.