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# RECORD RETENTION POLICY

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**FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION**

General Council on Finance and Administration

THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

# RECORD RETENTION AND DESTRUCTION POLICY

## 1) PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that necessary records and documents are adequately protected and maintained and to ensure that records that are no longer needed are discarded at the proper time. This policy is also for the purpose of aiding staff and volunteers, so that they have an understanding of their obligations in retaining electronic documents - including e-mail, web files, text files, sound and movie files, PDF documents, and all Microsoft Office or other formatted files.

## 2) ADMINISTRATION

The attached Appendix A is a Record Retention Schedule that is approved as the initial maintenance, retention and disposal schedule for physical records and the retention and disposal of electronic documents. The Administrator is the officer/person in charge of the administration of this policy and the implementation of processes and procedures to ensure that the Record Retention Schedule is followed. The Administrator is also authorized to: make modifications to the Record Retention Schedule from time-to-time to ensure that it is in compliance with local, state and federal laws and includes the appropriate document and record categories; monitor local, state and federal laws affecting record retention; annually review the record retention and disposal program; and monitor compliance with this policy.

## 3) SUSPENSION OF RECORD DISPOSAL IN EVENT OF LITIGATION OR CLAIMS

In the event the organization/church is served with any subpoena or request for documents or any staff/volunteer becomes aware of a governmental investigation or audit concerning the church/organization or the commencement of any litigation against or concerning the church/organization, the staff/volunteer shall inform the Administrator and any further disposal of documents shall be suspended until such time as the Administrator, with the advice of counsel, determines otherwise. The Administrator shall take such steps as is necessary to promptly inform all staff of any suspension in the further disposal of documents.

## 4) APPLICABILITY

This policy applies to all physical records generated in the course of operation, including both original documents and reproductions. It also applies to the electronic documents described above.

This policy was approved by the Church Council of {Name of church} on {Date}.

## APPENDIX A - RECORD RETENTION SCHEDULE

The Record Retention Schedule is organized as follows:

### SECTION TOPIC

- A. Accounting and Finance
- B. Contracts
- C. Corporate Records
- D. Correspondence and Internal Memoranda
- E. Electronic Documents
- F. Grant Records
- G. Insurance Records
- H. Legal Files and Papers
- I. Miscellaneous
- J. Payroll Documents
- K. Pension Documents
- L. Personnel Records
- M. Property Records
- N. Tax Records
- O. Contribution Records
- P. Programs & Services Records
- Q. Fiscal Sponsor Project Records

### A. ACCOUNTING AND FINANCE

RECORD TYPE	RETENTION PERIOD
Accounts Payable ledgers and schedules	7 years
Accounts Receivable ledgers and schedules	7 years
Annual Audit Reports and Financial Statements	Permanent
Annual Audit Records, including work papers and other documents that relate to the audit	7 years after completion of audit
Annual Plans and Budgets	2 years
Bank Statements and Canceled Checks	7 years

RECORD TYPE	RETENTION PERIOD
Employee Expense Reports	7 years
General Ledgers	Permanent
Interim Financial Statements	7 years
Notes Receivable ledgers and schedules	7 years
Investment Records	7 years after sale of investment
Credit card records (documents showing customer credit card number)	2 years

### 1. CREDIT CARD RECORD RETENTION AND DESTRUCTION

A credit card may be used to pay for the following products and services: {Insert types of products/ services here as approved by the church council, Trustees, and/or Finance Committee of the church}.

All records showing customer credit card number must be locked in a desk drawer or a file cabinet when not in immediate use by staff.

If it is determined that information on a document, which contains credit card information, is necessary for retention beyond 2 years, then the credit card number should be cut out of the document.

## B. CONTRACTS

RECORD TYPE	RETENTION PERIOD
Contracts and Related Correspondence (including any proposal that resulted in the contract and all other supportive documentation)	7 years after expiration or termination

## C. CORPORATE RECORDS

RECORD TYPE	RETENTION PERIOD
Corporate Records (minute books, signed minutes of the Board and all committees, corporate seals, articles of incorporation, bylaws, annual corporate reports)	Permanent
Licenses and Permits	Permanent

## D. CORRESPONDENCE AND INTERNAL MEMORANDA

**GENERAL PRINCIPLE:** Most correspondence and internal memoranda should be retained for the same period as the document they pertain to or support. For instance, a letter pertaining to a particular contract would be retained as long as the contract (7 years after expiration). It is recommended that records that support a particular project be kept with the project and take on the retention time of that particular project file.

Correspondence or memoranda that do not pertain to documents having a prescribed retention period should generally be discarded sooner. These may be divided into two general categories:

1. Those pertaining to routine matters and having no significant, lasting consequences should be discarded within two years. Some examples include:
  - Routine letters and notes that require no acknowledgment or follow up, such as notes of appreciation, congratulations, letters of transmittal, and plans for meetings.
  - Form letters that require no follow up.
  - Letters of general inquiry and replies that complete a cycle of correspondence.
  - Letters or complaints requesting specific action that have no further value after changes are made or action taken (such as name or address change).
  - Other letters of inconsequential subject matter or that definitely close correspondence to which no further reference will be necessary.
  - Chronological correspondence files.

Please note that copies of interoffice correspondence and documents where a copy will be in the originating department file should be read and destroyed, unless that information provides reference to or direction to other documents and must be kept for project traceability.

2. Those pertaining to non routine matters or having significant lasting consequences should generally be retained permanently.

## E. ELECTRONIC DOCUMENTS

1. **ELECTRONIC MAIL:** Not all emails need to be retained. It will depend on the subject matter.
  - All e-mail—from internal or external sources—is to be deleted after 12 months.
  - Staff will strive to keep all but an insignificant minority of their e-mail related to business issues.
  - {Insert Name of Organization} will archive e-mail for six months after the staff has deleted it, after which time the e-mail will be permanently deleted.
  - All {Insert Name of Organization} business-related email should be downloaded to a service center or user directory on the server.

- Staff will not store or transfer {Insert Name of Organization}-related e-mail on non-work-related computers except as necessary or appropriate for {Insert Name of Organization} purposes.
- Staff will take care not to send confidential/proprietary {Insert Name of Organization} information to outside sources.
- Staff with more than 500MB in their e-mail account will be unable to send or receive messages until the size of their account is reduced. Staff will be notified by {Insert Responsible Department} as their account size approaches 500 MB.
- Any e-mail staff deems vital to the performance of their job should be copied to the staff's personal drive folder, and printed and stored in the employee's workspace.

**2. ELECTRONIC DOCUMENTS:** including Microsoft Office Suite and PDF files. Retention also depends on the subject matter.

- PDF documents – The length of time that a PDF file should be retained should be based upon the content of the file and the category under the various sections of this policy. The maximum period that a PDF file should be retained is 6 years. PDF files the employee deems vital to the performance of his or her job should be printed and stored in the employee's workspace.
- Text/formatted files - Staff will conduct annual reviews of all text/formatted files (e.g., Microsoft Word documents) and will delete all those they consider unnecessary or outdated. After five years, all text files will be deleted from the network and the staff's desktop/laptop. Text/formatted files the staff deems vital to the performance of their job should be printed and stored in the staff's workspace.

**3. WEB PAGE FILES:** Internet Cookies

- All workstations: Your internet browsers should be scheduled to delete Internet cookies once per month.

{Insert Name of Organization} does not automatically delete electronic files beyond the dates specified in this policy. It is the responsibility of all staff to adhere to the guidelines specified in this policy.

Each day {Insert Name of Organization} will run a tape backup copy of all electronic files (including email) on {Insert Name of Organization}'s servers, as specified in the {Insert Name of Organization} Disaster Recovery Plan. This backup tape is a safeguard to retrieve lost information within a one-year retrieval period should documents on the network experience problems. The tape backup copy is considered a safeguard for the record retention system of {Insert Name of Organization}, but is not considered an official repository of {Insert Name of Organization} records. All monthly and yearly tapes are stored offsite according to {Insert Name of Organization}'s Disaster Recovery Policy.

In certain cases a document will be maintained in both paper and electronic form. In such cases the official document will be the electronic document.

## F. GRANT RECORDS

### RECORD TYPE

Original grant proposal

### RETENTION PERIOD

7 years after completion of grant period

Grant agreement and subsequent modifications,  
if applicable

7 years after completion of grant period

All requested IRS/grantee correspondence including  
determination letters and "no change" in exempt status  
letters

7 years after completion of grant period

Final grantee reports, both financial and narrative

7 years after completion of grant period

All evidence of returned grant funds

7 years after completion of grant period

All pertinent formal correspondence including opinion  
letters of counsel

7 years after completion of grant period

Report assessment forms

7 years after completion of grant period

Documentation relating to grantee evidence of invoices  
and matching or challenge grants that would support  
grantee compliance with the grant agreement

7 years after completion of grant period

Pre-grant inquiry forms and other documentation for  
expenditure responsibility grants

7 years after completion of grant period

Grantee work product produced with the grant funds

7 years after completion of grant period

## G. INSURANCE RECORDS

### RECORD TYPE

Annual Loss Summaries

### RETENTION PERIOD

10 years

Audits and Adjustments

3 years after final adjustment

Certificates Issued to {Insert Name of Organization}

Permanent

**RECORD TYPE**

Claims Files (including correspondence, medical records, injury documentation, etc.)

Group Insurance Plans – Active Employees

Group Insurance Plans – Retirees

Inspections

Insurance Policies (including expired policies)

Journal Entry Support Data

Loss Runs

Releases and Settlements

**RETENTION PERIOD**

Permanent

Until Plan is amended or terminated

Permanent or until 6 years after death of last eligible participant

3 years

Permanent

7 years

10 years

25 years

**H. LEGAL FILES AND PAPERS****RECORD TYPE**

Legal Memoranda and Opinions (including all subject matter files)

Litigation Files

Court Orders

Requests for Departure from Records Retention Plan

**RETENTION PERIOD**

7 years after close of matter

1 year after expiration of appeals or time for filing appeals

Permanent

10 years

**I. MISCELLANEOUS****RECORD TYPE**

Consultant's Reports

Material of Historical Value (including pictures, publications)

**RETENTION PERIOD**

2 years

Permanent



**RECORD TYPE**

Policy and Procedures Manuals – Original

**RETENTION PERIOD**

Current version with revision history

Policy and Procedures Manuals – Copies

Retain current version only

Annual Reports

Permanent

**J. PAYROLL DOCUMENTS****RECORD TYPE**

Employee Deduction Authorizations

**RETENTION PERIOD**

4 years after termination

Payroll Deductions

Termination + 7 years

W-2 and W-4 Forms

Termination + 7 years

Garnishments, Assignments, Attachments

Termination + 7 years

Labor Distribution Cost Records

7 years

Payroll Registers (gross and net)

7 years

Time Cards/Sheets

2 years

Unclaimed Wage Records

6 years

**K. PENSION DOCUMENTS AND SUPPORTING EMPLOYEE DATA**

**GENERAL PRINCIPLE:** Pension documents and supporting employee data shall be kept in such a manner that {Name of Church} can establish at all times whether or not any pension is payable to any person and if so the amount of such pension.

**RECORD TYPE**

Retirement and Pension Records

**RETENTION PERIOD**

Permanent

**L. PERSONNEL RECORDS****RECORD TYPE**

Commissions/Bonuses/Incentives/Awards

**RETENTION PERIOD**

7 years

**RECORD TYPE**

EEO 1 /EEO 2 – Employer Information Reports

Employee Earnings Records

Employee Handbooks

Employee Medical Records

Employee Personnel Records (including individual attendance records, application forms, job or status change records, performance evaluations, termination papers, withholding information, garnishments, test results, training, and qualification records)

Employment Contracts – Individual

Employment Records – Correspondence with Employment Agencies and Advertisements for Job Openings

Employment Records – All Non Hired Applicants (including all applications and resumes - whether solicited or unsolicited, results of post offer, pre employment physicals, results of background investigations, if any, related correspondence)

Job Descriptions

Personnel Count Records

Forms I-9

**RETENTION PERIOD**

2 years after superseded or filing (whichever is longer)

Separation + 7 years

1 copy kept permanently

Separation + 6 years

6 years after separation

7 years after separation

3 years from date of hiring decision

2-4 years (4 years if file contains any correspondence which might be construed as an offer)

3 years after superseded

3 years

3 years after hiring, or 1 year after separation if later

## M. PROPERTY RECORDS

RECORD TYPE	RETENTION PERIOD
Correspondence, Property Deeds, Assessments, Licenses, Rights of Way	Permanent
Original Purchase/Sale/Lease Agreement	Permanent
Property Insurance Policies	Permanent

## N. TAX RECORDS

**GENERAL PRINCIPLE:** {Name of Church} must keep books of account or records as are sufficient to establish amount of gross income, deductions, credits, or other matters required to be shown in any such return.

These documents and records shall be kept for as long as the contents thereof may become material in the administration of federal, state, and local income, franchise, and property tax laws.

RECORD TYPE	RETENTION PERIOD
Tax-Exemption Documents and Related Correspondence	Permanent
IRS Rulings	Permanent
Excise Tax Records	7 years
Payroll Tax Records	7 years
Tax Bills, Receipts, Statements	7 years
Tax Returns Income, Franchise, Property	Permanent
Tax Workpaper Packages Originals	7 years
Sales/Use Tax Records	7 years

RECORD TYPE	RETENTION PERIOD
Annual Information Returns - Federal and State	Permanent
IRS or other Government Audit Records	Permanent

## O. CONTRIBUTION RECORDS

RECORD TYPE	RETENTION PERIOD
Records of Contributions	Permanent
{Insert Name of Organization}'s or other documents evidencing terms of gifts	Permanent

## P. PROGRAM AND SERVICE RECORDS

RECORD TYPE	RETENTION PERIOD
{Insert Types of Programs and Services}	7 years
{Insert Name of Organization} convenings	Permanent (1 copy only)
Research & Publications	Permanent (1 copy only)

## Q. FISCAL SPONSOR PROJECT RECORDS

RECORD TYPE	RETENTION PERIOD
Sponsorship agreements	Permanent

GCFA's IT Services Department offers a wide range of services - including backup and recovery solutions - to local churches, annual conferences, and agencies. We are committed to supporting the servant ministry of all those working within the United Methodist connection to spread the gospel of Christ with the technology of today.

**CALL US FOR A FREE IT ASSESSMENT OR TO INQUIRE ABOUT OUR OTHER SERVICES TODAY:  
1-866-367-4232 OR [ConnectionalRelations@gcfa.org](mailto:ConnectionalRelations@gcfa.org).**

*\*The original source material for this policy was provided by Donors Forum*

















