

ELCA REGION 8 ARCHIVES ACQUISITION POLICY

GENERAL INFORMATION AND PROVISIONS

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) Region 8 Archives (hereafter referred to as “the Archives”) is the repository for records of historical value created by ELCA synods and disbanded congregations within the eastern portion of ELCA Region 8: Allegheny Synod, Upper Susquehanna Synod, Lower Susquehanna Synod, Delaware-Maryland Synod, and Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod (hereafter referred to as “the ELCA Region 8 East synods”).

The Archives is *not* the repository for records of historical value created by ELCA synods and disbanded congregations within the western portion of ELCA Region 8: Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod, Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod, and West Virginia-Western Maryland Synod. The Tri-Synod Archives at Thiel College in Greenville, Pennsylvania collects materials from the ELCA Region 8 West synods.

The Archives does not accept donations from private individuals or any entities other than the ELCA Region 8 East synods. Any individual or entity that holds original records of an ELCA congregation or synod should make every effort to return such materials to their rightful owner(s).

ELCA REGION 8 ARCHIVAL SERVICES

ELCA Region 8 archival services are provided by the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg, at the discretion and with the supervision of the Seminary’s Library Director and Archivist and his/her designees (hereafter referred to as “the Archives staff”). The Seminary provides shelf and storage space for archival materials, subject to constraints of the current A. R. Wentz Library facilities.

CUSTODY AND RIGHTS

ELCA synods are the sole owners of their records as well as those of the disbanded ELCA congregations that existed within their territories. The ELCA Region 8 East synods retain legal title and all rights to materials deposited in the Archives, including (but not exclusive to) copyright, intellectual, or literary rights. The Archives only takes physical custody of the materials in order to preserve and make them available for research.

TRANSFER OF MATERIALS TO THE ARCHIVES

All transfers of materials to the Archives must be arranged by the synod staff member who is responsible for the synod’s records management (hereafter referred to as “synod designee”). No other synod staff members or persons associated with a disbanded congregation should arrange a transfer. Synod designee must coordinate transfers of materials with the Archives staff *only*. Under no circumstances should arrangements be made with any individuals at the ELCA Region 8 offices, the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg, or the A. R. Wentz Library.

Procedure for Transferring Materials

1. Synod designee must contact the Archives staff to initiate the transfer of materials.
2. The Archives staff will advise the synod designee to sort through the materials according to the appropriate ELCA records retention schedule(s) to identify those materials that hold permanent value.

3. During this process, the synod designee should feel free to consult with the Archives staff regarding any questions about whether items have permanent value.
4. After sorting materials and consulting with the Archives staff, synod designee should create a rough inventory list of potential materials to be transferred (e.g., Synod Assembly Minutes 1990-2000, Congregation Annual Reports 2000-2005, etc.)
5. The Archives staff will evaluate the inventory list and advise synod designee to remove materials that do not hold permanent value and/or request that questionable items be kept separate for further assessment when the materials are delivered to the Archives.
6. Synod designee arranges with the Archives staff to deliver approved materials to the Archives. Under *no* circumstances are materials to be transported without authorization from the Archives staff. The Archives reserves the right to refuse unauthorized transfers or shipments.
7. The Archives staff and synod designee will further evaluate any questionable materials to determine their potential archival value.
8. Synod designee and the Archives staff will sign a Transfer Agreement form, which acknowledges the transfer of the materials and outlines the legal title and copyrights to the items.
9. Synod designee returns any non-archival materials to the synod to retain or discard as appropriate.

Delivery of Materials

Materials must be delivered to the Archives by the synod designee. Except for published items (e.g., church/synod histories, annual assembly proceedings, bulletins of reports, etc.), shipping of materials via parcel carriers is highly discouraged due to the possibility of damage to or loss of irreplaceable historical materials. The Archives staff is not able to transport materials from synod offices to the Archives.

SCOPE OF ACQUISITIONS

The Archives collects records of historical value created by the ELCA Region 8 East synods and their disbanded congregations. The Archives' scope of acquisitions is based on the records retentions schedules developed by the ELCA. All records transferred to the Archives must be noncurrent (i.e., those that are no longer used in the day-to-day course of business). The Archives will *not* accept any current records that the ELCA Region 8 East synods would potentially need for operational, administrative, fiscal, or legal purposes.

Synod Records

The types of synod records that the Archives will accept are those that the ELCA document "Records Retention Schedule for the Synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America" specifically states are to be deposited in the regional archives. They are as follows:

- **Legal Records**
 - Charter or articles of incorporation (copies)
 - Synod constitutions and bylaws (copies)
 - Minutes of the synod council (copies)
 - Minutes of the synod council executive committee (copies)
 - Minutes of the synod assembly (copies)
 - Documentation for bequests, gifts and endowments (after the file is closed)
- **Information on Congregations**
 - Constitutions and bylaws of congregations (inactive)
 - Articles of incorporation (inactive)
 - Copies of property related documents of congregations (inactive)

- Congregation annual reports (inactive)
 - Congregation profile (inactive)
 - Congregation histories and anniversary books
 - Reports of special congregation projects
 - Congregation audio and visual materials
 - Samples of congregation newsletters
 - Promotional pieces
 - Bulletins of special occasions
- **Information on Synod Employees** (all of the below upon completion of service)
 - Letters of application
 - Letters of call
 - Position description
 - Résumé
 - Continuing education documentation
 - Honors and clippings
- **Biographical Documents on Rostered Persons** (all of the below upon retirement, resignation, removal from the roster, or death)
 - Educational and professional history such as résumés
 - Copies of letters of call, acceptance, and termination
 - Questionnaires answered by the individual, including subjective essays describing the person's understanding of vocation
 - Family history, including marriages and divorces, which are legal contracts and part of the public record
 - Photographs, identified by name, location, and date
 - Personal correspondence between the pastor and the bishop that relates to the program of the congregation
 - News releases, honors, bulletins for installations, anniversaries, retirement, and funerals
- **Correspondence Including Email**
 - Only that correspondence to the bishop and assistants of the bishop that represents the policies, programs, and ongoing life of the synod (upon completion of service)
- **Documents and Reports**
 - Reports from the synod to the ELCA Church Council
 - Reports from synod staff or about various synod partnerships and activities
 - Publications of the bishop
 - Worship bulletins for synod sponsored events
 - Synod newsletters (samples)
 - News releases and other promotional material (samples)
 - Training program material (samples)
 - World Wide Web site (samples)
 - Membership directories with or without photographs (samples)
- **Synodical Agencies, Schools, and Camps**
 - Constitutions and bylaws (outdated)
 - Articles of incorporation (outdated)
 - Minutes of boards (outdated)

- Audit reports (outdated)
 - Copies of insurance policies (outdated)
 - Programmatic material
 - Newsletters
 - Histories and bulletins of special events
- **Synodical Auxiliaries**
 - Constitutions and bylaws (copies)
 - Minutes of boards (copies)
 - Assembly programs and documents (copies)
 - Audit reports (copies)
 - Programmatic material
 - Newsletters
 - Membership directories
 - Audio visual materials

Disbanded Congregation Records

The types of disbanded congregation records that the Archives will accept are those that the ELCA document “Disposition of Records: Advice for Disbanding Congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America” defines as the permanent records of a congregation’s history. They are as follows:

- Parish Register
- Charter, Articles of Incorporation, and Constitutions
- Minutes and reports of regular and special congregational meetings
- Minutes of the Congregation Council and its Executive Committee
- Minutes and other records of committees and auxiliary organizations for men, women, and youth
- Letters of call or employment and appropriate biographical material for rostered leaders and staff
- Correspondence of historical significance
- Parish newsletters
- Other significant publications, such as directories, anniversary history booklets, and news releases
- Programmatic, worship, and music materials generated by the congregation
- Annual audit reports and year end budgets and treasurer’s reports (may be part of the minutes of the annual meeting)
- Property related documents such as deeds, titles, surveys, mortgages, easements, blueprints, and construction drawings
- Documentation of endowments, bequests and restricted gifts
- All insurance policies
- Photographs and negatives, films, DVD and videotapes, sound recordings, all properly marked identifying persons, dates, and events
- “Snapshots” of the congregation’s World Wide Web site (i.e., printouts of pages with unique Web delivered material containing information about the life of the congregation and its community) if no web archiving service has preserved the site

EXCLUSIONS

The Archives reserves the right to refuse the transfer of materials not included in the scope of this policy.

Financial Records

According to the ELCA document “Records Retention Schedule for the Synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America,” no synod financial records should be transferred to regional/synodical archives. Synods are to send annual audit reports and the Synodical Budget/Actual Submission Form to the ELCA Treasurer. Synods are to include annual budgets, annual treasurer’s reports, and information on permanent bequests, gifts, and endowments with both the synod assembly minutes and pre-assembly reports. Below are guidelines for all other financial records that the synods must either retain or destroy according to the provisions of the appropriate ELCA records retention schedule. Synods should *never* transfer these records to the Archives.

- **Synod Financial Records**

- Bequests after distribution
- Mortgages paid in full
- Legal files and notes on synodically owned real estate
- Loans and notes after sale or termination
- Canceled checks or copies of canceled checks
- Cash receipt record
- Special fund-raising appeal record
- Bank reconciliations
- Accounts payable vouchers, originals and documentation
- Payroll administration records such as W-2, W-4, 941 forms and payroll registers
- Cash receipt journals
- General invoices

- **Disbanded Congregation Financial Records**

- 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
- General invoices
- Offering envelopes

Confidential Records

Certain synod and disbanded congregation records are considered confidential and therefore restricted to public access. Below are guidelines for confidential records that the synods must either retain or destroy according to the provisions of the appropriate ELCA records retention schedule. Synods should *never* transfer these records to the Archives.

- **Information on Persons** (Files containing some or all of these documents may exist for pastors, other rostered persons, employees, registered seminary students, and volunteers.)
 - Emergency notification forms
 - Health-related documents, including as worker’s compensation
 - Letters of recommendation
 - Background and reference checks
 - Performance appraisals and letters of discipline

- Contracts
 - Continuing education documentation
 - Documents related to compensation and benefits
 - Mobility forms
- **Pastoral Care Files** (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 the following documents.)
 - Date and time of consultation
 - Persons present
 - Observation notes
 - Tests, such as personality inventories
 - Correspondence
- **Information on Rostered Persons** (Roster files contain highly confidential records. For complete guidelines, synods should refer to the ELCA document “Care of Information on Persons Rostered in the Synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.”)
 - **Long-Term Controlled Access Documents** (Access to these records is reserved to the bishop of the synod or a designated synod staff person, the secretary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and legal counsel. Synods are to retain the following files for 25 years after retirement, resignation, removal from the roster, or death, and then destroy them.)
 - Signed letters regarding the performance of a rostered person, if they warrant the bishop’s attention
 - Personal correspondence between the pastor and the bishop or synodical staff member
 - Correspondence and documentation on matters that could result in disciplinary action or that relate to serious concerns about conduct
 - Rostered leader’s reports to the bishop
 - Mobility forms
 - Performance evaluations
 - Letters of recommendation
 - Medical or psychodiagnostic reports
 - **Temporary Documents** (These documents have temporary value and the synod should destroy them when they are no longer useful or at the time of a change of call.)
 - Signed letters regarding the performance of a rostered person, if they do not warrant the bishop’s attention
 - Transcripts of academic records
 - Contractual arrangements, including grants or sponsorships, while the contractual agreement is in effect

Electronic Records

The Archives recognizes that electronic records are an increasingly important area of historical documentation. However, many challenges exist with preserving electronic records, as file formats and the hardware and software to read them change continually. Therefore, until all the issues involved can be researched, the Archives will not collect electronic records, including (but not limited to) email

messages, databases, spreadsheets, word-processed documents, presentations, digital photos/graphics, Web pages, or digital audio/video files.

Synod and disbanded congregation records of archival value that exist only in digital formats should be printed out on acid-free paper for transfer to the Archives. Digital images should be printed out on quality photographic paper. The Archives will not accept electronic records on CDs, DVDs, floppy disks, removable storage drives, external or internal hard drives, magnetic tapes, zip disks, or any other types of data storage media.

Three-Dimensional Objects

Due to space limitations, the Archives generally cannot collect three-dimensional artifacts other than small, easy-to-house items that are part of or directly related to larger manuscript collections.

According to the ELCA document “A Brief Guide for Archives of Congregations,” disbanded congregation items such as carvings, stained-glass windows, old vestments, and altarware (if still usable) should be donated to an active congregation in need of them.

Personal Papers

The Archives will not accept any personal papers created by congregation members, employees, pastors and other rostered persons, registered seminary students, volunteers, or any other individuals associated with ELCA Region 8 East synods and congregations. Therefore, synods should not include personal papers with the records of synods or disbanding congregations when transferring materials to the Archives.

Sermons

Sermons, in whatever format, are considered intellectual property and belong to the pastor. Therefore, synods should not include sermons with the records of synods or disbanding congregations when transferring materials to the Archives.

The Archives will determine whether it can accept sermons directly from pastors on a case-by-case basis. Please consult the Archives staff for more information.

NOTE ABOUT ACTIVE CONGREGATION RECORDS

According to the ELCA documents “A Brief Guide for Archives of Congregations” and “Records Retention Schedule for the Congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America,” active ELCA congregations are responsible for maintaining their own records. The Archives staff recognizes that many active congregations do not have a proper environment to store records of historical value, particularly older materials that may require preservation measures. To help minimize the risks of losing valuable records altogether, the Archives staff can advise active ELCA congregations in regards to preserving fragile materials. However, due to limited resources and shelf space, the Archives can only house a small amount of active congregation records. The Archives will determine whether it can accept active congregation materials on a case-by-case basis. Please consult the Archives staff for more information.

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Provisions subject to change without notice.