

Records Retention Schedule *

<u>Congregation Responsibility</u>	<u>Synod Responsibility</u>
------------------------------------	-----------------------------

Parish Register:

Official Acts: Baptism, Confirmation, Marriage, Burial.

<p>"The parish register is a permanent record and requires the utmost care...it should be kept in a fire-proof safe." It is required that this register be a "hard-copy record." An electronic database does not constitute a register, primarily because of the short life of electronic programs. Each congregation should update and retain its Parish Registers</p>	<p>When a congregation has closed, the Parish Registers should be transferred to the synod archives.</p>
---	--

Legal Records:

Articles of Incorporation, Constitutions, By-laws, continuing resolutions, blueprints, construction drawings, current insurance policies, deeds, minutes of corporation meetings.

<p>Congregations should retain current records in a fire-proof safe and older records in its archives. Closed congregations may transfer these records to the Synod archives.</p>	<p>The synod offices are to retain these synod records permanently and send copies to the archives.</p>
---	---

Financial Records:

These need to be hard-copy documents. The *Treasurer's Annual Report*, the *Annual audit* and the *Budget* are permanent records for both congregation and synod. These documents should be in the secretary's minutes and preserved in the congregation or synod's respective archives. Bank Records—such as *cancelled checks*, *bank statements*, *payroll records*, *cash receipt journals*, *members' giving*, *special fund-raising records*, and *W-2s*—are to be kept for four years for IRS, seven years for administration use. After seven years these documents may be deleted or shredded. *General invoices* can be shredded after three years. *Bequests* and *Endowment* information are permanent records to be retained for 20 years. *Offering envelopes* can be shredded after entering data. *Mortgages paid in full*, *Legal files and notes on synod property*, *loans and notes after terminations* should be retained for 20 years and then they can be shredded.

Information on Persons:

<p><i>Letters of call</i>, <i>employment</i>, <i>job descriptions</i>, <i>resumes</i> should be retained during tenure of employee or minister. Biographical information and career history should be placed in the congregation's archives with a copy given to the ELS Archives.</p>	<p>The ELS Archives maintains files on ministers who serve in the ELS. Circuit Visitors are responsible for sending ordination/installation materials to the ELS Archives.</p>
<p><i>Background checks</i>, <i>correspondence</i>, <i>compensation forms</i>, and <i>emergency notification forms</i> are documents that need to be held in strict confidence. They should be shredded upon completion of service, after resolution of a matter, or after 50 years. The ELS Archives restricts access to these files to the Synod Officers until 25 years have passed.</p>	

Pastoral Care files:

Consultation notes and correspondence (including e-mail).

<p>In the congregation, these document files should be kept locked. Individuals must sign a release form to allow any information from these files to leave the file.</p>	<p>On the synod level, e-mails that represent the policies, program, and ongoing life of the synod should be printed out. These materials should be kept for the tenure of the president and then be placed in the ELS Archives.</p>
---	--

	<u>Congregation Responsibility</u>		<u>Synod Responsibility</u>
Sermons:			
	These documents in whatever format belong to the pastor. The congregation may elect to place sermon manuscripts of special events into its archives.		Upon retirement, pastors are encouraged to send to the ELS Archives sermons from special events, funerals, and synodical events (installations, dedications, conventions, etc.).
Programic Materials:			
<i>Congregational histories, directories, newsletters, bulletins of special events, and photographs.</i>			
	Digital files do not survive. These materials need to be printed and placed in the respective archives. Photographs should be printed on photographic paper, not on a color printer. These programic materials should be sent to the congregational and synod archives immediately after the event		
Organizations and Boards:			
<i>Constitutions, bylaws, articles of incorporation, minutes, audit reports, insurance policies, programs, newsletters, and special event bulletins.</i>			
	Each organization secretary should retain their own records.		<i>Constitutions, bylaws, articles of incorporation, minutes, audit reports, and insurance policies.</i> Each synod board or committee secretary should retain their records and protect them by duplication to its members. When new secretaries are elected or new policies are in force, older materials should be transferred to the ELS Archives. <i>Programs, newsletters, and special event bulletin;</i> these materials should be sent directly to the ELS Archives for preservation.
Auxiliary Organizations:			
<i>Constitutions, bylaws, articles of incorporation, minutes, programs, and audit reports.</i>			
			Each organization related to the Evangelical Lutheran Synod should be responsible for retaining their own records. Copies of minutes and programs should be sent to the ELS Archives after five years.
Resource Materials:			
<i>Hymnbooks, Sunday School and VBS materials, Bible Class materials, etc.</i>			
	These seldom have permanent value. Congregations should retain samples for recording parish history.		The ELS Archives maintains a collection of hymnbooks used in ELS congregations. Curriculum materials generated by ELS pastors should be preserved in the ELS Archives.
Synod Circuits, Area Pastoral Conferences, and the General Pastoral Conference:			
<i>Minutes, papers and essays, programs and handouts.</i>			
			These materials should be collected by the secretaries of each entity and retained for five years. After five years, the secretaries should deliver printed copies to the ELS Archives for retention.
* adapted from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America			
2020			