

[DRAFT]
THE PRESBYTERY OF BALTIMORE
RECORDS MANAGEMENT AND FILES POLICY
[2012]

1. Records Management. The Presbytery creates and uses a large quantity of records in its daily work. These records contain the information that enables the Presbytery to function and to fulfill its legal, fiscal, and administrative responsibilities. They also serve as primary, documentary evidence that is part of the collective memory of the Church's history.

The records management program outlined in this Policy will:

- a. Help staff control the creation, storage, and length of time needed to keep records.
 - b. Provide for an orderly and systematic destruction of records consistent with legal, fiscal, historical and administrative requirements.
 - c. Reduce costs associated with the storage of noncurrent (less frequently used) records.
 - d. Improve retrieval of noncurrent records.
 - e. Identify records for permanent retention based on their historic, continued administrative or legal needs.
 - f. Ensure protection of valuable records against premature deterioration and/or destruction.¹
2. Responsibility. The Stated Clerk will be the records manager of the Presbytery, responsible for the implementation of this Policy. The Committee on Administration is responsible for reviewing the work of the records manager, and establishing such procedures as are necessary to implement this Policy.
 3. Files Management Chart. The Chart attached to this Policy lists all of the files of the Presbytery that the *Book of Order*, the *Presbytery Manual*, or other written procedures of the Presbytery may require or may expect to be maintained for a period of time after the need for regular operational use. It is referred to in this rule as "the Chart."
 4. Definitions. The following terms, used in the Chart, have the following specific meanings when used:
 - a. Public [records]: Records or documents that are in the public domain have been published, or which record, document, or were distributed at public events or meetings, i.e. meetings with unrestricted attendance.
 - b. Unrestricted access: Records that may be viewed or copied by anyone.
 - c. Open access: Records that may be viewed or copied by any member of the Presbytery of Baltimore or any of its particular churches.
 - d. Restricted access: Records that have limitations on access as specified in the Chart. All records with restricted access may be accessed by staff, committees and other governing bodies of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) who have established a valid "need to

know” the information contained in the record. The Stated Clerk except as specifically specified in this Policy will make decisions regarding “need to know”. Unless specifically stated otherwise, the Executive Presbyter, Stated Clerk, and the chair of the committee responsible for the creation of the file, on a “need to know” basis, may access all Presbytery files.

- e. Need to know: A need to have access to, or be told about, specific information necessary to fulfill the specific responsibility of the individual, committee, or governing body, as spelled out in written guidelines, regulations, or position descriptions.
 - f. Permanent: Files designated for permanent storage, i.e. never to be destroyed. The chart provides for culling of most files before they are placed in permanent storage.
 - g. Lifetime: Files to be retained for the lifetime of the individual subject of the file. For convenience sake it is assumed that 75 years after ordination or 25 years after retirement satisfies this requirement.
 - h. Minimize: The process of minimizing the size of a file by the elimination of duplicates, reasonable culling of insignificant papers, and physical reduction of size by photocopying 2-sided in smaller format or other process (including microforms).
 - i. GP and SC: In the Chart the acronyms GP and SC will be used for General Presbyter and Stated Clerk.
5. Historic Value. The Chart identifies specific files to be reviewed for historic value. These are so identified because of the likelihood that portions of the files will have such value. However, all files scheduled for destruction should be reviewed for historic value. The Historian of the Presbytery (if one has been appointed by the **Committee on Administration**) and/or the Stated Clerk will conduct such reviews. It is recognized that the identification of materials of historic value is a subjective judgment. The Historian and Clerk will consult with the Presbyterian Historical Society (PHS) and, where appropriate, other professional organizations in making determinations of historic value.
 6. Working Papers. It is understood that the staff and committees of the Presbytery will need to create, maintain, and use temporary or working files which have no permanent or long term value and are outside the scope of this Policy. These support the day-to-day work of the Presbytery and may be created and disposed of by committees and staff as needed. The Stated Clerk prior to disposal should review any such files that may have permanent or long-term value. Such working papers may be filed in permanent file folders for convenience, but should be clearly identified as such, and should be removed before the files are transferred. Papers that are used to support the official actions of a staff member or committee, particularly actions in relation to an individual or of a fiscal nature, cannot be considered working papers.
 7. Electronic Files and Media.
 - a. Permanent storage. At the present state of electronic storage media,

electronic files cannot become a substitute for paper or microfilm records for permanent files storage. When documents are such that they should be permanently retained, or retained for a period beyond their need as “working papers,” a paper copy should be produced and filed. This means that correspondence that communicates decisions, meets communication obligations of the Presbytery, states positions of the Presbytery, or in any other way is an official communication of the Presbytery should be retained in paper form. This applies to letters created in a word processor and e-mail communications. Retention of the correspondence in electronic form does not meet the files retention requirements of the Presbytery.

- b. Materials Electronically Distributed: Presbytery documents produced for electronic distribution, including newsletters and the Presbytery website, should be retained in paper format if permanent or long term retention is required by this Policy or other requirements imposed by or on the Presbytery.
 - c. Electronic Database: The Presbytery maintains current information on many individuals in its electronic database. The database includes most of those persons identified in the Chart as the subject of “People” files. Whenever any person on whom a paper file is to be maintained is removed from the database, for any reason, the information in the database should be printed out and placed in the person’s paper file. No such action is required when persons for whom there are no requirements to maintain a paper file are removed from the database (e.g., when a member of a local congregation ends service on a Presbytery committee). Further, the release of information contained in the database is subject to the same restrictions as release of information contained in the corresponding papers files.
 - d. Computer Backups: The computer network of the Presbytery office will be backed up on a daily basis. For archival purposes a copy of one of the daily back-ups will be made at least annually, and retained permanently. The best available technology today for such a backup is a DVD. A second copy should be made and stored off-site—probably at a nearby local church that is willing to provide such storage.
 - e. Access: The rules for access to electronic files will be the same as if the files were paper and filed in the appropriate paper files as indicated in the chart.
8. Presbyterian Historical Society. The archive and storage facilities of the Presbyterian Historical Society are available to the Presbytery. The Stated Clerk is directed to maximize use of those facilities, to the extent their procedures allow. This will minimize the amount of file space required in the Presbytery office and will place records into a physical environment most conducive to long term preservation. As a matter of routine, the Stated Clerk should review files stored in the Presbytery every five years for possible

transfer to the Presbyterian Historical Society.

9. Appeal. All decisions required by this Policy may be appealed to the Council of the Presbytery, by addressing the appeal to the Chair of the Council. The Council in Executive Session will consider any such appeals. The Council will hear from both the individual (or body) making the appeal and the individual or body whose decision is being appealed.
10. Destruction. When documents from restricted files are to be destroyed, care will be taken to insure destruction into unreadable format. The preferred method is shredding the material. In particular items containing Social Security numbers, compensation and other employment information, and any sensitive material will be shredded or carefully disposed of.
11. Catastrophic Loss. Files management must consider the implications of a major loss of records, most likely in a major fire or flood. Record loss in such a case would be in two categories: operational records needed to resume regular operations as soon as possible and records of historical significance. The greatest protection of operational records is the off-site regular storage of computer data back-ups, covered in paragraph 7d above. With so much of the financial and programmatic data generated and communicated by computers, the recreation of the computer data from a recent (within a week) backup should provide adequate operational continuity.

Protection of historical records is best achieved through the use of the high quality archival facilities of PHS. The major records now stored with PHS have been microfilmed and the film is available at the Presbytery Office. Most records of historic value currently produced by the Presbytery are composed on the computer, and the computer back-ups provide protection for such material in the short term, before it is deposited with PHS. Priority should be given to protection of materials of historic value for which only a single paper copy exists in the Presbytery Office. This would include Presbytery and Trustee minutes for the period following the microfilming done by PHS and prior to those minutes contained in the computer files of the Presbytery.

¹ Adapted from *Managing and Preserving Official Records for Synods and Presbyteries*, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA, (available on their website, www.history.pcusa.org).