

Baptist Heritage Queensland // Baptist Church Archives, Queensland

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Local Church Records – what to collect?

What records to collect and save is determined by the aims and purposes:

1. Legal – you need records to document various important issues – eg, property, employment, insurance claims, court action re issues relating to children, etc etc
2. Planning and Administration – you need to know details of what you have decided and done in the past in order to make good and informed plans for the future
3. Family, church and local history – you need to preserve the heritage of your church so that you have a full story which can be available for those of your congregation and others interested in understanding and telling the story of your church, its members, organisations and its place in the local community.
4. Testimony and witness to the Grace of God – most important of all, your church is ‘His story’ so you need to be able to tell the story of God and his Grace and Mercy

This means you need to **create** good records in the first place, you need to **keep** relevant records for an appropriate period of time, you need to **manage** and **preserve** these properly, and you need to make provision for good **access** to these records.

Records will be a) traditional paper records and b) and digital records

(Note that you may decide to convert digital records to paper if you do not have the technology, personnel, administration and funds to maintain a digital system indefinitely into the future. See also below about digitising all your paper records.

You need to set up a proper system of administration and you need to set up proper physical provisions to achieve the above. See our *Church Archives and Historical Record form* and *Managing Church Records* guide for more information

Privacy: you need to take account of privacy rules, especially in regard to personal information about living people

How long to keep records?

The main records are kept in perpetuity although some less significant ones (such as correspondence) can be disposed of after a reasonable period (30 years)

Financial – consult your Accountant and ATO and ACNC rules for the church and for any of its entities (such as Kindy, Op-Shop, school etc)

Records to create and keep and manage:

- Minutes of all bodies in the church – Church members, Deacons, Elders, Leaders, Board, and departments such as Children’s works, Men, Women, etc etc
- Annual reports of the above
- Annual Financial reports of the above
- Membership rolls and church directories of the church and any of its organisations
- Constitutions, By-Laws of the Church and other entity
- Key paper correspondence of the above
- Key emails – see our *Guide to archiving emails*
- Key administration files and documents relating to the church and its organisations
- Building and property documents – deeds, contracts, plans etc
- Staff appointment papers and HR records
- Key reports such as a review of the church’s ministry, a building expansion program etc
- Selected church bulletins/news sheets and orders of service
- Selected promotional material especially of major events like a building opening
- History of church and its departments and other informational material (selected)
- Photographs – paper and digital – selected (make sure they are identified as to date, time, people, place, event)
- Audio material – A/V, videos etc (ditto)
- Registers: Marriage Registers, Baptism, Dedication certificate books, Visitors books
- Any other material that will be useful for any of the 4 purposes listed above

Not to be kept for historical archives

- Detailed financial papers such as cheque butts, invoices etc (but check ACNC etc requirements first above)
- Detailed agendas, promotional material etc
- Trivial memos and correspondence and emails

You may wish to consider digitising your collection – see our guide sheet *Digitising your Church Records*

How to manage your records – see our *Managing Church Records – a Guide*

All our guide sheets available for download at -

<http://www.qb.org.au/support-for-churches-pastors/baptist-church-archives-queensland/>

Consult us about transferring church records to the Baptist Church Archives Qld