

Retention schedule for Methodist Records

(Revised 12 April 2021)

1. Introduction

a. What this document covers

This document is a revision to the existing 'Retention schedule for Methodist records' and is prompted by the Data Protection Act 2018 which incorporated the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2018. This revised and updated version is intended to provide some brief practical notes and guidance to be used by ministers, church officers, and volunteer archivists who are involved in managing records on behalf of Local Churches, Circuits and Districts. The Data Protection Officer and the Liaison Officer for Methodist Archives can provide advice and guidance on the care of church records and archive material ranging from old to modern; contact details are given in the final section of this guide. Standing Order 015 on CPD provides a very useful introduction to Methodist Archives.

b. The importance of caring for our Church records

Local Churches, Circuits and Districts have a duty of care for their records; not only are they a valuable historic, financial, missional and social resource, but often contain the personal data of individuals who also expect the Church to protect their data efficiently.

Some of the reasons why the Methodist Church should care for our records include:

- Without proper organisation the sheer volume of paper and electronic information can become overwhelming. Well managed and organised records ensure that the right information is available to the right people at the right time.
- It forms part of the way the Church fulfils its responsibilities under data protection legislation. Many areas of Church activity are subject to external regulation. This includes safeguarding, finance, human resource management, Health and Safety to name but a few which makes it essential to maintain proper records
- Good record keeping helps demonstrate that Local Churches, Circuits and Districts and the Methodist Church collectively cares about protecting individuals and their personal data as well as compliance with current data protection legislation.
- It ensures that records that will have archival or historical value in future, and which help tell the story of the Church locally, regionally and nationally, are identified and preserved.
- Our records tell the story of the people called Methodists – who we were, who we are and who we might become; they are a very important part of our Methodist heritage.

2. Records retention: how long do we need to keep records for

Records should be kept for as long as they are required for operational, legal, historical etc purposes. Records which are no longer required should be destroyed. Additionally under data

protection legislation personal data¹ must only be retained for as long as is necessary to prevent a build up of obsolete records taking up valuable storage space.

The schedules set out the necessary retention periods for the Church. The retention periods take into the consideration the requirements of data protection legislation. The retention schedule contained in this document indicates how long the different types record at Local Church, Circuit and District level should be kept to meet business, statutory, fiscal and heritage requirements and when they can be disposed of.

Guidance is also given on which Church records should be deposited in the local authority record office for local and district archiving purposes on behalf of the Methodist Church.

Please Note:

- a) Further and more detailed information and guidance on best practice in managing Methodist records (print and electronic) to accompany this document will issues in due course.
- b) For clarification, where 'Archive' is the final action, this indicates that the records should be deposited in the local authority record office. 'Destroy' means shredding securely paper records or permanent deletion in the case of personal data held on computers, which includes all backup copies.
- c) Start of a retention period – for correspondence files and where records are maintained in some form of a ledger or listing, the retention period should start from the date of the last entry.
- d) 'Weeding' is the technical term used to decide which documents should be archived and kept and those which are duplicates or are no longer relevant and do not need to be kept for historical, statutory, operational, and/or informational use can be destroyed.
- e) Title Deeds to Methodist Church Property. The current policy relating to the retention of Title Deeds is given in SO 903. Deeds currently required for Church purposes should be retained securely in the relevant Local Church or Circuit safe. Other title deeds (generally pre-registration with the Land Registry) should be deposited in local authority record offices.
- f) Current safeguarding guidance is given in each of the sections dealing with Church, Circuit and District Archives. Where safeguarding records are concerned, it is the responsibility of the person archiving material with an external body to ensure that the retention period has been confirmed with that body.
- g) Please always refer to your District Archivist for advice. Further advice is available from the Liaison Officer for Methodist Archives.

¹ personal data' means any information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person ('data subject'); an identifiable natural person is one who can be identified, directly or indirectly, in particular by reference to an identifier such as a name, an identification number, location data, an online identifier or to one or more factors specific to the physical, physiological, genetic, mental, economic, cultural or social identity of that natural person

Church Objects and memorabilia

Objects are not archives but it is important that a full inventory of all Church objects is maintained as good practice and as a historical record. All Local Churches will have collections of objects and memorabilia which have been lovingly collected over many years and include church silver, memorials, banners, musical instruments and often unique furniture. These items are not normally accepted for deposit by local authority record offices. When a Local Church or a Methodist institution has been identified for closure the future of church objects and memorabilia should be discussed initially with the District Archivist. Further information is available from the Methodist Heritage website <http://www.methodistheritage.org.uk/artefacts.htm>

Oversight (Church Membership)

With reference to Church membership records and the different types of membership records maintained including Members, Adherents, Pastoral Lists and Community Roll; further guidance will be forthcoming. Managing Trustees should always check with their Superintendent Minister if in doubt.

Section 1. Individual church records

1.1 Church meetings		
Type of record	How long to keep it for	What to do with it
Church Council	Current connexional year +5 Good practice	Archive
Meetings reporting to Church Council	Current connexional year +3 Included in papers of above	Archive after weeding
Meetings of youth organisations	Current connexional year +3 Good practice	Archive after weeding

1.2 Employment		
Type of record	How long to keep it for	What to do with it
Employee tax and insurance records	Current tax year +6 Statutory responsibility / retain for the duration of the employment contract	Destroy
Insurance records: employer liability	Current tax year + 40	Destroy
Pension contribution records	Current tax year +6	Destroy

	Limitation Act 1980	
Contracts of Employment	Current tax year +6	Destroy
Annual tax return	Current tax year +6	Destroy
Expenses claims	Current Tax year +6	Destroy

1.3 Finance

Type of record	How long to keep it for	What to do with it
Annual Accounts	Current connexional year +6 Limitation Act 1980	Archive
Cash books	Current connexional year +6 Limitation Act 1980	Destroy
Financial statements	Current connexional year +6 Limitation Act 1980	Destroy
Church Copyright licenses	Current connexional year +6	Destroy
Accounts of reporting organisations	Current connexional year +6 Limitation Act 1980	Archive if not found in church accounts
Accounts of youth organisations	Current connexional year +6 Limitation Act 1980	Archive if not found in church accounts
Rent ledgers	Current connexional year +6	Destroy
Schedule B returns	2 years after audit	Destroy
Gift Aid Declarations	Current connexional year +6 Limitation Act 1980	Destroy
Trust Deeds	Keep permanently	Keep permanently

1.4 Membership

Type of record	How long to keep for	What to do with it
Church membership lists or directories including databases, mailing and contact lists ²	Permanent retention. CPD SO 015 and SO 054	Superseded copy to Archive
List of adherents including databases, mailing and contact lists	Permanent retention. CPD SO 015 and SO 054	Superseded copy to Archive
Baptism registers	Permanent retention whilst register or church is in use CPD SO 015	Archive
Marriage registers	Permanent retention. New arrangements for marriage registration in force from May 2021. One copy of Marriage	Archive

² Where consent is required, evidence should be retained as long as the person is a member (or withdrew consent) then deleted.

	Register to be retained by Church	
Church Directory	Review annually.	Superseded copy to Archive.
Burial registers / Records of graveyards including plans of graves	Permanent retention	Archive
Sunday School rolls and registers	Keep until the child / young adult attains the age of 21 and keep for three years	Destroy

1.5 Property		
Type of record	How long to keep it for	What to do with it
Title Deeds	Registration of Methodist property agreed by Conference. Deeds are of historical interest only. CPD SO 903 (See notes 2)	Retain for 12 years from the connexional year that the property is sold
Insurance policies	Retain for 40 years, Commercial practice	Destroy
Claims correspondence	3 years after last action	Destroy
Property agreements and leases	6 year after end of agreement. Commercial practice	Archive
Licences for use	3 years after end of agreement. Commercial practice	Destroy
Records of lettings and use by external bodies	1 year. Commercial practice	Destroy
Methodist property logs	Retain whilst log or church is in use.	Archive
Quinquennial inspection reports	Hold in property log,	Destroy if property no longer owned by church
Records of building schemes	Last action + 5 years	Archive
Burial grounds Title documents	Title documents should be kept permanently	Archive

1.6 Health and Safety		
Type of record	How long to keep it for	What to do with it
Accident reporting sheets or book – for adults	Date of incident plus 3 years. SI 1995/3163	Destroy

Accident reporting sheets or book – for children	Date when the child attains the age of 21 plus 3 years SI 1995/3163	Destroy
Records documenting external inspections	Date of last inspection + 3 years. Good practice	Destroy

1.7 Safeguarding

As part of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, there is currently a legal requirement under Section 25 of the Inquiries Act for churches and other relevant organisations in England and Wales to retain documents relating to child protection and allegations of child abuse made against individuals or the organisation. This also includes child protection policy documents. The legal requirement not to destroy such material has precedence over retention requirements under the Data Protection Act 2018 for the duration of the inquiry.

Basic record description	Retention Policy	Final Action
Clear Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificate	Retain for 6 months from the recruitment decision	Destroy
Risk Assessment recommendations and a management plan in the event of an unclear or blemished DBS disclosure	Retain for 75 years after appointment / employment ceases / confirmation of blemished DBS details	Destroy
Records of other safeguarding adult or child protection concerns either within the church, church related activity, or within a family by an individual where the church was the reporting body or involved in care or monitoring plans that is any sex offender risk assessments and monitoring agreements Please see Standing Order 010	Retain for 75 years after the conclusion of the matter	Destroy
Records of any children's activities, Sunday School/Junior Church/youth club registers and related general safety risk assessments. Any communication from parents or other parties in relation to the above	Retain for 75 years after the conclusion of the matter	Destroy
Personnel records of individuals with contact with children and	Retain for 75 years after the conclusion of the matter	Destroy

vulnerable adults including all documentation concerning any allegations and investigations regardless of the findings		
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1.8 Publications		
Type of record	How long to keep it for	What to do with it
Church guides / significant anniversary publications	Replace with new editions	One copy sent to the British Library. If deemed to be of connexional value or significance, archive with the connexional archive at John Rylands Library
Church magazines	Date of issue + 2 years	Archive
Miscellaneous and/or ephemeral literature (scrap books, photographs, newspaper cuttings)	Last action +2 years	Archive

1.9 Legal Documents		
Type of record	How long to keep it for	What to do with it
Local Ecumenical Partnership Agreements	Retention to follow from discussion with partners.	Archive
Trustee Declarations	Retain while person is in office	Archive
Data Protection records in relation to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data Subject Access Requests • Right to Rectification • Right to Erasure (to be forgotten) • Right to Restrict Processing 	7 years after the last contact with the individual	Destroy or delete
Data Protection Consent Record	End of the Connexional Year plus 2 years	Destroy or delete
Data Consent Forms and Data Collection Forms	End of the Connexional Year plus 2 years	Destroy or delete
Data Processor Record	End of the Connexional Year after it has been updated	Destroy or delete

1/10 Miscellaneous / General records		
Type of record	How long to keep it for	What to do with it
General Correspondence	Conclusion of matter + 1 year	Destroy
Records of anniversaries and commemorations	Date of event plus 10 years	Archive
Ministers' papers relating to major church developments, audits etc	Last action plus 5 years	Archive
Visitors' books	Last entry plus 5 years GDPR Privacy Notice required	Destroy
Photographs and videos of events	24 months after the event – selected items retained for historic purposes and consent obtained	Archive

Please note. This is not an exhaustive list of miscellaneous or general records which a Local Church, minister or office holder may use but seeks to cover all main areas of activity. As general guidance, records not covered by this schedule should be retained until the conclusion of the matter/end date plus one year. If in doubt, please contact your District Archivist.

Section 2. Circuit Records

2.1 Circuit meetings		
Type of record	How long to keep it for	What to do with it
Circuit meetings	Current connexional year + 5 Good practice	Archive
Meetings reporting to Circuit meeting	Current connexional year + 5 Include with papers of above	Archive after weeding
Records relating to ecumenical partners	Current connexional year +2	Consult District Archivist

2.2 Employment		
Type of record	How long to keep it for	What to do with it
Employee tax and insurance records	Current tax year +6 Statutory responsibility	Destroy

Insurance records: employer liability	Current tax year + 40 Statutory responsibility	Destroy
Pension contribution records	Current tax year +6 Limitation Act 1980	Destroy
Contracts of employment	Current tax year +6 Limitation Act 1980	Destroy
Annual tax return	Current tax year +6 Statutory	Destroy
Expenses claims	Current tax year +6 Limitation Act 1980	Destroy

2.3 Finance

Type of record	How long to keep it for	What to do with it
Annual accounts	Current connexional year +6 Limitation Act 1980	Archive
Cash books	Current connexional year +6 Limitation Act 1980	Destroy
Cheque Book / Paying in slips	Current connexional year +6 Limitation Act 1980	Destroy
Financial Statements	Current connexional year +6 Limitation Act 1980	Archive if not inc in Circuit accounts
Accounts of reporting organisations	Current connexional year +6 Limitation Act 1980	Archive if not inc in Circuit accounts
Accounts of youth organisations	Current connexional year +6 Limitation Act 1980	Archive
Schedule B returns	2 years after audit	Destroy
Missionary accounts	Current connexional year +6 Limitation Act 1980	Archive (Weed)
Trust Deeds	Keep permanently	Keep permanently
Burial Grounds Title documents	Title documents should be kept permanently	Archive

2.4 Membership

Type of record	How long to keep it for	What to do with it
Circuit Directory including databases, mailing and contact lists	Review annually. Apply GDPR policy on consent forms	Previous copy to Archive.

Circuit register of baptisms	Retain while register is in use CPD SO 015	Archive
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2.5 Property		
Type of record	How long to keep it for	What to do with it
Title deeds	Registration of Methodist property agreed by Conference. Deeds are of historical interest only. CPD SO 903 (See notes 2)	Archive
Insurance policies	Retain for 40 years Commercial practice	Destroy
Claims correspondence	3 years after last action Commercial practice	Destroy
Property agreements and leases	6 years after end of agreement Commercial practice	Archive
Licences for use	1 years after end of agreement Commercial practice	Archive
Methodist property logs	Retain while log or church is in use.	Archive
Quinquennial inspection reports	Hold in property log.	Destroy if property no longer owned by Church
Records of building schemes	Last action + 5 years	Destroy if property no longer owned by the Church
Chapel registration certificates	Retain permanently	Keep securely
Records of church closure and sale of premises	Current connexional year +6 Limitation Act 1980	Archive after weeding
Records relating to manse inspections	Hold in property log CPD SO 954 and 965	Destroy if property no longer owned by the Church
Burial Registers / Records of graveyards including plans of graves	Permanent Retention	Archive

2.6 Safeguarding

As part of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, there is currently a legal requirement under Section 25 of the Inquiries Act for churches and other relevant organisations in England and Wales to retain documents relating to child protection and allegations of child abuse made against individuals or the organisation. This also includes child protection policy documents. The legal requirement not to destroy such material has precedence over retention requirements under the Data Protection Act 2018 for the duration of the inquiry.

Type of record	How long to keep it for	What to do with it
Clear Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificate	Retain for 6 months from the recruitment decision	Destroy
Risk Assessment recommendations and a management plan in the event of an unclear or blemished DBS disclosure	Retain for 75 years after appointment / employment ceases	Destroy
Records of other safeguarding adult or child protection concerns either within the church, church related activity, or within a family by an individual where the church was the reporting body or involved in care or monitoring plans that is any sex offender risk assessments and monitoring agreements Please see Standing Order 010	Retain for 75 years after the conclusion of the matter	Destroy
Records of any children's activities, Sunday School/Junior Church/youth club registers and related general safety risk assessments. Any communication from parents or other parties in relation to the above	Retain for 75 years after the conclusion of the matter	Destroy
Personnel records of individuals with contact with children and vulnerable adults including all documentation concerning any allegations and investigations regardless of the findings	Retain for 75 years after the conclusion of the matter	Destroy

2.7 Miscellaneous / Legal or General Records		
Type of record	How long to keep it for	What to do with it
General correspondence	Conclusion of matter +1 year Good practice	Destroy / Delete file
Records of anniversaries and commemorations	Date of event +10 years Good practice	Archive
Circuit newsletters, notices, publications and circuit plans	Date of issue +2 years Good practice	Archive after weeding
Records of Local Ecumenical Partnerships	Discuss with partners	Consult District Archivist
Copies of replies to District and Connexional questionnaires and circulars	Last action + 5 years Good practice	Consult District Archivist
Data Protection records in relation to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data Subject Access Requests • Right to Rectification • Right to Erasure (to be forgotten) • Right to Restrict Processing 	7 years after the last contact with the individual	Destroy or delete
Data Protection Consent Record	End of the Connexional Year plus 2 years	Destroy or delete
Data Consent Forms and Data Collection Forms	End of the Connexional Year plus 2 years	Destroy or delete
Data Processor Record	End of the Connexional Year after it has been updated	Destroy or delete

Please Note: Local Authority Record Offices will no longer accept Circuit Plans – please consult your District Archivist for information and advice about retention policies for miscellaneous and general records produced by Local Churches and Circuits

Section 3. District Records

3.1 District Meetings		
Type of record	How long to keep it for	What to do with it
Synod	Current connexional year + 5 CPD SO 415 (until no longer required for current reference)	Archive

District Committees	Current connexional year +3 Good practice	Archive
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3.2 Employment

Type of record	How long to keep it for	What to do with it
Employee tax and insurance records	Current tax year + 6 Statutory requirement	Destroy
Insurance records: employer liability	Current tax year + 4 Statutory requirement	Destroy
Pension contribution records	Current tax year + 6 Limitation Act 1980	Destroy
Contracts of employment	Current tax year + 6 Limitation Act 1980	Destroy
Annual tax return	Current tax year + 6 Statutory	Destroy
Expenses claims	Current tax year + 6 Limitation Act 1980	Destroy

3.3 Finance

Type of record	How long to keep it for	What to do with it
Annual accounts	Current connexional year + 6 Limitation Act 1980	Archive
Cash books	Current connexional year + 6 Good practice	Destroy
Cheque book / paying in slips	Current connexional year + 6 Limitation Act 1980	Destroy
Financial statements	Current connexional year + 6 Limitation Act 1980	Destroy
Accounts of reporting organisations	Current connexional year + 6 Limitation Act 1980	Archive (if not already included in District accounts)
Accounts of youth organisations	Current connexional year + 6 Limitation Act 1980	Archive (if not already included in District accounts)

3.4 Membership		
Type of record	How long to keep it for	What to do with it
Synod Directory including databases, mailing and contact lists	Review annually GDPR compliance required – Consent forms required for all new Synod appointees	Superseded copy to Archive, Consent forms destroyed when no longer valid.

3.5 Property		
Type of record	How long to keep it for	What to do with it
Insurance policies	Retain for 40 years Commercial practice	Destroy or delete
Claims correspondence	3 years after last action Commercial practice	Destroy or delete
Property agreements and leases	1 year after end of agreement Commercial practice	Archive
Licences for use	1 years after end of agreement	Destroy if property no longer owned by the Church
Quinquennial inspection reports	Retain for as long as required for current business	Destroy if property no longer owned by the Church
Records of church closure and sale of premises	Current connexional year + 6 Limitation Act 1980	Archive after weeding
Burial Registers / Records of graveyards including plans of graves	Permanent Retention	Archive

3.6 Safeguarding		
Type of record	How long to keep it for	What to do with it
Clear Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificate	Retain for 6 months from the recruitment decision	Destroy
Risk Assessment recommendations and a management plan in the event of an unclear or blemished DBS disclosure	Retain for 75 years after appointment / employment ceases	Destroy

Records of other safeguarding adult or child protection concerns either within the church, church related activity, or within a family by an individual where the church was the reporting body or involved in care or monitoring plans that is any sex offender risk assessments and monitoring agreements Please see Standing Order 010	Retain for 75 years after the conclusion of the matter	Destroy
Records of any children's activities, Sunday School/Junior Church/youth club registers and related general safety risk assessments. Any communication from parents or other parties in relation to the above	Retain for 75 years after the conclusion of the matter	Destroy
Personnel records of individuals with contact with children and vulnerable adults including all documentation concerning any allegations and investigations regardless of the findings	Retain for 75 years after the conclusion of the matter	Destroy

3.7 Miscellaneous / Legal and General Records

Type of record	How long to keep it for	What to do with it
General correspondence	Conclusion of matter +1 year	Destroy
District newsletters and publications	Date of issue + 2 years	Archive
Copies of replies to Connexional questionnaires and circulars	Last action +5 years	Destroy
Local Ecumenical Partnership Agreements	Duration of the Agreement	Archive
Data Protection records in relation to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data Subject Access Requests • Right to Rectification 	7 years after the last contact with the individual	Destroy or delete

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Right to Erasure (to be forgotten) • Right to Restrict Processing 		
Data Protection Consent Record	End of the Connexional Year plus 2 years	Destroy or delete
Data Processor Record	End of the Connexional Year after it has been updated	Destroy or delete

This guidance has been written and approved by

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Dated 12 April 2021