

The Anglican Church of Australia

Diocese of Bendigo

# Parish Archives

2016



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## **What is an archive**

An **archive** is a place where materials of historical value are kept. A collection of records preserved in an orderly manner and in a secure place for future reference. The purpose of the archive is to preserve and classify past records so that incoming clergy and parish officers might refer to past policies, resolutions, activities and resolutions to clarify past decisions and understand current situations. We preserve the past in order to better understand and move forward into the future

In small organisations an archive may be just a room where such materials are stored. These records may include written or printed documents or objects such as photographs, maps, sound recordings, computer disks, etc.

The Parish Archive could simply be a storage cupboard, filing cabinet or boxes depending how much material you have.

## **Who is responsible**

Extract from the Parish Administration Act, 2010

*7.2 The duties of the Churchwardens are as follows:  
... ( c ) To ensure that adequate provision is made by each congregation for the proper preservation and safe custody of the Church Registers and all Church plate and other valuables;*

## **Why we keep archives**

Archival records of churches represent a very significant part of Australia's documentary heritage. They trace the history of the various parishes, the clergy and people who have been involved over the years, the baptisms, marriages, burials, the special celebrations and also the story of the buildings that we use for worship.

What we hold are the only copies of those documents, and if they are lost or damaged over time, the history of our church and its contribution to Australian society may also be lost.

Synod, in 1998, made this resolution.

*Recognising that there is a clear need for the preservation of the historical records and minute books of the churches and that it is necessary to have ready access to these records, this Synod:*

- (1) reminds all church Wardens of their obligation to ensure that adequate provision is made by each congregation for the proper preservation and safe custody of Church records; ...*
- (2) requests that the Registrar provides to parishes information on the correct and appropriate manner of storing, caring for and conserving such records.*

### **Who owns them**

All Parish records and registers belong to the Diocese of Bendigo. They should be stored within the parish or in the Diocesan Archive in Bendigo. They are not to be passed on to community organisations such as local historical societies.

### **Who looks after them**

It would be advantageous if every Parish had someone who was in charge of the records and who could be available to organise and maintain them and answer enquiries. This person may not necessarily have any particular qualifications for the job, but will have a sense of responsibility regarding history and the preservation of the records of the church. This could be one person or two people working together.

### **What we keep**

Records which should be preserved include

- Registers for services, Baptisms, Marriages and Burials
- Faculties (documents which give the Parish permission for memorials to be placed in the church)
- Parish roll. (including past Parish rolls)
- Plans of buildings or property
- Vestry meeting papers (minutes, financials, correspondence etc.)

- Special worship services (Inductions, anniversaries, weddings and funerals of parishioners)
- Parish newsletters
- Memorabilia (photos, newspaper cuttings, trophies)
- Finance and stewardship records

### **Where we keep them**

Material still in use will be in various locations.

- The registers will be in the church.
- The Secretary and/or Treasurer of Parish organisations may have current books in their homes

Materials no longer in use should be placed in an archive as soon as possible.

When Parishes close, the registers, and other important documents should be sent to the Diocesan Archive in Bendigo.

### **How we store them**

The size of your parish storage area depends on the number of records you hold or expect to hold in the future. In a smaller parish this may simply be a cupboard, some shelves or a filing cabinet. In a larger parish you may need a room devoted to your collection with steel shelving erected to take archive boxes.

Ensuring that your collection is stored in appropriate conditions will help you preserve your records for a long time.

- Don't store on the floor – even boxes should be kept clear of the floor in case of flooding
- Don't store near heaters or plumbing
- Keep storage areas clean; vacuum regularly.
- Avoid extremes of temperature and humidity.
- Avoid exposure to direct sunlight.
- Regularly inspect storage areas to prevent insect or animal infestation.
- No food in collection storage areas

## **What we store them in**

### **Paper and plastic**

Place your documents in 'Copy safe' or other archival plastic sleeves. Put sheets of archival-quality paper behind them. You can write any extra information in pencil on this paper. (Check the wrapper on your copy paper – it should say 'Acid free')

These documents in plastic sleeves can be stored in an ordinary ring binder or in boxes. Zip-top plastic bags can house registers and other books and items.

Photograph albums are a good way of storing and displaying small items. Use 'Copy safe' photo pockets. Albums with 'magnetic' or 'self-adhesive' materials are to be avoided as they may stain and damage your documents.

Newspapers are printed on paper not meant to last, and yellows with age. It is best to photocopy newspaper cuttings and store the copies in plastic pockets for keeping.

### **Safe plastics**

Polyester, polyethylene and polypropylene (recycle 05) - often marked as 'Copy safe' - are safe plastics to use.

Oven bags are particularly appropriate as they are transparent and made out of polyester, which is very stable.

### **Boxes**

Archive quality storage boxes can be purchased, but Marbig and Esselte are fine. Boxes protect from dust and light, buffer temperature and humidity, and protect from pollution. They are easy to handle if not loaded too full, and offer some protection against water damage. They can be used as outer containers, but first place your documents in good quality wrapping such as stable plastic or acid-free paper.

## **How we handle them**

- Handle objects with clean, dry hands.
- Handle or display original documents in protective mounts and folders.

- Do not attempt to 'mend' objects or paper based records. Place in plastic sleeves or between sheets of acid free paper.
- Do not use 'sticky tape' on your documents as permanent staining may occur.
- If it is necessary to annotate documents, use only a soft pencil.
- Do not use metal pins, staples, paper clips as they will rust.
- Label the package, not the object or record. If you must label use a graphite pencil, e.g. 2B and write softly.
- Do not photocopy from the baptism, marriage and burial registers as they may be damaged in the process. A certified copy is adequate.
- Do not laminate documents.

### **How we preserve them**

- Make print or electronic copies of your computer files and store them in appropriate storage conditions.
- Make copies of very fragile and/or frequently used materials.
- When making electronic copies, save as TIF files, not JPG where information can be lost.
- Lamination is not recommended.
- Display copies of original documents or pictures rather than the originals. Good colour copies are hard to tell from the originals.

### **Knowing what is in the collection**

If there is no list of what is held in the archive, one should be made. Start by looking at what is there, and make a rough list, sorting the records (if they are not already sorted) into groups - Service registers, baptism, marriage and burial registers, correspondence, minute books, leaflets, photographs etc.

Enter this into a register. This register can then be used to keep a record of any new materials that come in to the



collection. A digital record should be made and updated regularly, but it is important to also keep the register updated.

When creating the list note:

- What the records are and the date range
- A brief description and note about physical condition or size
- Where it is to be found – e.g. Box 1, shelf 1. Give the box an identification mark and note this on the list. Place a copy listing the contents into the box and a copy into a folder for reference.
- For new materials, include the date of receipt, the item or collection, the quantity of the material (for example, 3 boxes, 3 folders) and a brief description of the contents and where and/or from whom they originated.

### **Who can use them and what is accessible**

Write the rules (a policy) of who has access to your records and what information is available.

- Some minutes or financial records may contain sensitive material which the parish may not wish to be made public.
- Baptism and marriage information should only be provided within privacy constraints. As a guideline official Victorian birth records are not available later than 1920 and marriages not later than 1942. There needs to be proof that persons asking for transcriptions of more recent records are either the person themselves or next-of-kin.

### **What (if anything) is charged?**

Normally fees are not charged to parishioners.

Some larger or older parishes, however, have a number of family history enquiries regarding baptisms, marriages and burials. It is reasonable to charge a fee for these searches and for the provision of an extract of an entry from a register.

Currently, St Paul's Cathedral charges a fee of \$10 for an extract of an entry from a register.

## **Relationship with the Diocesan Archive**

### **Parishes**

- Store their current and historical records as long as they have adequate and sufficient storage space.
- When centres close or records are not able to be stored properly they should be sent to the Diocesan archive.
- As the first point of contact for enquiries is often the Diocesan Archivist, a list of materials held (with dates) and the name of the person to contact should be furnished to the Diocesan archive.

### **Diocese**

- Holds Diocesan records - copies of church newspapers, Diocesan Directories, published booklets from parishes, correspondence, material from Diocesan groups etc.
- Holds registers and other materials handed in from parishes and from closed centres.

### **Contact**

Feel free to contact the honorary Diocesan archivist at any time. Write care of the Registry Office, Box 2, Bendigo or email [archivist@bendigoanglican.org.au](mailto:archivist@bendigoanglican.org.au)

This information has been compiled by the honorary Diocesan archivist from a number of sources.

- Keith Cole's booklet 'Your Parish Archive'
- The National Library of Australia 'Preserving Australia's Documentary Heritage – A Starter kit for Community Groups'
- Information gained from studying Conservation during library studies and
- Workshops presented by personnel from the Public Records Office of Victoria, North Melbourne.

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