

Church Archives and Historical Information Guidelines

To help preserve the history of our congregations, and ultimately the EMMC, it is important that we archive specific documents that help tell the story of who we are and what has happened in our past.

When sorting through the information in your church, please send the following items to the EMMC Home Office in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

WHAT TO KEEP:

- A copy (or original) of **all CHURCH BOARD** (governing board) **MINUTES** from the start of your congregation to the present. Some of you have already done this, which has been a great help.
- A copy (or original) of **all CONGREGATION MEETING MINUTES** from the start of your congregation to the present
- A copy (or original) of **MEMBERSHIP LISTS** from the start of your congregation to the present
- A copy of each Sunday bulletin from the start of your congregation to the present. If there was an insert that contained more church information, please include that. If the insert was a promotion from another agency, it does not need to be included. Email a copy to recorder@emmc.ca. Information relating to special events / promotions that your congregation has initiated
- Send the above documents to the EMMC Home Office on a regular basis (ie: once a year) to keep up with the archiving process

THE FOLLOWING ITEMS MAY BE KEPT AT YOUR CHURCH:

- **Year-end financial records.** You should keep the past seven years of records on file for easy access in the event that you need to produce the documents upon request. Forward the oldest financial records to EMMC when the 7th calendar year has concluded
- **Photographs.** Whenever possible, identify the event, the date and people in the photo. This is especially important information when churches celebrate anniversaries and other occasions. Of course, you are welcome to send photos to the archives at any time.

CHURCH RECORDS / MINUTES OF A SENSITIVE NATURE:

At times, congregations move through a very difficult period in congregation life. Situations and decisions arise which subsequently are recorded in minutes. Access to that information is not necessarily helpful for those outside of that situation. The Mennonite Heritage Centre, 500 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg Manitoba is the storage location for all EMMC archives. The Heritage Centre has policies and procedures in place for handling sensitive materials. If a congregation is concerned about the handling of sensitive material, they should:

- 1) Note which files are sensitive
- 2) State **WHY** they are sensitive (just a sentence or two, even a few words like - personal conflict issues, or termination of employment, or abuse etc).
- 3) Suggest what kind of restriction (eg. How long are the files closed, under what circumstances they may be seen, who needs to be consulted if someone wants to see them etc).

- 4) If the researcher / person looking at the files have questions, to contact the church office, the EMMC office and / or the Mennonite Heritage Centre.

WHAT HAPPENS AT THE MENNONITE HERITAGE CENTRE WITH SENSITIVE MATERIAL: a **large red dot** is placed on the box and on the file to alert Heritage Centre staff that there is a restriction. Before the box is given to a researcher they check to see what the restrictions are, and take appropriate steps eg. making the researcher sign a form, not giving access, contacting someone in the EMMC office or the appropriate church for permission. Some congregations may want these records destroyed but there are good reasons for keeping it such as legal reasons, healing reasons, learning etc.

The request can be made that the files remain sealed / restricted for up to 99 years from the date of deposit to the Heritage Centre. That way, the individuals who are identified and involved in the situation of concern will have passed on, and will not be subject to further question or scrutiny.

CHURCH BULLETINS:

Church bulletins are a huge resource for researchers and gathering information. A simple thing to do is send or email (recorder@emmc.ca) the EMMC Home Office a copy of your weekly bulletins / information sheet once a month. We can easily forward that to the Mennonite Heritage Centre on a regular basis.

MINUTES OF CHURCH BOARD / CONGREGATION MEETINGS:

If someone is disposing of their collection of minutes, you can forward that collection without going into the extra work of making a photo copy. There are those in your congregation who would be happy to pass their minutes along to someone else! We're happy to take them! On the other hand, if you want to send in the church collection of original minutes, you are welcome to do that as well. You will still have access to this information at the Archives.

MEMBERSHIP LISTS:

We recognize that Membership Lists are difficult to keep up to date. If you have copies of church directories, phone lists, etc., that would be great information for us to have for archival and reference purposes. When you produce a new directory, just pop one in the mail to the EMMC Home Office, or email it to us (recorder@emmc.ca), and again, we will file that at the Mennonite Heritage Centre on your behalf.

If and when you have larger amounts of material that needs to come to Winnipeg, let me know and I can help arrange for the transportation.

Consider this a ministry to both your congregation and the conference. Your work with church records will help us tell our story to our children and our children's children. We learn from our past.

Blessings!

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