



# concordia historical institute

Department of Archives and History of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

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[concordiahistoricalinstitute.org](http://concordiahistoricalinstitute.org)

RETRIEVE + RECORD + REFLECT + RECALL

## “My Congregation is Disbanding—Now What?”

Congregations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod are the sole owners of their records and the preservation of these records must be addressed properly when a congregation closes. *Records of disbanded congregations are legal documents and important for recording the life of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and should be incorporated into the Synod’s archives.* Additionally records of official acts can and have been used as legal proof of births and deaths.

### I. Procedure for transferring records to the CHI archives

A. Part of the process for managing the affairs of a congregation that is closing is to see that the records of the congregation are transferred to an archive for permanent preservation. The Synod encourages member congregations to transfer their records to the synodical archives at the Concordia Historical Institute in St. Louis when they disband.

B. This document lists some of the most important records that should be preserved. You may contact your district archivist for additional guidance regarding what should be kept and how to proceed with transferring your materials. You may also contact CHI if you have additional questions about what to preserve.

C. We encourage congregations to designate a portion of the congregation’s remaining financial assets for the synodical archives to cover the cost of processing, cataloging, maintaining and providing access to the legal and historical records, photographs and other materials that represent the congregation’s history.

D. Records of archival value that exist only in digital formats should be printed out for transfer to the archives.

E. When records of disbanded congregations are discovered, every effort should be made to place such records in the archives at CHI.

When congregations merge rather than close or disband completely, the newly-formed congregation should receive and

assume ownership of the records of each of its predecessor congregations and be responsible for maintaining them. The records of disbanded congregations preserved at CHI are open for research according to the general reference and research policies of CHI.

### II. Records to Be Preserved

The history of your congregation will be preserved in records that have been maintained with care. The following records should generally be preserved permanently in an archive when a congregation disbands.

- A. Parish register (includes membership records, baptisms, confirmations, marriages, funerals), church charter, articles of incorporation, and constitutions and bylaws
- B. Minutes and reports of regular and special congregational meetings
- C. Minutes of all major boards
- D. Correspondence of historical significance regarding major programs, events and contributions of the congregation
- E. Parish directories and anniversary history booklets, audited annual financial statements
- F. Property-related documents such as deeds, titles, surveys, mortgages, easements, and blueprints
- G. Documentation of endowments, bequests and restricted gifts
- H. All insurance policies
- I. Statistical information such as parochial reports
- J. Selected photographs, films, DVDs, videotapes, and sound recordings of buildings, church workers, significant individuals and special events—*all properly marked identifying persons, dates and events*
- K. Snapshots of the congregation’s website

For additional information, please contact Concordia Historical Institute at 314-505-7900 or the archivist for your district.