



# DRC in South Africa: Church Archives

## Minimum requirements for the conservation of records

(See conservation periods determined by law on page 4 and further)

Information as from 1 November 2017

On the following pages the term “congregation” also refers to synods, presbyteries, committees, task teams, service groups or any other church institutions. Similarly, the term “church board” also refers to the management board or executive council of any of the above bodies and the term “scribe” refers to the administrative official, secretary or administrator.

### 1. Documents that need to be stored permanently

Documents that need to be stored permanently should be in **hard copy** – in other words they should be printed documents. Minutes should be signed to be legally valid.

- 1.1 **Registers:** All membership registers (baptised and full members), marriage registers and registers of baptism.
- 1.2 **Agendas and minutes:** All agendas (reports), minutes of the church board and all committees.
- 1.3 **Vestry books** (which minister conducted a sermon from which text; attendance and collections).
- 1.4 **Notice books** (weekly notices or congregational bulletins).
- 1.5 **Congregational journals** (monthly or quarterly journals. one from each edition)
- 1.6 **Calendar** (annual programme. One example per annum/period)
- 1.7 **Other historical documents:** Agreements of historical significance, deeds of foundation and title deeds.
- 1.8 **Correspondence:** All letters and e-mails that have direct application to the congregation (chronological in a file). Here the church board/scribe should discern wisely. If there is any doubt, keep it. Each piece is judged on its own merit according to direct or indirect value.

Documents have **direct value** for the institutions that created them as an instrument to keep the running administration going in a meaningful, consistent and systematic way. That applies especially to recent documents. Documents have direct value – according to the Act on Access to Information (Act 2 of 2000) – to persons who are directly involved with the information or whose life or subsistence is impacted by it.

Documents with **indirect value** can have research value and give insight into and understanding of the story of the institution. **Functional value** is the kind of information in documents concerning the origin, functions, organisational composition and development of the institutions that created them. It has research value for researchers in any possible subject area.

The following questions might for instance be posed: Will this piece help the church board to prove anything? Will anybody find this information valuable for the purpose of research? Does the piece bear specific testimony to the acts of God in the congregation? Is this information also available elsewhere? (This implies that no congregation needs to store any circular or newsletter from any other institution. It is the duty of the relevant institution to store copies of the newsletters that they generate. Therefore the congregation does not store copies of the newspaper *Kerkbode*, or the monthly magazine *LiG* or old church orders. The Publication arm of the DRC will do that.)

- 1.9 **Financial documents:** Only certain of the following documents will be stored permanently, and only if they are the first/original documents, or documents that were originated in an important phase of the history of the congregation/church: cashbooks, journals, general ledgers, signed audited statements, fixed asset registers. This material should not be stored in the congregation for longer than 10 years, after which it should be handed in at the Church Archives.

Note: Exactly the same rules apply to documents that were only received or created electronically. Minutes should as a rule be printed (one copy) so that the original can be signed and stored. Correspondence (also by e-mail) that is stored in hard copy, should also be stored safely. This includes a proper filing system, so that the specific e-mail could be retrieved again. Also refer to the Act on Electronic Communication (Act 25 of 2002).

## 2. Documents that should be stored for 15 years

- 2.1 Financial documents (books) like the cashbook, general ledger and journal (Refer to the legal requirements from page 5).

## 3. Documents that should be stored for 6 years

- 3.1 Cheque counterfoils and cashed cheques – also where they are attached to invoices – may only be destroyed after 6 years.

## 4. Documents that should be stored for 5 years

These are documents of which the contents are established or available elsewhere.

- 4.1 **Letters of credence** that were accepted by the relevant meeting for which they were issued, are stored until the next ordinary meeting.
- 4.2 **Certificates of baptism** that were handed in with a view to confirmation, may be handed back when people are within close reach. Otherwise they may be destroyed after 5 years, because they can easily be requested again.
- 4.3 **Certificates of membership** and attestation that were handed in, may be destroyed after 5 years provided that the contents of the documents were enrolled into the relevant registers and all applicable information could be found there or elsewhere.
- 4.4 **Financial documents older than 5 years**, that have relevance to completed transactions, and that have no further implications, and of which the relevant information is also available elsewhere, may be destroyed.
- 4.5 **Church fete, tithing and other collection lists** older than 5 years, that provide no information of any historical or other significance regarding a person or an issue, but only inform, without any further implications, what were donated to the relevant fete or cause in money or goods, of which the important specifications are also recorded elsewhere and which will not be referred to again. That is also applicable to receipt books of the scribe, deacons and sub-deacons. Cheque counterfoils and cashed cheques may only be destroyed after 6 years.
- 4.6 **Monthly financial statements** older than 5 years, of which particulars without any further implications are only applicable to the relevant month, of which the particulars can also be found elsewhere (as on a financial annual statement) and to which will not be referred again. The same is applicable to payment registers of deacons.
- 4.7 **Tax assessments** (employee's tax), payment statements and personnel records may be destroyed 5 years after the employee left service.
- 4.8 Contracts, agreements and guarantees – 5 years after the expiry date.

## 5. Documents that should be stored for 1 year

- 5.1 **Absentee notes** that were supplied for a meeting, that have no further implication other than that the person could not attend the meeting, and that are reflected in the minutes.
- 5.2 **Waybills** (after a year) of which the information became redundant because it showed clearly enough from the piece that the waybill accompanied, from whom, when and under which circumstances it was received.
- 5.3 Notices of and **invitations to meetings**, notices of unavailability and attendance registers (after a year), if the factual particulars that are displayed on the documents are reflected in full in the minutes and if they have no further implication other than the fact that the meeting took place, that people were called up to attend, and that they could or could not attend the meeting.
- 5.4 Letters and/or notices of the **acceptance/non-acceptance of nominations/elections**, provided that the information is reflected elsewhere (in minutes or reports) and that the letters/notices have no further implications other than that the nomination/election was accepted or declined.
- 5.5 Notices and **invitations** (after a year), provided that the information on the specific documents can be obtained elsewhere.
- 5.6 **Statistical** and other data may be destroyed when the information is established in a collection statement, for example in the reports of the congregation to the presbytery.

- 5.7 **Circulars** received, which were already taken notice of, which will not be referred to again and which have no other implication other than to the once off matter that was addressed in the circular.

## 6. The disposal of material

- 6.1 No documents may be destroyed without the permission of the Church Archives. Permission must be obtained in writing. Firstly an inventory must be drawn up of all the material that may be destroyed according to the requirements mentioned above. This is presented to the church board for permission and then to the Church Archives as a second point of control to assure that important documents do not get lost. Only when the Church Archives grants permission, may the material be destroyed.
- 6.2 Disposal (after permission!) takes place in one of three ways:
- 6.2.1 It can be torn into small pieces.
- 6.2.2 It can be shredded.
- 6.2.3 It can be burnt. Just make sure of the specific fire regulations of the local municipality so that a bigger fire is not caused in the process. Great care should be taken that no personal information lies around somewhere or is blown away by the wind.

## 7. Documents that may be destroyed immediately (*without permission of the Church Archives*)

(These documents need not be shredded or torn up or burnt. They may be disposed of as waste paper or via the normal municipal refuse removal.)

- 7.1 Marketing material received, old magazines, newspapers, redundant copies of bulletins, hymn sheets, newsletters, etc.
- 7.2 Records that contain no legible information any more due to fading, wearing away or damage. For example, carbon copies of old correspondence that have faded away so that they are illegible, also where pen carbon books were used or faxes that faded.

## 8. Handing in of documents at the Church Archives

- 8.1 Documents that congregations want to hand in at the Church Archives, must be covered by a full inventory after a decision by the church board, in consultation with the Church Archives and then handed in at the Church Archives for conservation and unlocking. This implies that you send the inventory first to the Church Archives (without the documents). The Church Archives will then grant permission that the documents may be dispatched or delivered.
- 8.2 Congregations should manage their own places of safekeeping in such a way that only documents of around 10 years be stored in the safe of the congregation (that is apart from financial documents that should be stored for 15 years). The rest should please be sent to the Church Archives for safekeeping in a modern, purposefully built archives. The Church Archives provides the correct climate (temperature and humidity) in a dust free environment with high quality conservation technology (fire, robbery). Archivalia handed in for safekeeping are still accessible to the specific congregation.

The Senior Archivist (Karen Minnaar) handles enquiries concerning conservation periods and grants permission for the destruction of archivalia.

Physical address: Archives Building, 1 Noordwal-West Street, Stellenbosch

Phone: 021 882 9923

Postal address: PO Box 34, Stellenbosch 7599

E-mail: [karen@kaapkerk.co.za](mailto:karen@kaapkerk.co.za)

## LEGAL REQUIREMENTS FOR THE CONSERVATION OF RECORDS

If any of the following documents are prepared electronically, it must be assured that the data are still stored for the required period and can be printed and/or supplied on request. As media change electronic data should be transferred to acceptable storing methods. Data on memory sticks should for instance be transferred to a portable hard disk or another acceptable backup system. Backup copies should – also for safety sake – rather be stored at another venue (in another building). That decreases the risk that the computer as well as the backup copies could be stolen or destroyed by fire in one incident.

<b>ACCOUNTING RECORDS</b>	<b>Store for X years</b>
Financial audited annual statements	<b>15</b>
Purchasing journals	<b>15</b>
General ledgers	<b>15</b>
Additional annexures to accounting records and supplementary accounting records	<b>15</b>
Debtors' ledgers	<b>15</b>
Auxiliary general ledgers	<b>15</b>
Auxiliary journals	<b>15</b>
Auxiliary accounting books	<b>15</b>
Journals	<b>15</b>
Journal supporting documents	<b>15</b>
Cashbooks and/or petty cashbooks	<b>15</b>
Consolidation returns	<b>15</b>
Creditors' ledgers	<b>15</b>
Fixed asset registers	<b>15</b>
Accounting records	<b>15</b>
Sales journals	<b>15</b>
Stock records, stock statements and supporting documents	<b>15</b>
Dividend and interest records	<b>12</b>
Interest payment records (listed companies)	<b>12</b>
Cheques and bills of exchange	<b>6</b>
Purchase invoices and purchase orders	<b>5</b>
Proofs	<b>5</b>
Bank orders	<b>5</b>
Bank statements and supporting documents	<b>5</b>
Tax returns and tax assessments	<b>5</b>
Payment records	<b>5</b>
VAT documents	<b>5</b>
Debtors' statements	<b>5</b>
Deposit slips	<b>5</b>
Working papers of annual financial statements	<b>5</b>
Goods received vouchers	<b>5</b>
Journal records	<b>5</b>
Cost accounting records	<b>5</b>
Creditors' invoices	<b>5</b>
Receipts	<b>5</b>
Payroll registers	<b>5</b>
Sales tax records	<b>5</b>
Dispatch records	<b>5</b>
Sales invoices	<b>5</b>
Loading records	<b>5</b>

<b>EMPLOYEE RECORDS</b>	<b>Store for X years</b>
Tax returns with regard to employee's tax	5
Payment records	5
Salary and wages registers	5
Expense accounts	3
Industry training records	7
Casualty records (IOD)	7
Accident books and records	7
Personnel and disciplinary records after date of completion of service	3
Time records	7
Apprentice compensation records	1
Applications for work – unsuccessful	5

<b>AGREEMENTS AND CONTRACTS</b>	<b>Store for X years</b>
Agreements of historical value	<b>Indefinitely</b>
Debts, depending on the type of debt – refer to the Prescription Act (Act 68 of 1969)	5
Expired written agreements or contracts (after expiry date)	5
Rental, lease and suspensive sales agreements (after expiry date)	5
Contracts with agents, customers and suppliers (after expiry date)	5
Licensing agreements (after expiry date)	5
Indemnifications and guarantees (after expiry date)	5
Applications for work – unsuccessful	1

<b>STATUTORY AND SHARE REGISTRATION RECORDS</b>	<b>Store for X years</b>
Annual returns and supporting documents	<b>Indefinitely</b>
Notices of general and committee meetings	<b>Indefinitely</b>
Minute books of companies and closed corporations	<b>Indefinitely</b>
Certificates for commencement of business	<b>Indefinitely</b>
Certificates of incorporation	<b>Indefinitely</b>
Certificates of name changes	<b>Indefinitely</b>
Indemnification letters for lost share certificates	<b>Indefinitely</b>
Statutes and acts of incorporation	<b>Indefinitely</b>
Founding declaration and amendments (closed corporation)	<b>Indefinitely</b>
Attendance registers of directors	<b>Permanently</b>
Name change records	<b>Permanently</b>
Index of members	15
Member registers	15
Registers of directors and officials	15
Registers of directors' holdings in contracts	15
Registers of directors' holdings in shares and debentures	15
Registers of pledge giving and bonds	15
Registers of debenture holders	15
Branch registers	15
Fixed asset register	15
Share transfer forms (cancelled)	12
Subscriptions, certificates, underwritings or any similar instruments that represent any shares, effects or debentures (cancelled)	3
Notices of change of address	1

<b>TITLE DOCUMENTS</b>	<b>Store for X years</b>
Share certificates	<b>Until the shares are sold</b>
Share certificates – cancelled	<b>3</b>
Patent and trade mark records	<b>Indefinitely</b>
Patent and trade mark records after date of expiry	<b>5</b>
Title deeds – proofs of right of property or diagram deeds	<b>Until the property is disposed of</b>

### **Indemnity**

Although the Church Archives does everything in its capacity to ensure that all the information is as correct as possible and will update the information regularly, the Church Archives does not accept responsibility for the correctness thereof. The correctness of information that is supplied, depends on the primary sources that were used in the collection of the information. The golden rule would be to rather store documents for a longer than a shorter period as reflected in these guidelines and to get permission from both the church board and the Church Archives, before archivalia are destroyed. It might be that a certain document is not mentioned in this list, but when it is presented with a view to destruction, the newest legislation and guidelines will again be consulted.

Please also refer to the additional responsibility and accountability that you might have for the conservation periods of specific documents/records as required by applicable legislation, for example the Act on Organisations without Profit (Act 71 of 1997) and the Companies Act (Act 71 of 2008).

As a Public Benefit Organisation (PBO), you should also remember the following:

#### ***Record-keeping***

*Any books of account, records or other documents, including financial statements, of an approved PBO must be retained and preserved for a period of at least four years after the last date of an entry in any book or, if kept in electronic or any other form, for a period of four years after completion of the transaction, act or operation to which they relate. It is the responsibility of the person in control of the PBO to ensure that the necessary records are kept.*