

Memory and Ministry
Caring for Your Church's Heritage
Study Guide

About this resource

Memory and Ministry: Caring for Your Church's Heritage is designed for you, the person in your local church charged with the care and keeping of the church's records. You may be the church historian, a member of the Committee on Records and History or simply someone who values your church's records and wants to insure that they are preserved for future generations.

This DVD focuses on the proper archival care of local church records, including such concerns as locating and organizing records, deciding what should be saved and what can be discarded, and providing a safe environment for fragile documents. The DVD also stresses that caring for church records is a ministry, *a ministry of memory*, which can be a vital part of local church life.

There are five segments in the DVD. It may be viewed in a single session or over several sessions, allowing times for breaks, discussion and questions. It is especially appropriate to use the DVD in a workshop setting. **Whatever your setting, the DVD will be much more effective if you use the companion workbook, *Guidelines for Leading Your Congregation: Church Historian*, part of a series for local church leaders published by The United Methodist Publishing House. Contact your local Cokesbury store or call 1-800-672-1789 to purchase this workbook.**

The DVD comes to you from the General Commission on Archives and History, in cooperation with United Methodist Communications. If you have questions about archival work or would like to learn about other archives and history resources, contact the General Commission on Archives and History at P.O. Box 127, Madison, NJ 07940; 973-408-3189.

Who will use the DVD?

The primary audience is local church historians and Committees on Records and History. Other persons concerned about local church records will also find the DVD useful, including pastors and church secretaries.

Members of Annual Conference Commissions on Archives and History will find that the concepts and practices introduced in the DVD also have application at the Annual Conference archives.

Using this DVD in a training workshop

If at all possible, obtain enough copies of the companion workbook, *Guidelines for leading Your Congregation: Church Historian* so that every participant can have one. Read the workbook carefully ahead of time, marking those topics you will want to stress in your discussion times.

Preview the DVD. Watch it all the way through once, noting the length of each segment. Then go back and view each segment at least one more time. Note those sections in the companion workbook that correspond to various DVD segments. We recommend that you stop the DVD for discussion at the end of each segment and turn to the workbook, which supplements and expands on the concepts introduced in each segment. While it is not necessary to give detailed attention to every paragraph of the workbook, it will be very helpful for participants to familiarize themselves with the contents as part of the training they receive at the workshop.

Decide how long the discussion breaks will be, but be aware that you may need to be somewhat flexible. Be sure to build in some time for refreshment breaks.

Gather additional materials that will be useful (see list at the end of this guide).

On the day of the workshop, arrive early to make sure that the room is set up properly. It is imperative that each person be able to see the monitor clearly. Make sure there is no glare on the monitor screen. Have the DVD cued up; make sure you know how to stop and start the DVD.

Begin the workshop experience by asking each participant to introduce himself or herself to the group. One way to break the ice is to ask each person to respond

(briefly!) to three specific questions, such as, How long have you been involved in caring for local church records? Does your church have any sort of organized archives? What question would you especially like to have answered at this workshop? Participants' responses will help you gauge their levels of interest, experience and expertise.

As you introduce the DVD, be sure to indicate how the viewing will be structured, when breaks will occur and so on. People will appreciate having some sense of how their time will be spent.

An important theme of the DVD is that history is a ministry. Therefore, the care of local church records is an important, worthwhile task. You may wish to touch on this theme as you introduce the DVD and/or in a devotional moment.

Segment 1 introduces the theme that history is ministry. It then moves on to define some archival terms and discusses the process of identifying existing church records.

In particular, it will be helpful to spend some time outlining a process for identifying local church records. You may want to walk the participants through the process. Some questions for discussion could be, Where are records located in your church? What are some strategies for working with church leaders and the congregation to locate and collect materials? (Encourage "How we did it" stories from other participants). What has been your experience in working with a local library or the Annual Conference archives to learn more about your church's records and history?

Segment 2 discusses how to determine which records should be kept and which can be discarded, and how to organize the records that you have.

This segment touches on matters of great concern to those who care for local church records. The participants will probably have a number of very specific questions. It may be helpful to do a brief exercise so that participants can get some practice determining which records to keep and how to organize them. You can prepare a handout with a random list of typical items to be found in a church archives. Allow enough time for participants to decide which should be kept and then ask them to organize the records (on paper). Following the exercise,

participants can be asked about their decisions and methods. The responses will help address the whole group's concerns.

Segment 3 introduces the topic of preservation and suggests simple ways to prolong the life of your records.

Preservation is an enormous responsibility for all those entrusted with the care of records. This can be the most "hands-on" part of the workshop experience. It will be extremely helpful if you can have a variety of archival containers and supplies on hand, as well as some archival supply catalogues. Invite participants to handle the containers and other supplies. Have some documents and photographs on hand so that you can demonstrate proper storage methods.

You may also want to take a little time to discuss the kind of room or space in which church records should be housed. Encourage participants to talk about the available space (or lack of it) in their churches for their archives.

Segment 4 discusses how information about your church can be found in your Annual Conference archives, at the General Commission on Archives and History and in public libraries and archives in your area. It also illustrates how a local church's ministry of history can connect people to their own past.

The discussion time following this segment provides a good opportunity for you to describe the work of the Annual Conference Commission on Archives and History, particularly as it relates to the local churches of the conference. If you have obtained material from the General Commission (such as brochures and publication order forms), you can hand them out now. In addition, perhaps you can gather information about regional historical societies and libraries to share with participants at this time.

After viewing segment 4, participants should have a good idea of the value of local church records. If participants wish to pursue the topic of records management in more detail, encourage them to obtain copies of the General Commission's publication, *Guidelines to Managing Records for the Local Church and Annual Conference*. You can also encourage brainstorming about creative ways to document today's church life.

The last part of the DVD, Segment 5, reminds viewers of history's importance as a ministry of the local church. You will need to decide beforehand whether you want to conclude with this segment or move through additional sections of the workbook.

If you want to conclude the workshop with this segment, tell the participants that this will wind things up, although you will be glad to continue any unfinished discussions. Introduce this final segment with a word of encouragement, reminding each participant that their work counts, that history is a ministry of the local church. Be sure to thank the participants for their active interest in the workshop.

Materials to have on hand

The workshop experience will be enhanced if you can have some of the following materials on hand:

- Samples of archival storage containers, supplies (such as Mylar envelopes) and catalogues from suppliers.
- Samples of simple finding aids from the Annual Conference archival depository or a local historical society.
- Sample copy of *Guidelines Managing Records for the Local Church and Annual Conference* (available from the General Commission on Archives and History).
- Sample copy of the General Commission's *Archives and History Directory* (available from the General Commission).
- Handouts, brochures, and other materials from the Annual Conference Commission on Archives and History.
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