(POL-RECORDS) Records Retention and Confidentiality Policy

General Board Approved: May 31, 2026

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish clear expectations for maintaining, protecting, accessing, and retaining church records.

The church desires to preserve important records, protect confidential information, and handle sensitive matters with integrity and care.

2. Scope

This policy applies to church records, including paper and electronic records, created or received by the church, its boards, officers, employees, ministries, and approved leaders.

3. Types of Records

Church records may include:

- Membership records;
- Board and business meeting minutes;
- Financial records;
- Employment records;
- Volunteer applications;
- Background check records;
- Driver approval records;
- Incident reports;
- Permission forms;
- Facility use agreements;
- Insurance documents;
- Counseling notes, if any;
- Legal correspondence;
- Ministry records;
- Policies and procedures.

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4. Confidential Records

Confidential records include, but are not limited to:

- Background check information;
- Abuse, misconduct, or incident reports;
- Counseling-related notes;
- Personnel records;
- Financial giving records;
- Medical information;
- Sensitive membership or discipline records;
- Legal or insurance matters.

Confidential records shall be shared only with those who have a legitimate church, legal, pastoral, insurance, or safety need to know.

5. Storage and Security

Records should be stored in a secure and orderly manner.

Paper records should be kept in locked files or secure areas when appropriate.

Electronic records should be protected by reasonable password, access, backup, and security practices.

6. Access to Records

Access to records may be granted according to role and responsibility.

The church may limit access to confidential or sensitive records to the Lead Pastor, appropriate board members, clerk, treasurer, ministry leaders, legal counsel, insurance representatives, or others with a legitimate need to know.

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7. Retention Guidelines

The church shall retain records according to the following general guidelines unless law, insurance requirements, legal counsel, or the General Board require a longer period:

- Constitution, Bylaws, policies, and official governing documents: permanent;
- Membership records: permanent or long-term;
- Board and business meeting minutes: permanent;
- Financial records: at least seven years;
- Employment records: at least seven years after employment ends;
- Volunteer applications and screening records: at least seven years after service ends;
- Background check authorization and results: at least seven years after service ends, or longer if connected to an incident;
- Driver approval records: at least seven years after driving service ends;
- Permission slips and routine event forms: at least three years;
- Incident reports: permanent or long-term;
- Abuse or misconduct reports: permanent;
- Insurance policies and claims: permanent or long-term;
- Facility use agreements: at least seven years;
- Counseling notes, if any: handled carefully and retained according to pastoral, legal, and church policy guidance.

8. Incident and Abuse Records

Records involving abuse, suspected abuse, sexual misconduct, serious injury, threats, or major incidents shall not be destroyed without approval from the General Board and, when appropriate, legal counsel.

9. Disposal of Records

Records that are no longer required may be securely destroyed.

Confidential paper records should be shredded or otherwise destroyed in a way that protects privacy.

Electronic records should be deleted securely when practical.

10. Litigation, Claims, or Investigations

If the church becomes aware of a potential lawsuit, insurance claim, investigation, abuse allegation, employment dispute, or other serious matter, relevant records shall be preserved and not destroyed.

11. Confidentiality Expectations

Church leaders and ministry workers shall not use or share confidential information for gossip, personal advantage, unnecessary curiosity, or harm.

Confidentiality does not prevent reporting abuse, complying with law, protecting safety, cooperating with authorities, or involving the appropriate General Board members.

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12. Review

This policy shall be reviewed periodically by the General Board and may be revised as needed.

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