

## SECTION F

### PRESERVING FRED, ETC.

Toward the end of the last century a drifter died while passing through an Indiana town. The authorities made inquiries, but no one knew the fellow or whether he had family. Meanwhile the mortician, a craftsman proud of his calling, took charge of the corpse.

When no relative stepped forward, the mortician had an idea. He'd done his usual job of fine embalming, and it was again going into a hole, along with a reasonably nice suit. His skill wouldn't be appreciated by mourners. So, he just never got around to burying the man. The hobo settled down as a permanent community resident, sitting in a chair with a dust cover over him upstairs in the funeral parlor's storage room. He was given a name, Fred, and shown off on occasion by the proud mortician.

Archaeologists, morticians, and archivists all witness sin's effect on creation. Even Fred eventually looked a little dried out and he was buried 30 or 40 years later. Things deteriorate. To "preserve" means to slow the withering breakdown of molecules of matter.

Trained conservators are highly skilled professionals in the repair and stabilization of documents, photos, and artifacts. Few possessions of an average church warrant their attention and cost. Unskilled effort can do harm. Yet there are things to do, and not do, to extend life and minimize deterioration of objects.

Let's look at what the average church historian can do to preserve all the "Freds" of the church. Here are the steps:

1. **Make a starting plan of action.**
2. **Organize the troops.**
3. **Identify what to preserve.**
4. **Review the plan.**
5. **Select, collect, and arrange.**
6. **Protect and preserve.**
7. **Use.**

#### 1. **Make a starting plan of action.**

The "lone church historian" can't and shouldn't try to save and protect everything. Being a one-man band defeats the bandsman; it destroys the unity of the church; it is very unPresbyterian,

and it will keep you from participating in other needed ministries of the church. Fight the temptation to do it all on your own.

Still, you may have to start things out on your own, or informally with a friend or two who share your interest. Is your church collecting, keeping, and using its past? Is the story of today being preserved? Think it through and write down reasons for a preservation effort. Why should your church save its story? How could people be edified? What short-range and long-range benefits might come from such a project.

Fit your church into the plan of action on these pages and write down every idea which comes to you for preserving. Be wild and creative if you want. Keep this list for future reference and make a second, concrete starting plan which is modest and practical enough to take to the session. At this point you are simply the sparkplug. Your task is to represent the idea and keep it going, leaving the rest to the Lord.

## **2. Organize.**

Ask the session to form a preservation committee or task force. This should include a cross-section of interested people. Actually, it is a great way to tap two of the church's most unused age groups, the elderly, whose contributions are obvious, and the teens and young adults, who have energy, ideas, and often a natural interest in what has come before them in the church.

Tell the session why you think a preservation project is important and what can be accomplished. Keep in mind the church finances, but also remember that some things can be done at little cost. Give the elders an idea of what might come from the project beyond simply preserving documents and artifacts. Is a new or updated booklet or brochure introducing the church possible? Is an anniversary coming in even five or more years? Don't be dismayed if others have a different vision and yours gets lost along the way--but have a solid idea to offer.

## **3. Identify what to preserve.**

If yours is a new congregation, most sources to preserve are no farther away than the church files. . .and the ruling elders' files. . .and the pastor's files. . .and the newspaper morgue. . . and photo albums in every member's home. . .

See, even a new church quickly disperses its memorabilia. Important documents scatter or fall to neglect. It's easy to assume things will be saved without doing it. If they are kept, where? Materials from churches with a longer history may be strewn through the community, the state, and the nation. Preservation begins with detective work.

## PRESERVATION, page F-3

After organizing, the committee should begin an inventory. An inventory is needed to answer three important questions:

- What do we have?**
- What is missing that we need to keep looking for?**
- Where, precisely, is everything?**

Make copies of the Records Inventory Sheet in the Forms section of this handbook. Give one to the church records keeper, whether pastor or secretary, or ask permission for the committee to inventory the church filing system. This is a preliminary survey, but details will help later. Record:

- a. Types of materials (correspondence, financial records, sermon notes, etc.) in each set of records.
- b. Who owns the records (Some may be the pastor's personal files. Files may be mixed church's/pastor's).
- c. Who originated each set of records (pastor, session, diaconate, WIC, trustees, choir, Christian ed.).
- d. Whether each set of records is protected, secure, and under someone's authority.
- e. Whether the records are active or inactive (how often they are used).
- f. The time period covered by each set of records.

Survey the church property. Use a church work day. Probe every closet, drawer, and corner, looking for old boxes of papers, photographs, paintings, Scout troop banners, communion sets, cradle roll posters, and choir robes. A few things will obviously have no value and can be immediately discarded, but be careful. You are now only to describe materials, record their location, note their condition, and perhaps collect them in a central location.

With session approval, request information about the whereabouts of anything pertaining to the the church's life and history among the congregation and friends.

Make things easy. If someone has something in the attic, but he no longer can climb stairs, offer a young, adventurous committee member to make the survey.

Be sensitive about feelings. Make sure members understand that you are not asking them to give up their favorite memories, nor will they have your wrath if they admit they threw something important away. To better preserve its heritage the session simply needs to know where items are located. If something is destroyed, the church needs to know so time won't be lost looking for it.

Be thorough. Ask long-term members for help in locating items. Write to former pastors and members. If someone has left the church in anger, ask the pastor to make contact. It could be a

On the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the Woman's Society at Giliad ARP Church, Huntersville, NC, the pastor used an old church painting to challenge his people. In 1897 45 girls of the church had their names inscribed on the artwork for having memorized the Westminster Shorter Catechism or the Children's Catechism. The preserved painting was pictured in the newsletter with a challenge to stress catechism memory for all ages.

chism. Pictured here is a photo of the painting commemorating "Westminster Day," Nov. 12, 1897. One of those 45 was Mrs. Laura Cashion, who 13 years before had become a charter member of the Woman's Soc. Another was Minnie Alexander, daughter of another charter member, Nancy Fulwood Alexander.

That was the young lady who was to become the first ARP missionary to India.

for the Woman's Society (incidentally, now that I will probably be leaving ever, I will be with you in special occasion. There is a look over our shoulder we come from.

uld like to see us do is to t of those 45 Gileadites orized either the Westminster or the Child's Cate-



contact leading to repentance and reconciliation. Contact heirs. They may be willing to donate the items or copies. They also may share memories of grandpa's or Aunt Edith's life in the church. Offer to pay for photocopying documents and photos and mailing. Seek professional advice before agreeing to pay for an appraisal, if that is suggested.

Write or, better, visit libraries, historical societies, and archives in the area, surveying materials pertaining to the church and noting sources for information about the community. Newspaper files are full of information. These details will make projects easier, add color to the story, and help you understand why the church was begun when and where it was. Someone on the preservation committee should set out to become informed about the history of the community.

Books on area church history also contain insights. Reading more about the denominational roots of your congregation will help you understand what to preserve and why.

Northern churches should contact the Presbyterian Historical Society at Philadelphia, PA, and southern churches the Presbyterian Study Center at Montreat, NC. Addresses are listed in the resource section. These archives may have materials about your church, and they likely will have much on the presbytery. A visit (Both are located in great vacation areas!) is best. The PCA Historical Archives, as noted elsewhere, will survey our holdings and Covenant Seminary's Buswell Library for available information and documents.

#### **4. Review the plan.**

Gather the survey forms and organize the list. It should answer those three important questions. The committee now should evaluate and make some decisions:

- a. **Has everything important been found or accounted for? If not, are there other places to look?**
- b. **Are the materials which are in the church's control protected? Realistically, what space is available to organize and store them safely? Is a Heritage Room possible? Can space be made in the church library? Would it be better to store some things away from the building? Should session records be microfilmed and/or transferred to the denominational archives? What funds might be found to repair and preserve in acid-free folders and boxes? Is someone interested in undertaking a preservation project?**
- c. **In what kind of condition are materials that are not under church control? Are they any worse than what the church could provide? If they would get better**

care how should the people be approached? Are funds available to pay for copying documents and photos? What kinds of storage needs will be created? How will security be handled? Can large objects as well as documents be accepted?

As these and other questions are discussed it should become obvious what changes are needed in the plan. If it is not now feasible, what is? Set priorities and plan to do what is possible now, setting a date to reconsider better ways. Make a recommended budget and present the survey, recommendations, and budget, to the session.

A firm, workable, affordable program should develop. If the committee has been visibly active, other people already may be involved and interested. Plan to use a Sunday school hour, an evening worship time, a fellowship night, or plan an event to make the full report to the congregation. It should include:

- a. A display or slide presentation, showing some of the more interesting things uncovered.
- b. A report of what the committee did.
- c. Some facts learned about the church.
- d. What needs to be done to preserve the story.
- e. A definite plan of action.
- f. A policy to insure privacy and safety of materials.
- g. What, specifically, the committee and session want the people to do.

The report should be given by one or two who are themselves excited about the project. It should be brief and to the point. Questions should be answered fully. Ideas should be sought, and a time commitment made. The committee likely already has had stories in the church newsletter. Updates should now be frequent.

The project may begin small. It may remain small. If all you can do is keep what is on the premises correctly boxed, photos protected, and everything dust-free, that is conservation. **Most PCA Churches will never get beyond this point. Most can go this far, however.** An inventory should show what is in each box, and who has other materials so they are safe for now.

Don't be confident that they will remain safe until the Lord returns. Buy an inexpensive thermometer/humidistat to measure storage temperature and humidity. Someone should be responsible to check records occasionally. Make sure those who own other things realize their importance to the congregation. Ask them to include, by description, church-related photos, letters, or documents in their wills as bequests to the church. Set a date to review resources of money and interest to see if a more thorough work of collection and conservation may be done.

### 5. Select, Collect, and Arrange.

Now comes the step everyone has been waiting for--something visibly happens. From this point we will assume the church is ready to set aside space for a heritage room, part of the library, or some other spot. The committee is restive. They want to collect everything in sight, process it, and publish a history in time for Christmas. Remember that it took, lo, these many years to live the story. Time spent doing the work well won't hurt.

There are three things to consider: What to collect, how to "accession" it, and how to arrange the records in their new home. First, determine what to preserve.

- a. **Write a collection policy.** It should be on paper. The "Church Historian's Checklist" and the policy the PCA Archives follows for collecting records from PCA offices may help. Both are in the Forms Section of this guide. If you are in doubt about legal documents, ask a lawyer. Laws about what records must be kept vary slightly from state to state. Also, check with the pastor and other leaders to see what they use.
- b. **Set priorities according to available space.** There obviously is more room for records in a heritage room than in a broom closet, but either is usable. The first priority is what MUST be kept. Set other priorities according to the situation.
- c. **Don't collect more than there is time to handle.** The preservation of materials is time-consuming. Start slowly and aggressively seek more later.
- d. **Keep in mind that the PCA Historical Archives may be better able to care for some things.** Sending some papers to St. Louis may be more space efficient. It is possible to use Archives space to store a small church collection. Important minutes and documents should be microfilmed and a copy filed with the Archives in case of fire or other loss.
- e. **Don't use a collection policy to censor.** Collect what tells the whole story of the church, warts and all. Of course, not all things can be available to all people. Recent session and presbytery minutes, for example, should be available to no one except the session.
- f. **Publish the collection policy through a bulletin insert, newsletter, bulletin board notice or other means.** A simple, straight-forward policy that is known by all will encourage people to bring in those things they know you are seeking. It also will save hurt feelings by letting people know what is not wanted and can't be used.

One issue facing the committee in the selection process involves the minister's records. Unless yours is the rare pastor who has spent his entire career serving your congregation he will want to take his personal files with him when he leaves. This is proper. Your church should keep printed or audio copies of at least some sermons. Copies of books and magazine articles he writes or which refer to him should be saved.

If a teaching elder retires after serving your congregation or if he dies, he/his heirs should be asked to deposit his papers with the PCA Archives. In most cases this is more satisfactory than for the church or family to keep them. The Archives works with families who wish to keep memorabilia or who have concerns about how materials will be used. We are, however, anxious to save documentation of pastoral life and ministry. Any information about deaths or retirees should be sent to the Archives in St. Louis or to the PCA's stated clerk with a request that the Archives should be notified.

Selection is the handmaid to collection. If your committee has been following the steps to this point you may have already received some materials to preserve, or you know where they are. There is at least a pile of things in the building to handle. As materials come in the process of preservation begins:

- a. **"Accession" all items immediately.** To accession means to make an inventory of each item, describe, and note original order and origin (or "provenance"). This can be done with notes on a sheet of 8 1/2"x11" paper which can be filed or kept in a notebook. You can also copy the accession form that is reproduced in the Forms section. Do not intermingle files from separate sources nor reorganize them. At this point just record the items. Assign each item or box of materials an "accession number." Mark this number on the box or article. Avoid marking an artifact, but if you must, make the number small, inconspicuous and erasable.
- b. **The committee may want to review accession notes before proceeding.** Do some items require special handling, supplies, or immediate repair? Should some be sent for microfilming? Should some go to the PCA Archives? How should processing be done? Is more information needed about the origin of something? If anything is to be removed from the collection for a time (to display, for example), or permanently, note carefully where it came from and where it has gone. A "separation sheet" for this purpose is in the Forms section. Keep asking if the next generation will be able to find this item and know where it came from by the information you leave.



Provenance is an impressive-sounding word and an important idea. A pastor's personal office files are his "provenance." He collected and originated them. They express who he is, interests, and contributions. In addition to the raw information to be found, the files tell about their creator. Provenance is like Psalm 19.

As you begin processing a collection, then, provenance must be considered. If some records belong to someone else, you may not have any business processing them without permission. They may not fit the collection policy. It's tempting to reorganize to make things easier to find, but this may destroy information about the person who created them. That doesn't mean papers may never be rearranged. It means thinking first to see what damage may be done by tinkering. Don't reorganize even a file folder without cause.

- c. Arrange the collection.** Think of everything from one source as a wedding cake to be served. The cake is a collection. If you want to sound like a pro, call it a "Records Group" or a "Manuscript Group," depending on its contents. This is a broad area--the Session; the Day School. Slice or square the cake according to its shape. Consider the shape of session records. They include minutes, financial records, and correspondence, probably set up by time periods. Notice how the cake was baked. Cut along the lines. The pieces you cut are called "Series." Some kid wants only the pink icing, and series can be divided into "Sub-series." The idea is to get to the forkfuls, the folders and items within each folder.

The end arrangement will look like this:

1. The collection.
2. The office/department/program of origination.
3. The type of records within that office, etc.
4. Other pertinent divisions, such as time period, which were originally followed by the creator of the records.

Your divisions might translate into:

Faith Presbyterian Church	(Collection)
Christian Education Committee	(Records Group)
Sunday School Curricula	(Series)
1950-1960	(Sub-series)

- d. Once this arrangement is identified and grouped, the collection has been preliminarily processed. Go through the collection again. Pull staples and paperclips. Remove plastic covers and folders. If items within a file need to be fastened together, use**

Monel staples, available at many office products stores. The cost of Monel staples is higher than for regular staples, but one box will likely be a lifetime supply, and Monel staples will not rust. Some poor-quality paper may require photocopying because the paper is disintegrating. Ditto masters and older wet-process copies must be copied before they fade. Unless there is intrinsic value to fading originals, discard them after copying.

- e. **Move the materials to acid-free boxes and folders, and label them by box, file, and subject:**

**Box 1 Faith Presbyterian Church  
File 7 Christian Education Committee  
Sunday School Curricula  
1950-1960.**

A simple labeling system is to create a box for each series or sub-series and give it a sequential number. Number the files in sequential order. The one in front is number 1, the second is number 2, etc. This is the system used by the PCA Archives. In the first box of each collection the first file should be reserved for finding aids. Labels can be neatly printed in pencil (#1 lead is best) or typed on the file folder. It is difficult to obtain acid-free gummed labels. Most adhesives will not last. Do not use ball-point or similar inks. Catalogs and price information are available from companies listed in the Sources and Resources section.

- f. **Make finding aids.** Finding aids are ways to retrieve the information you have worked to protect. There are many ways to make aids. A simple, effective aid is a list of what is in each file:

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**Faith Presbyterian Church, Juneau, Alaska,  
Church Records, 1930-1990**

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>
1	1-5	<u>Christian Education Committee:</u>
	6-12	Correspondence
	13-14	Curricula
	15-17	Child Evangelism Fellowship
	18-22	Flannelgraph, Old Testament
		Flannelgraph, New Testament

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If a more extensive finding aid is desired, a word-processing program on a computer can be used to create a subject index. Catalog cards also may be used, a good cataloguing system takes time to develop and maintain. Catalog cards can contain a lot of information:

AE 0.3 Bible Presbyterian Church of Chester, PA.  
Box 1 Correspondence. 1945.  
File 8 1 item.

File folder consists of personal correspondence between Francis Schaeffer and J. S. Albany, Secretary, Board of Trustees, Bible Presbyterian Church of Chester, PA.

Or they may be simple and to the point:

Box 122 D. James Kennedy Collection  
File 9 "Truths that Transform"  
12/21/87, Sermon Script:  
"The Holy Spirit and You."

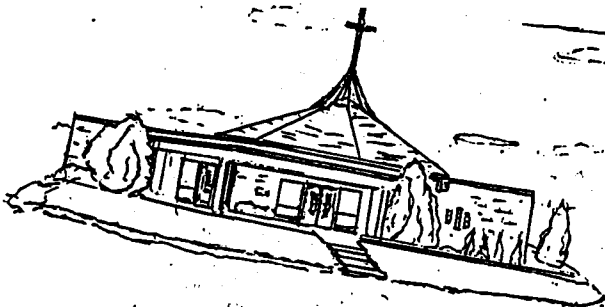
We said that three issues should be planned together as a church begins a heritage room or any archival storage. Two have been discussed--selection and collection/arrangement. The third is storage. You are already taking those materials out of dusty closets and putting them into nice, acid-free file folders and boxes. . .Is there more to storage than that? Unfortunately, yes.

DECLARATION  
WE SOLEMNLY PLEDGE TO FORM A NEW CHURCH AND  
REMAIN MEMBERSHIP IN THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN AMERICA  
AS OUR DENOMINATION.

NAME	ADDRESS	PHONE
1. Bob & Carol Gunn	526 Red Pine	672-1198
2. Susan Gunn	1874 Monte Rio	672-9905
3. Bob & Betty Gunn	418 Kalamazoo	672-1915
4. Bob & Betty Gunn	717	672-9147
5. Bob & Betty Gunn	402 Aspen	672-9180
6. Bob & Betty Gunn	126 Ariva	672-9180
7. Tom & Joan Stephens	550 Gipsy Loop	672-9283
8. Mary Ann West Meyer	116 Ariva	672-1942
9. Margaret Nelson	79 Laurel	672-3726
10. Betty Miller	357 Kinsley	672-9896
11. Don & Joan C. Cline	27 Ariva	672-966
12. Harold & Ethel	410 Denver	672-3553
13. Harold & Ethel	210 Ariva	672-9667
14. Harold & Ethel	503 Highland	672-2007
15. Harold & Ethel	411 4th St.	672-1214
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Soli Deo Gloria

OUR FIRST DECADE  
REFLECTIONS TO BUILD ON



1975 - 1985

BRYCE AVENUE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
Presbyterian Church in America  
Los Alamos, New Mexico

After 10 years as a PCA congregation, Bryce Avenue Presbyterian Church, Los Alamos, NM, published this photocopied history. Just as the United States proudly preserves the signatures on its Declaration of Independence, the book includes a copy of the petition signed by those wishing to withdraw from the UPCUSA.

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## 6. Protect and preserve.

All things, it is true, are in the process of deterioration because of sin, but the destruction is hurried by what is in the structure of what you want to preserve (internal factors) and what is outside and all around (external factors).

Internally, paper fibers are most rapidly destroyed by acids introduced to modern paper-milling. Go to a museum and look at an old document. Many years passed before it reached the safety of archival handling, yet it may look amazingly good for its age--better than a newspaper a few months old. If it was made before 1850 it likely contains clean cloth fibers and was designed for durability. It has no bleaches, colorings, or other additives. It is close to being what today is called "acid-free." After 1850 wood fiber, which contains the acidic substance lignin, was added, and in a search for efficient, low-cost production and pretty colors other agents came to be used.

Taken care of, cheap, wood pulp paper today can last 50 years or a little longer. Good-quality acidic paper will last maybe a century longer. Surround that acidic paper with acid-free, and the rate of deterioration will diminish considerably. The best circumstance is to surround acid-free paper with acid-free paper.

Two things need to be understood about acids, though. One is that all things made of wood are acidic. The second is that acid chemically migrates to anything touching it. Cheap paper next to good paper will gradually infect the good. An acid-free box placed on a wooden shelf will become acidic over time.

So acids are both an internal and an external threat. There are other environmental woes which will damage acid-free paper and any other materials you are trying to preserve.

**Environmental Pollution.** Just as acid is in materials it inhabits the air around us. This is one reason some historical documents such as the Declaration of Independence are hermetically sealed. The church is not going to store its records in an air-tight vault, but a good, tight room and a church heating and cooling plant which does some filtering of the air is not too bad.

**Temperature and humidity.** Fibers of paper and other materials expand and contract as the temperature and humidity rises and falls around them. This movement of the fibers wears out the paper and causes it to crack or curl. High humidity also causes mold to form. Heat dries.

Avoid, to the extent practical, fluctuating temperature or humidity. The ideal temperature is 65 degrees Fahrenheit, with 50 percent the best humidity. A dehumidifier may be needed in a humid climate; a humidifier may be called for in winter or dry climate. Avoid basements as storage areas unless the walls are well-sealed

and dry. Avoid upper floors since heat rises. Such areas are often hot and dry. If material becomes water-damaged it must be tended immediately. Carefully wrap the soaked items and freeze them. Order the book, Procedures for the Salvage of Water-Damaged Materials, by Peter Waters. This book is available from the assistant director for preservation, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., 20540.

**Light.** Think what sunlight does to draperies. A piece of paper left for a few days by the window is a graphic demonstration of light's effect on paper and ink. If two sheets of paper are left under intense light, the bottom sheet partially covered by the top, the exposed area will quickly fade and dry. Light damages. Exposure to direct sunlight from an unshaded window is disaster.

Even away from direct rays, light is an enemy. Fluorescent light contains ultra-violet rays. Incandescent bulbs contain fewer damaging wavelengths, but they emit considerable heat. Any light will eventually cause damage to books and their bindings, materials on exhibit, and paper.

Protection is not difficult, however. Blinds and heavy curtains can keep window light under control. Plastic shields for fluorescent tubes are available in many lamp and hardware stores. Keeping materials boxed and lights turned off or down when not in use helps.

When you display items from the collection avoid direct exposure to sunlight and hot lamps. Use subdued light where possible and shield fluorescent fixtures. Most exhibits are rather short-term affairs anyway. If yours is to last longer than three or four months, use photocopies of fragile documents and copy photographs. Rotating materials off the display will also keep the exhibit looking fresher and will give materials a "rest."

Another way to protect fragile documents, "encapsulation," will be described later. Also notice information in this guide's section on exhibits and displays.

**Things that go "bump" in the night.** In this category are all sorts of little "beasties" who wage war on collections. Their number includes microscopic mold and fungus spores which thrive in warmth and humidity. Spores will cause, among other disasters, the the brown stain frequently found on old books. This is called "foxing." Since spores are air-borne in dust, frequent, thorough housecleaning is the best cure.

Insects and rodents snack on bindings, books, and paper. Some Archives routinely fumigate collections and storage areas. Don't expose photos to pesticide chemicals. The emulsion will be damaged. Some roaches, ensconced in boxes, will not be killed by

routine spraying, but a professional fumigator can suggest answers. Conservation of Church Records, by Robert Benedetto and Joel L. Alvis, Jr., discusses this problem. Churches beginning a records program should order this book from the Presbyterian Historical Foundation, Montreat, N.C. The best way to deal with an insect problem, though, is not to allow a colony to get started.

Here is a list of what you should have to set up your storage area:

**FURNITURE:**

- Shelving.** The best is primed, warehouse-quality steel. The worst is wood or particle board. Acidic lignin will leech into boxes. If wood shelving is what is available, coat it with four or five coats of polyurethane plastic. It spreads like varnish and completely seals wood. Allow sealer to cure a few weeks before using.
- Thermometer/humidistat.** Depending on what this gauge shows, a humidifier, dehumidifier, or air conditioner may be required.
- Smoke detector.**
- Dry chemical fire extinguisher, rated ABC.**
- Copier.** Access to an updated "any-paper" copier is good, though not a necessity.
- Work table** for processing and conservation work.

**ACID-FREE SUPPLIES:**

- Paper.** For copying, church histories, separating acidic documents, mounting photos, etc.
- File folders.** Since many documents are over-sized, use all legal-size file folders.
- Boxes.** Boxes or document cases are made in several dimensions. Ideal for most church uses is 15 1/4"x10 1/4"x5". This document case is available from manufacturers of acid-free materials. It holds about 1/2 cubic foot of material. It is light enough to handle easily. Rarely, if ever, use the brown 1-cubic-foot box. It is bulky, can be heavy--and is not permanently acid-free, according to reports just out. For photograph storage the PCA Archives uses 12 1/4"x10 1/4"x2 1/2" cases, stored so photos can lie flat.
- Tissue.** For interleaving documents or photos and wrapping artifacts and photo negatives.
- Mylar (polypropylene) sleeves.** Use, if desired, for photo mounting, encapsulation, and negative storage.
- Adhesive.** No working adhesive is totally acid-free, but Pritt glue stick is close. It is available through office supply stores.
- Photo corners.** Not necessary with use of photo template.

OTHER SUPPLIES:

- Scissors.
- Pencils (#1 lead).
- Temporary, double-stick, permanent adhesives tape. Remember that any tape will damage the surface on which it is applied. Temporary tape is helpful for attaching labels boxes. Double-stick tape is used in encapsulation.
- Monel staples and stapler.
- Staple puller.
- Cotton gloves. These should be used when handling sensitive materials, photos and negatives to protect them from moisture and oil on the hands.
- Vinyl Cleaning Pad. Available in office supply, drafting and art stores.
- Absorene-brand wallpaper cleaner.
- Soft artist's brushes.

Somewhere the church archivist should have a work area--an out-of-the-way table with good light. The best situation is to find a place where materials can be left undisturbed. If no place at church is available, set up an area at home.

Repair and restoration should be done after reading a good manual on the subject, such as Conservation of Church Records, by Benedetto and Alvis. In this context we can provide a few broad guidelines.

- a. **Make sure the document is worth the effort.** If a copy would be just as useful and valuable as a torn original, photocopy on acid-free paper and discard the original. If it is a legal document, something important to the church or has a relatively rare signature time spent cleaning and preserving is worthwhile.
- b. **Items which have great value should be handled only by experts.** This includes rare photographs, art and documents with strong historical value. If a church has a grant signed by the President, it is worth special care. Don't take an expert's word for his skill. Ask for names of qualified conservators from the state historical society. Also, a professional photographer is not necessarily qualified to restore photographs. It usually is wise not to attempt to restore an original photograph. Have a copy negative made by a good laboratory which does retouching with an air brush.
- c. **Do not do anything which can't be reversed later.** If a document is laminated, for example, it will be "unlaminated". . .and the laminating plastic will eventually destroy what is laminated.



- d. **The easiest help for an old document is to clean it.** Be careful. Do not attempt to clean paper which is extremely fragile or brittle. If in doubt, look for a less-important piece in about the same condition and try cleaning it. When cleaning any paper:
  - Do not use water.
  - Start with the gentlest agent (a soft brush) and proceed carefully to more abrasive dry cleaning agents.
  - Work from the center of the sheet out. Stroke toward the edge. Be especially carefull of folds and the edge of the sheet.
  - Clean both sides of the paper.
- e. **When cleaning non-paper items, start with a spot that can't be seen and test the suitability of the cleaning agent on the material.**
- f. **Work on a blotter.**
- g. **Unfold documents.** Badly curled papers can be relaxed by placing them in a humid environment. A humidifying chamber is very simple to make and use. The book by Benedetto and Alvis contains a detailed, step-by-step description.
- h. **Tears can be repaired.** Encapsulating the item can be enough. Archival supply companies listed in the Sources and Resources section sell a document repair tape. Do not use any commercial tape. an acid-free Japanese paper is also available for major repairs. It can be absorbed into the damaged document to make strong, nearly invisible repairs. The process is relatively expensive, though, and is seldom required. It is best done by a professional.
- i. **Ask for advice.** The PCA Archives is always willing to answer questions, as is almost any major archives. Some will do simple restoration work for you. The PCA Archives can repair most paper damage, but ask for advice before shipping damaged pieces.

Encapsulation has been mentioned several times already. It is extremely popular these days for document restoration because it is reversible, it effectively protects damaged paper without tapes or other techniques that might damage, it allows reference to or display of very fragile papers, and it is easy to do. Encapsulation kits are available for \$40 or less from archival suppliers. Conservation of Church Records also tells what materials are needed and gives instructions. Encapsulation simply means that a document is sealed between two sheets of acid-free polyester plastic. The plastic sheets are joined with double-stick tape around the edges so the paper does not touch the adhesive. In sealing air is forced from around the sheet being treated, leaving it in a vacuum.

A church's heritage room may contain more than paper. Old books and other artifacts may have little archival value, but if there is room artifacts are wonderful windows on the past. They also help sustain support for the work. People like museums, with three-dimensional objects once owned by great-grandfather.

Here are some guidelines for artifact storage:

### **Books**

Paper-backed books tend to have less value, and they are usually poorly bound and have cheap paper. Dirt may be cleaned from these books using the techniques for paper. Polyester plastic can be used to protect a cover, and they can be boxed rather than shelved for protection. Don't expect complete success.

Cloth bindings can be easily cared for. Clean with Absorene wallpaper cleaner. Dust or vacuum to avoid spore infection. If fragile, cover with polyester plastic or wrap in acid-free paper and store flat in an acid-free box. Valuable books should be repaired by a professional binder. Ask for names from the state historical society or a museum.

Leather books require more care. A good, undamaged binding should be carefully cleaned with saddle soap and very little water. Leather should be gently treated with leather preservative such as Neat's Foot Oil, TALAS Leather Dressing or TanKote every year or two. Major repairs require a qualified professional. The simplest care is to keep the book in an acid-free environment, using the same methods as for cloth-bound books. Control humidity to avoid dry rot. A solution of oplenyl phenal (available in many drug and hardware stores) will treat mold.

### **Photographs**

No one knows how permanent color prints will be. Early color prints are now fading. Black-and-white photos are more durable, if stabilized properly during development. Any photograph is sensitive to its environment. Black paper and cheap plastic albums are probably the worst possible environments which could have been devised. Photos and negatives should, then, be stored in a cool and low-humidity place, away from light and air.

Polypropylene sleeves are sold at photo stores for negatives and prints. Acid-free envelopes and corners are available. The cheapest care is to wrap negatives in acid-free tissue or paper and cut slits in acid-free paper to mount prints. Templates for mounting are included in the Forms section. Pencil in information on the paper and place in an acid-free file. Photos shouldn't touch. Their container should allow them to lie flat under light, even weight.

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Clean negatives on the nonemulsion (shiny) side only, with a cloth or brush recommended for such work by a professional. They are best cleaned by a professional photographer as he prints the negative. A stubborn stain will sometimes come off and scratches can be filled in by gently rubbing the nonemulsion surface with a finger moistened with skin oil from the nose or forehead. Otherwise handle negatives only by the edges using cotton gloves.

Glass negatives, which were popular in the U.S. until about 75 years ago and in some other countries until World War II, can be cleaned on the nonemulsion side with a soft lint-free cotton cloth. Store glass negatives on edge.

Beware of the early plastic (nitrate-base) films. Films made before and during World War II probably are nitrate-base and may say so on the edge. Such film is highly flammable and has been known to spontaneously ignite. Such film, if saved, should be stored in a safe place away from the collection.

As photos are processed extra time should be spent to track down identities of people, places, and events depicted. Scraps of information and dates can sometimes be gleaned from envelopes and the negatives themselves. Information should be recorded IN PENCIL ONLY lightly on back of the photo or on paper attached.

One additional note on black-and-white photographs. A commercial processor will print on "resin-coated" or RC paper. This means the paper is actually coated with plastic and is quite acidic. For important photographs that are to last for a long time you will need to seek out a private photographer or photo lab who will custom print on cotton-base photo paper. One recommended processor is listed in the Sources and Resources section. Ask for single-weight polyfibre for display purposes, double-weight polyfibre for long life.

### **Audio and Video Tapes**

Videotape is rapidly becoming the medium of record for many church events. It is easy to use and gives wonderful images to keep and play back for years. Wrong. Cassette tapes are far easier to use than those old reel-to-reel and will keep the voices of the present far into the future. Wrong.

No one knows exactly how long a well-maintained videotape will last. The best guesses are that it won't last all that many years. A VCR which isn't cleaned and serviced regularly will cut the life of the tapes drastically. A video image is unstable, though, and there isn't much an archivist can do except have tapes copied occasionally. It is better for a family or congregation interested in a permanent record to continue to use Super 8 mm film cameras and copy on video, keeping the master in a cool, dry,

## **PRESERVATION, page F-20**

dark, acid-free place. It is also better to keep reel-to-reel audio recorders and dub onto a cassette and file originals.

Slides can be easily maintained under archival conditions, as can film strips. Both will warp if improperly maintained. Old film, as noted above, could be nitrate based and explosively flammable. Old film also becomes brittle and breaks easily. Such film can not only be damaged by use but can harm projectors. If old materials with some value are to be used have them copied and keep the originals safe. Acid-free slide boxes are available.

Phonograph records should be stored vertically and kept free of dust. Store them separately from other items since they give off a harmful gas which can make other materials deteriorate more quickly. If no player exists for the record you have, studios can be found to dub the sound onto a reel-to-reel tape. Record discs should be in an acid-free environment and kept cool so they will not warp.

### **Paintings**

The difficulties of preserving artworks has been well publicised in stories about ancient frescoes and old masters which are succumbing to light and air pollution. Oils, charcoals, chalks, acrylics, and watercolors are all fragile. Keep them away from light, handle them as little as possible and never touch their surface.

Framed artwork should be stored by hanging in a dark space. If it must be stacked, never put weight on top of it. Lay stored paintings on padded shelves. Small works can sometimes be laid together if separated with acid-free paper. As with other display items, it is a good idea to rotate paintings from room display to dark storage.

Aside from gently blowing dust from paintings leave restoration and renovation to experts.

### **Other types of artifacts**

It took years but the congregation is nearly ready for the big day. Fathers drive their children to the vacant field at the edge of town to watch the basement being dug and the foundation laid for a new worship center and day school. The raised building is finally up and members attack its bare austerity with paint and draperies and carpeting. The old building has been sold to a bank and will be torn down. Everything inside, from pews to the stained glass window installed in 1922 is sold to other congregations. As the people meet for one last time to worship in the old sanctuary there are tears of sadness at leaving a friend. . . Too bad a little of the old building can't go with them.

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A little can and should. We hope, for one thing, that a good photographer has taken photos of the old girl. . .not just the empty shell but rooms in use. Such pictures will be cherished when the young couple's class has become the retired set. Scenes of special remembrance should be photographed, with a good description of what happened there. They are a lingering witness of God's work in that place.

So are things associated with the old building. The new building need not look like a museum for a few pieces of the old to be moved. Some things will be taken because the church can't afford to replace them. If these pieces are obviously old and of unknown origin, proceed carefully. They may have more to tell under that checked-varnish than is realized. Old session minutes, photographs, letters, and memories may decipher their story. A qualified antique dealer can give some information. Something might turn up so old and valuable that it requires professional restoration. Don't discount the possibility.

The average piece will simply represent the furniture from the old building and will have more sentimental than historical or monetary value. Have a good furniture restorer look at it. A good hobbyist who is a member might take on the job--if he knows what he is doing. Joints may need regluing and paint removed. The idea, though, is not to make the thing look new, but to restore its original beauty and finish. Even relatively old furniture may have a painted-on grain that will fool the average person. Be careful of refurbishing the surface until it is known exactly what it is.

Will it then go to the archives? It could, but why not return it to service? A statement of all that has been learned about the piece and its history should be filed. If the piece is to be in one spot, attach a statement about it on the adjacent wall, using techniques from the Exhibits and Displays section. A good decorator may be able to arrange a foyer or corner setting combining several pieces from the former building. This may become a favorite meeting place--a living history display.

Some churches have included such a spot in their building plans. It need not add to the cost. One room (say the library) or a corner. . .similar coloring. . .maybe even a favorite window built in. . .some restored molding. . .a wall display case for a quilt made from fabrics of the old curtains and embroidered scenes. . . It at least is worth a bit of creative thought by the building committee.

If none of that is possible, and all you have left is a broken chair and table, one faded drapery panel, a Sunday school lectern nobody wants and an old pewter communion set, praise the Lord! You have more than many churches think to keep.

Once basic furniture restoration and a careful cleaning of the fabric is accomplished, much of what was said about preserving records fits here as well:

- Low, constant temperature for textiles, wood and metal.
- Low, controlled humidity, especially for metals.
- Keep an acid-free environment, free of dust, mold spores and air pollution. Acid-free boxes are specially constructed for most types of artifacts.
- Store textiles in darkness. Store silver in a padded cabinet.
- Exhibit under controlled light, especially textiles.
- Vacuum and dust often. Clean actual surfaces with great care, asking for help or reading books by experts in the fields. Use mild, non-abrasive cleansers and tung oil or a commercial paste wax for wood and cover stored pieces with a muslin dust protector. Use commercial preparations recommended by a professional for polishing and removing tarnish. Make sure a piece has not been coated with a varnish before polishing it.
- Avoid doing anything irreversible, without asking for professional advice. Most museums have professional restoration staffs who will willingly answer questions and make recommendations.

## **6. Use.**

Our survey of the archival process for churches is nearly at an end. We have considered how to form a plan of action, organize a solid program, identify what to save, collect it and arrange it. Much has been said, though not nearly all that could be, on how to protect and preserve materials.

All this process has been aimed at this step. You have done all the saving so the church's legal papers, records, books, audio-visuals, correspondence, and everything else can be used. This guide shows some ways materials can be used. Once the program is underway the plan of action should call for visible fruit to prove the effort is worth it. These ideas include:

- A plan for a celebration of a milestone anniversary.
- A church history book or pamphlet, either for the congregation or to introduce the church to newcomers.
- An evangelistic brochure.
- An oral history program.
- A series of lessons for Bible study, training covenant children or special worship services.
- Stories about church history in the newsletter.
- Research either inside or outside the church.

Part of preservation is that use doesn't threaten materials. Plan a policy of use of church materials and have it in writing so there are no misunderstandings and hard feelings:

- a. **Keep the Heritage Room area locked when not in use.**
- b. **Keep session minutes and confidential documents in a locked cabinet or area.**
- c. **Set regular hours when the room is open.** Allow other times by appointment. Encourage use.
- d. **Don't allow anything to leave the premises except by authorization of the session.**
- e. **Have posted rules for using the Archives.** Draw the attention of users to that list.
  1. **No pens or ink.**
  2. **No eating or drinking around papers.**
  3. **Papers should not be rearranged within files.**
  4. **The person on duty should get the materials requested from the shelves.**
  5. **No materials should leave room except by permission.**
- f. **Welcome people from outside the church who wish to refer to the files for research, but be watchful.** Don't leave the room unattended when a researcher is working. Ask that coats, briefcases and books be left outside. No one should be offended by such requests. Valuable documents are lost to theft, many stolen by respected scholars and well-known authors.
- g. **Keep a record of who uses what materials with their address and date.** Most archives demand a driver's license or other form of identification. If the researcher is unknown this might be wise.
- h. **Remember that bringing paper into light and using it is hard on fragile documents.** With such pieces make a photocopy for the researcher to use.

Only a few churches will ever need all of the program developed in this section. Every congregation can make some use of its principles, however, because every church has a story to preserve.

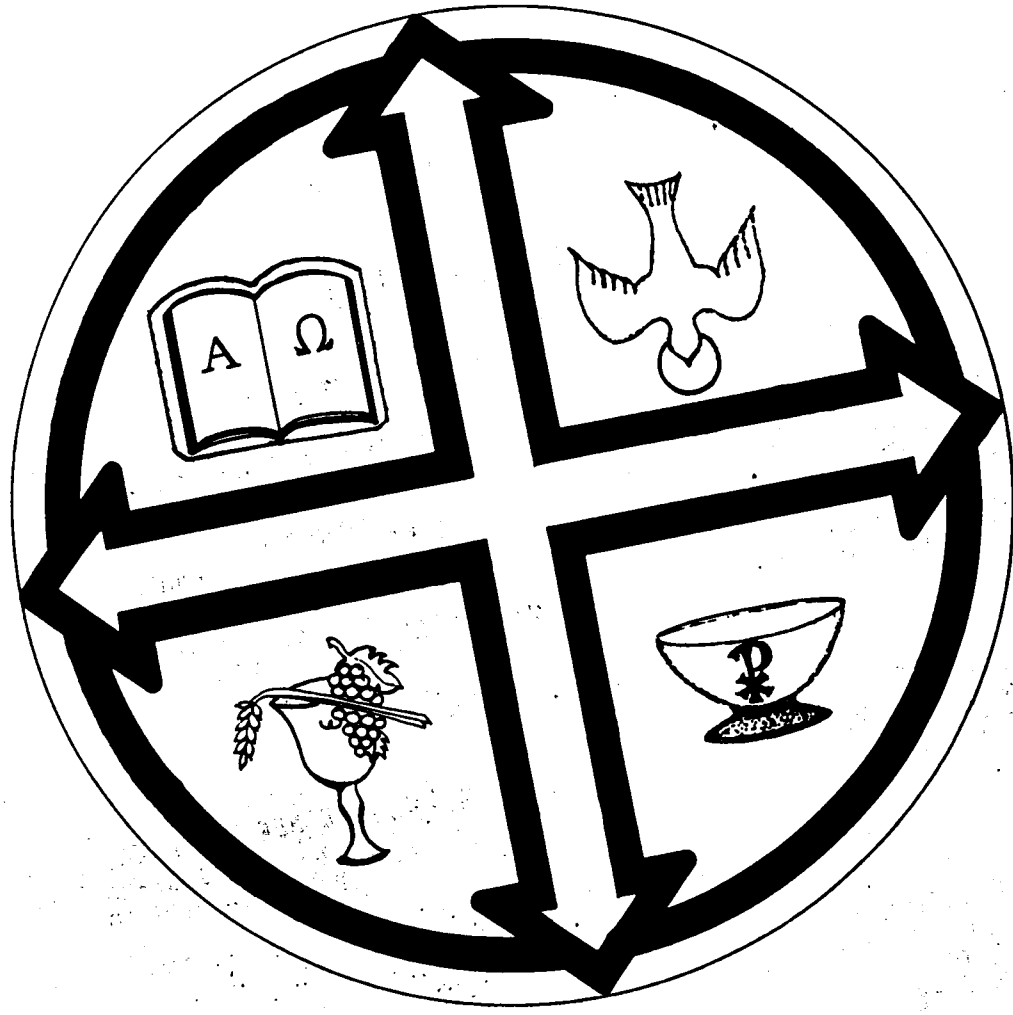
When Christians look back on the earthly church from their eternal home, I can't imagine that they won't praise God for just the stories today's church historian is trying to save. The difference will be that none of it will be turning to dust.

# New Covenant Presbyterian Church

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True to the Scriptures, the Reformed faith, and obedient to the Great Commission of Jesus Christ

New Covenant Pres-  
byterian Church, Aiken,  
SC, combined four symbols of the  
early church into a modern logo that is  
prominently displayed on all church publications.