

**THE LOCAL CHURCH ARCHIVES
THE METHODIST CHURCH IN SINGAPORE**

1. MCS 2009 Book of Discipline

The following paragraphs are quoted from the *2009 Book of Discipline* of The Methodist Church in Singapore:-

Para 149.1: The Local Conference, or Church Conference authorised by the district superintendent, shall elect the following officers of the Local Church Executive Committee:-

.... h) **Church Archivist**

Para 153.1: The membership of the Local Church Executive Committee shall include the pastor(s) and the following:-

....i) The **Church Archivist**

Para 167.1: The Local Conference shall elect a **Church Archivist**, who shall keep the historical records up to date, serve as chairperson of the Archives and History Committee; cooperate with the Annual Conference Board of and General Conference Council on Archives and History, for the preservation of all local church records and historical materials no longer in current use. Records and historical material include all documents, minutes, journals, diaries, reports, letters, pamphlets, papers, manuscripts, maps, photographs, books, audio-visuals, sound recordings, magnetic or other tapes, or any other documentary material, regardless of form or characteristics, made or received pursuant to any provisions of The Book of Discipline in connection with the transaction of church business by any local church of The Methodist Church or any of its constituent predecessors.

Para 167.2: There may be a local church **Archives and History Committee**, chaired by the **Church Archivist**, to assist in fulfilling these responsibilities.

2. What is the meaning of the word "Archives"?

- a. It refers to the **records (written and oral)** pertaining to the actions of individuals and institutions that are important aids to establishing historical truth.
- b. It refers to the **place where archival records are kept.**

History is not what happened in the past. It is, as the word itself suggests, a story, written by subsequent generations.

Archives are the **source materials** that **make it possible for future generations to tell the stories of institutions and individuals.**

3. Why are Archives important?

- a. They are important in the search for the truth.

Without them, it is possible to fall victim to:-

- Conjecture
- Distortions
- Half-truths, and
- Plain falsehood

- b. They help form our identity by reminding us of our past.
- c. They provide resources for publications, activities, and events.

**THE LOCAL CHURCH ARCHIVES
THE METHODIST CHURCH IN SINGAPORE**

- d. They provide valuable research resources for interested members of the community, for academic scholars, and for historians of the church.

4. Responsibility of the Church Archivist

The local Church Archivist and his committee are the ones to implement a records policy in consultation with the pastor. The records of the local church would include everything from the local conference down to the papers generated in the church office.

5. Know your church history

Knowing all or some of your church history is a plus as this knowledge will assist you when you sort out and organise your materials. Start by drawing up a milestone list of the history e.g. when it was first established, when it became part of the Annual Conference, etc.

6. Materials to be kept by the local church archives

Records and historical materials as outlined in ¶167 of the *Book of Discipline* would include the following and we have included in the list, examples of each type:

Types of Materials	Examples
Audio-visual materials, including sound recordings	Compact discs (CDs), CD-ROMs, DVDs, and other media containing recordings of church services and sermons, oral history interviews, dramatic performances, lectures, musical performances, and similar material.
Books	Anniversary publications and other books published by the local church, its committees and ministries, and pastors.
Diaries	Diaries of pastors and prominent church leaders.
Documents	Architectural drawings and plans of the church building, policy documents relating to church administration and operation; legal documents; baptismal, confirmation, marriage and burial records.
Journals	Serial publications such as magazines and newsletters.
Letters	Letters and other correspondence relating to significant activities of the church or recording significant decisions made.
Magnetic or other tapes	Audio cassette tapes (e.g. oral history, etc.) and video tapes (may be obsolete now and if still in use, may require migration to another medium).
Manuscript	Handwritten materials by pastors and prominent members of the church.
Maps	Historical maps relating to the church.
Minutes	Minutes of meetings of the Local Church Executive Committee (LCEC) and minutes from various committees and ministries of the church. Documents attached to such minutes should also be kept.
Papers	Papers relating to the church collected by individuals, such as bookmarks, flyers, magazines and newsletters, newspaper cuttings, pamphlets, and Sunday bulletins and service sheets.
Pamphlets	Booklets, brochures, flyers, pamphlets, posters, tracts and other ephemera produced by the church, such as pamphlets given to visitors to the church and evangelistic tracts.
Photographs	Photographs of people and events relating to the church.

**THE LOCAL CHURCH ARCHIVES
THE METHODIST CHURCH IN SINGAPORE**

Reports	Reports prepared by the LCEC, and by church committees and ministries.
Other documentary material	Artefacts and memorabilia relating to the church, such as banners, pastors' and choir robes, communion chalices and patens, crosses, items of furniture, T-shirts, paintings and paraments (altar cloths).

Each local church is also responsible for maintaining the following membership records as spelled out in ¶ 134 of the *Book of Discipline*:

- Full Membership Roll.
- Preparatory Membership Roll.
- Members Removed by Local Conference Action.
- Constituency Roll.
- Affiliate Membership Roll.
- Associate Membership Roll.

7. The process of Archiving

a. Appraisal

- This is the first step to take to decide whether to accept materials donated to the archives or purchase materials to add to the collection.
- A judgement is made as to the administrative, legal, or fiscal use, evidential, informational or intrinsic value, and the relationship to other records.

b. Accessioning

- This is the process of registering the materials that comes into the archives so that knowledge of their presence and location is maintained.
- A record is made of the details of the donor (donation), cost (purchase) and the origin, background, etc. of the material.

c. Arrangement and Description

- Materials which are left unsorted and unidentified are almost useless. The arrangement and description with the use of databases serve the dual functions of organising the materials and making them available for use or accessible.
- Collectively, arrangement and description are often referred to as “processing” of the materials.

d. Preservation

- The steps taken to ensure that materials are kept as long as possible and to minimise the wear and tear that are inherent to handling, copying, loaning and exhibiting them.
- This would include making surrogate copies, proper storage and packaging.
- Preservation issues (“Enemies” of the Archives): Dampness, heat, light, pests, careless handling, fire, floods, dirt, theft and neglect.

**THE LOCAL CHURCH ARCHIVES
THE METHODIST CHURCH IN SINGAPORE**

e. Conservation

- This refers to the methods and processes of repairing and restoring damaged archival materials.
- Difficult conservation work is usually given to the National Archives of Singapore to do, usually at a charge.

f. Promoting the Archives

- Outreach represents the culmination of archival work to promote the materials that can be found in the archives and also the history of the church e.g. the local church history, pastor's significant contribution, significant historical events, etc. Outreach is done through articles, publications, web pages, exhibitions, marketing, talks, workshops, etc.

8. Important factors to consider when setting up an archives

- A dedicated and secure place or room to house the different types of materials, preferably with controlled environment – i.e. relatively low humidity, air-conditioned and free from insects, pests, etc.
- Personnel/Volunteers who are computer literate, especially in Microsoft Access (a database software).
- Personnel/Volunteers who are organised in their work and has a commitment to the work of the archives.
- Personnel/Volunteers who appreciates the history of the church.
- Church Office staff who observe good filing practice and give attention to the correct physical care of records.
- Ensuring that a tracking system is in place to locate and retrieve borrowed materials.
- Developing a smooth transition of old records and materials e.g.
 - i) From administrative office to archival area/room
 - ii) From committees heading the events to the archives, etc.
 - iii) From the different committees under the local conference to the archives, etc.

Prepared by:
Jenny Ng
Manager/Assistant Archivist
Archives & History Library
The Methodist Church in Singapore

March 2013