

# **Congregational Library & Archives**

## **Church Records Collecting Guidelines**

### **What Does the CLA Collect?**

The CLA collects all materials from the establishment of your church to the present. Below is a list of the broad categories we collect with more specific examples included.

- **All Types of Record Books:** Such as records of the parish and church, annual reports, records of all types of church committees, member directories, and especially vital records such as records of baptisms, marriages, and deaths
- **Correspondence:** Such as between ministers, letters to/from various congregational societies and organizations, letters to/from national/regional conference bodies, and correspondence related to parishioners
- **All Types of Records from Church Auxiliary Groups:** Such as records from "ladies" groups, missionary societies, Christian Endeavor groups, and all other social clubs
- **All Types of Photographic Materials:** Such as photographs, slides, glass slides, daguerreotypes, and tin types
- **Building Records:** Such as blueprints, pew plans and pew deeds, assessors' records, records related to construction/renovations
- **Financial Records:** Such as ledgers, account books, and collections records that are more than 50 years old
- **Ministerial Records:** Such as the personal papers of ministers, letters for calls, acceptances, and resignations, programs for pastoral installations pulpit supply letters, manuscript sermons
- **Print Materials Related to your Church and Community:** Such as church histories produced for anniversary years, church cookbooks, church manuals

### **What Does the CLA Not Collect?**

The CLA does not collect the following material types due to various factors, such as preservation or privacy concerns.

- **Most Financial Records from the Last 50 Years:** Included under that are materials related to building facilities and maintenance (such as work orders, receipts for cleanings, general facilities expenditure lists)

- **All Records Related to Human Resources:** Such as employment files, any documents with social security numbers attached, legal records related to employment
- **Weekly Service Programs and Event Calendars**
- **Church Weekly/Monthly/Quarterly Newsletters:** Exceptions can be made, on a case-by-case basis, for particularly complete runs of newsletters that span multiple decades
- **Published Books, Bibles, Pulpit Bibles, and Hymnals:** If there is an inventory for a book collection, we suggest passing that information to the CLA's librarian, who may select some titles to add to the CLA's print collections
- **Brochures, Information Packets, and Responses to Requests for Proposals (RFPs):** Either solicited from, or given by, third-party entities which have not contracted with your church.
- **Realia:** Such as posters, charts and maps, banners, calendars, etc.
- **Artwork:** Such as original and reproduction paintings, lithographs, and statues
- **Artifacts:** Such as gavels, bells, metal plaques, communion silver and similar physical objects
- **Regional/National Conference Newsletters, Mailings, Brochures, Information Packets, or Handouts:** Such as those that might be mass distributed by the UCC, NACCC, or CCCC

## Digital and Audio-Visual Records

The CLA recognizes that not all records are printed onto paper. The CLA collects some select types of audio-visual materials and some types of born-digital records. The CLA also collects digitized materials, however, the CLA strongly prefers to collect digitized content alongside the physical original materials. If you have either audio-visual, digitized, and/or born-digital materials, the potential donation of these materials must be discussed with the CLA prior to their deposit.

### Audio-Visual Materials

- **The CLA typically can take magnetic tape and phonographic record types.** Examples include, but are not limited to, VHS records of church events, audio cassettes of church sermons, vinyl records of church choirs.
- **The CLA typically cannot take film records, due to the preservation requirements to properly care for film.** Examples include film negatives of photographs, reels of super 8 and 16mm moving film, Video8 tapes used in older reel-to-reel camcorders.

- **The CLA may consider but does not guarantee that it will take any audio-visual materials that are found on uncommon or obsolete media types.** Examples include DAT or R-DAT cassettes, open reel magnetic tapes, brown wax cylinders, paper-based magnetic tape, Dictaphone recordings, and similar formats.

### **Digitized and Born-Digital Materials**

- **The CLA can take born-digital and digitized records of the types listed in the above “What does the CLA Collect?” section.** Digitized and born-digital records must be on one of the following media storage devices: external hard drives, USB flash drives, compact disks, DVD disks, Blu-ray disks.
- **The CLA cannot take whole computers.** Files from computers should be transferred to one of the external media storage devices listed above.
- **For safety and security, the CLA discourages the use of cloud-based file sharing services (such as Dropbox, Google Drive, or Microsoft OneDrive) to transfer significant numbers of files.** Similarly, files should not be sent to the CLA as attachments to emails.

*Questions? Please reach out to Billy McCarthy and Zachary Bodnar by email at [ref@14beacon.org](mailto:ref@14beacon.org).*



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*History Matters*