

How to Care for Parish Registers

General Synod Archives, May 2011

Completing Registers

1. Registers should be filled in and signed by the officiant, at the time of, or as soon as possible after, the pastoral act. This insures that information is not lost.
2. All parts of each entry shall be filled in completely.
3. Entries should be accurate, using names as registered with Provincial Vital Statistics (birth certificate names), not nicknames.
4. Entries should be made in chronological order.
5. All entries should be printed legibly, including the names of signatories.
6. If at the time of completing an entry, a mistake is made, the correction must be initialled by the officiant.
7. No page or entry should be removed from a register. Voided entries should be clearly noted and initialled.
8. Marginal comments are not allowed.
9. No change to dates or names can be made to any entry under the provisions of the Criminal Code Section 377 (i). If an error is discovered, a certified statement of correction may be appended to the register at a later date.
10. Access to Parish Registers should be allowed only according to established Diocesan policy and/or provincial statute.
11. Fees charged for certified copies should follow established Diocesan policy.
12. All completed registers are to be given to the Diocesan authorities in accordance with diocesan Canons.
13. All active registers are to be kept in a secure location, under the care of the incumbent.
14. In the case of a vacancy parish registers should be placed in the care of one of the church wardens, or as Diocesan canons provide. The Synod office should be informed of their whereabouts.

What to Do with Completed Registers

Baptisms, Confirmations, Marriages and Burials are public acts. Parishes and Dioceses hold the records of the acts in trust for the participants and for the whole church and are thereby responsible for maintaining the integrity of the records.

Care and Custody

1. The Diocesan archives will normally provide care for the completed registers and maintain intellectual control over them.
2. Completed registers are to be deposited in the Diocesan archives.
3. The Diocese is responsible for providing a safe, secure repository for completed registers. Where a parish retains completed registers, wardens must provide assurance to the Diocese that the records are safely and securely stored and that access is provided to qualified researchers according to Diocesan policies.
4. Duplication of parish registers is a Diocesan archives program priority. One preservation copy should be stored off site.

Access

1. Check with your Diocesan archivist or privacy officer regarding local access requirements and policies. Often there are different regulations regarding first and third party research access. Each archive sets fees for services rendered.
2. Offers by third parties (i.e. the Mormon Church, genealogical societies) to do free microfilming of parish registers, in exchange for total access, are not to be accepted.
3. Microfilms, or any other kind of copies of parish registers, are to remain under the control of the Diocesan archives, and are not to be distributed (i.e. by inter-library loan) to other repositories or researchers.