

Access

- 1) Check with your diocesan archivist 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 distributed, i.e. by inter-library loan, to other repositories or researchers.

For further information contact:

The General Synod Archives

600 Jarvis Street, Toronto, ON M4Y 2J6

Tel: 416-924-9199 Ext 279

Fax: 416-968-7983

TAKING CARE: YOUR PARISH REGISTERS

A NOTE FROM THE PRIMATE

The filling out of parish registers can seem a bothersome piece of work, but I want to encourage you to see it as something vital and creative. To care for these details is to participate in the telling of a story. An active register chronicles the life of a community as it is being lived out in concrete day-to-day ministry. Every completed register reveals a story in which the moments of celebration, sorrow and joy are remembered. Parish registers can be a basis for the creation of parish and diocesan histories, offer needed data to individuals who are seeking information for birth certificates or pensions and help record and recall formative events in the annals of parish family.

The carrying out of this simple but important task is one of the ways we take our place in the ongoing life of the body of Christ – week by week, year by year, even century by century.

Yours faithfully,

Michael G. Peers
Archbishop and Primate

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A. How to care for Parish 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.
- 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 they 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.

B. What to do with completed registers

Baptisms, Marriages and Burials are public acts. Parishes & 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 completed registers and maintain intellectual control over them.
- 2) Complete registers are to be deposited in the Diocesan Archives.
- 3) The Diocese is responsible for providing a safe, secure repository for complete 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.
- 4) Preservation microfilming of parish registers is a diocesan archives program priority. It is preferred that microfilm copies rather than originals are used by researchers. One preservation copy of the film should be stored off site.