

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

ABOUT SESSION RECORDS

PAPER/PRINT/STORAGE

The Minutes and Registers of each church are very valuable, for exhibiting the life and mission of the church as well as for their legal and historical importance. It is essential that there is a permanent, archival quality copy that will last for a very long time.

1. PAPER

The best permanent record remains that of archival quality paper (electronic media is transitory and unreliable). Archival quality paper is acid-free and has a "rag" or cotton fiber content for durability. Some claim that paper with 75-100% cotton fiber will last for a thousand years (how do they know this?); think of the interest that your Minutes will have then!

Archival quality paper is available at office supply outlets (e.g., Office Max; Office Depot) and is reasonable in cost. High fiber paper is often termed "resume paper." The preferred weight is "24 lb." paper (the weight supposedly of a ream).

2. PRINTING

Most clerks use computers to create the final copy of the Minutes. Handwritten records are certainly OK but must be done in ink, using a roller-ball or fountain pen whereby the ink soaks into and bonds with the paper (rather than the typical ballpoint). Make sure about the legibility!

If you use a computer, the Permanent records should be printed on a laser printer, which uses a bonding process (not laserjet). Photocopies are to be avoided as far as possible because they are not permanent [there is evidence that photo print degrades within a couple of decades]. Sometimes, however, this is difficult to avoid for material that is inserted into the record from a pre-printed master, e.g., program materials that you want in the record.

It is recommended that ordinary printed copies or photocopies be distributed to the Session and used in the church as working copies, with the Permanent Minutes set aside and securely stored.

3. STORAGE

The traditional manner of storing records is the leather-bound book, which usually requires special paper (perforated to fit in a post binder). This is expensive and unnecessary but preferred by some clerks. In fact, archivists recommend that paper

records be stored flat in special non-chemical boxes. If you use the bound book, you do not need to buy a new book when the present one is full (these are very expensive!). You can store the present minutes in a special box, buy only new special paper (Cokesbury sells this paper) and reuse the leather binding.

The preferred alternative is to store the Permanent Minutes in an archival box, using archival quality paper. These boxes come in a variety of sizes but a 1" or 2" box is usually sufficient for two to three years of Session minutes. When it is full, it can easily be stored flat. These boxes are acid- and chemical-free and are intended for the protection of high-fiber papers. They are available from library supply vendors such as:

www.lightimpressionsdirect.com
www.printfile.com
www.hollingermetaledge.com

[If there is sufficient interest, we may collaborate in a group order that will save time and money.]

Once a storage box is full, it is recommended that it be sent to the Presbytery Historical Society archives (Philadelphia) for long-term storage and the Session continue to use only the working copies. The Stated Clerk of Presbytery will do this for you upon request.

These comments and suggestions may raise other questions. Please submit them to the Chair of the Session Records Review Committee or to the Stated Clerk.