Synod Archives Collection and Access Policy

1 Purpose

The Synod Archives Collection and Access Policy (the **Policy**) establishes a clear, authoritative framework for the identification, preservation, custodianship, and access to archival records and artefacts of the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania (the **Synod**).

This Policy ensures that records of enduring value, or required to be maintained for compliance purposes are:

- Preserved as evidence of the Synod's governance, mission, ministry and community life.
- Managed in a manner that supports accountability, transparency, identity and organisational memory.
- Protected for current and future generations in a responsible and sustainable way.

This Policy supersedes and replaces the *Synod Archives By-Laws (2015)* and any other archival provisions contained within Synod By-Laws, regulations, policies or subordinate instruments insofar as they relate to the long-term custody, preservation, management or access of archival records and artefacts.

2 Scope

This Policy applies to:

- All councils of the Church within the bounds of the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania. This includes the Synod, including Synod Ministries and Operations (SMO), presbyteries, and congregations and all associated governance bodies of these councils.
- Archival records and artefacts created, received or acquired in the course of Church activities.
- Materials in all formats, including physical and digital.

This Policy applies only to materials assessed as having enduring archival value.

The Synod recognises that, for historical and practical reasons, alternative archival custody or storage arrangements may operate for archival records and artefacts originating in Tasmania.

3 Policy statement

The Synod recognises its archives, including archival records and artefacts, as a collective organisational memory and governance asset.

The Synod commits to:

- Ensuring adequate record-keeping and archiving to evidence the Synod's governance, mission, ministry and community life.

- Identifying records and artefacts of enduring value in a consistent, transparent and defensible manner.
- Preserving archival materials in ways that respect their evidential, historical, cultural and spiritual significance.
- Ensuring ethical, secure and sustainable custodianship.
- Supporting appropriate access, balanced with privacy, pastoral, cultural and legal responsibilities.

4 Key roles and responsibilities

The table below summarises the key roles and responsibilities in relation to this Policy.

Role	Responsibilities
Synod Standing Committee	• Establishing archive policy and requirements • Provide oversight of archival governance
Synod Senior Leadership Team (SLT)	• Responsible for overseeing the implementation of this and related policies and requirements into practice as related to Synod Ministries and Operations. • Ensuring the organisation appoints adequate resources and budget to coordinate and support archival management systems and activities.
Synod Archives Team	• Advises on archival appraisal, artefact assessment, preservation and access • Operates the 'Synod Archives' office including review, cataloguing and archiving of relevant material, and handling information requests to access archived materials. • Develops supporting procedures and standards • Provides guidance and advice across different councils of the Church to support consistent interpretation and application of this Policy. • Cooperating with the Uniting Church Historical Society (Victoria and Tasmania) to promote interest in and study of the Church, including arranging access to archival material, where appropriate, for research purposes to students of the history of the Church.
Tasmanian Office of the Synod	• Coordinate any Tasmanian state-based archiving processes and arrangements with Archives Tasmania.
All Councils of the Church	• Ensure adequate documentation and record-keeping of key governance processes and ministry activities. • Identify and retain records and artefacts with archival value. • Periodically transfer archival materials in accordance with approved processes. • Ensure that records and artefacts of councils of the Church that are disbanded, merged or restructured are archived in accordance with this Policy.

5 Policy requirements

5.1 Synod Archives

The Synod shall provide a central service for archives relating to The Uniting Church in Australia in the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania. The Synod Archives are responsible for the assessment, storage, preservation and accessibility of the archival material of the Synod, except those materials that may be archived with the Tasmanian State Government.

The Synod Archives are responsible for the review and assessment of materials to determine if items meet requirements of being core archival material and therefore able to be accepted by Synod for archiving.

Tasmanian councils may deposit with Archives Tasmania or Synod Archives; where deposited with Archives Tasmania, access is subject to that institution's requirements.

5.2 Collection policy

The following sub sections outline what records and artefacts are considered 'core archival material' and therefore require archiving. The Synod Archives are responsible for the review and assessment of materials to determine if items meet requirements of being core archival material and therefore able to be accepted by Synod for archiving.

5.2.1 Records

Core archival records of the Synod, designated as requiring permanent retention, includes the following.

- All Baptism, Burial and Marriage Registers
- Minutes, minute books, correspondence and other documents of each council of the Church within the Synod, including their related governance committees and boards, or other such records related to the governance, structure and authority of the Synod and its bodies.
- Formal periodicals, newsletters, bulletins etc. published by councils of the Church.
- Key records and photographs of material Church activities as related to mission, theology, ministry, and worship and witness.
- Papers, printed programs of dedications, ordinations, inductions, jubilee and commemorative booklets, other programs issued or published by councils of the Church.
- Key photographs of church buildings and their related plans, blueprints, designs etc, of churches, colleges, institutions and other property of the church. *Note that many such records may be held and maintained by the Synod's Property Services Team as opposed to within the archives.*
- Other records related to matters of continuing legal, cultural, spiritual or historical importance.

5.2.2 Artefacts

As objects require additional and specific storage and care requirements, the Synod has limited ability to centrally collect and store objects and artefacts from the life of the Church.

The below types of artefacts may be considered for acquisition to the Synod Archives.

- Memorabilia e.g. badges
- Sunday School book prizes
- Banners
- Commemorative china
- Clothing e.g. Uniforms
- Ministerial regalia
- Silver
- Trophies
- Bible and hymn books containing inscriptions of historical significance

The below limitations apply in relation to the acquisition of artefacts.

- Synod Archives will only accept artefacts where it can reasonably support their effective ongoing storage and display requirements.
- The Synod Archives will not act as a repository for private loan collections and will therefore not accept items offered for archiving 'on permanent loan'.
- The condition of each object will be assessed before it is accepted into the collection.
- The relative meaning of the object must be persistent after it is removed from its original context. If an object only has meaning when in its context but not beyond, it may not be appropriate for archiving.
- The Synod Archives will not collect property related artefacts such as foundation stones, stained glass windows, and memorial plaques. These artefacts form part of the physical fabric of a Church building and lose contextual relevance when removed from their originating site for separate storage.

5.3 Access and use of materials

Once records are transferred and formally accessioned into the Synod Archives collection, legal custody and ownership are vested in the Synod. Accessioned records will not be returned to the donor, except where required by law or explicitly provided for in a documented agreement at the time of transfer.

The Synod Archivist is the delegated decision-maker for access to, reproduction of, and use of materials held by the Synod Archives, and may approve, decline, or impose conditions on access. Where a request is high risk, complex or uncertain, the Synod Archivist will refer the matter to the General Secretary for determination.

- Access may be granted to authorised 'internal users' (including councils of the Church accessing material they have deposited) and may be restricted where required by law, privacy/confidentiality, pastoral or cultural considerations, or preservation needs. Generally, access to internal users will not incur any fee, except in some limited circumstances for more complex requests requiring additional research time.

- The Synod Archivist may issue certificates or extracts from registers or other authoritative records (including Records of Baptism) in accordance with supporting procedures and verification requirements.

- The Synod may publish selected archival materials (including online) and will consider reasonable requests to remove or restrict access to published content in accordance with supporting procedures.

- Access for 'external users' may be granted for legitimate purposes (including historical research) where appropriate and may be declined or made subject to conditions. Fees or cost recovery arrangements may apply.

5.4 Deaccessioning of archives

Deaccession of archives may be considered where an item:

- has been requested to be returned to its source of origin, particularly culturally sensitive artefacts;
- is no longer relevant to the collection and outside the scope of this collection policy;
- is damaged beyond repair; or
- cannot be reasonably accommodated within the available storage.

All deaccessions must be formally approved by the Synod Archivist.

Methods of deaccession to be considered by the Synod Archivist will be (in order of preference): return to donors or donors' heirs; transfer to another collecting institution; public sale; disposal by recycling or destruction.

6 Definition of key terms

The table below provides definitions for key terms specific to this policy to support consistent interpretation and application.

Term	Definition
Appraisal	The process of evaluating business activities to determine which records need to be captured and how long the records need to be kept, to meet business needs, the requirements of organisational accountability and community expectations.
Artefact	An artefact is a physical object that is not primarily a documentary record, but which has been assessed as having enduring value because it materially evidences, symbolises or is directly associated with significant aspects of the Synod's life, ministry, identity or history.
Disposal / Deaccessioning	A range of processes associated with implementing appraisal decisions. These include the retention, deletion, or destruction of records in or from recordkeeping systems. They may also include the migration or transmission of records between recordkeeping systems, and the transfer of custody or ownership of records.
External users	External users include all potential users that may request access to Synod Archive materials other than the councils of the Church that deposited the material. This may include other related bodies of the Church, historians, researchers, past ministers, past or current church members and their family and other such users.
Internal users	Internal users of Synod Archives material include authorised representatives of the councils of the Church that deposited the material and staff from the Synod office.

Term	Definition
Record	A record is information created, received and maintained as evidence of decisions, activities or transactions undertaken regardless of format or medium. This may include digital or physical documents as well as photographic records. An archival record is a record that has been formally assessed as having enduring value and is preserved permanently because of its continuing legal, governance, evidential, historical, cultural or accountability significance.

7 Related documents

This section provides a summary of key related documents as at the time of writing.

7.1 Internal Synod documents

- Synod Archives Transfer Procedure
- Access and Use of Synod Archives Procedure
- SMO Information Management Policy
- Data breach Policy and Procedure
- UCA Privacy Policy

Document control

Document Owner:	The **Synod Archivist** is responsible for the management and maintenance of this document.		
Review cycle:	This document will be subject to formal review every **3 years**.	**Next review date:**	**August 2029**
Endorsers:	Review and endorsement is required from the following bodies: - **Senior Leadership Team** - **Property and Operations Committee**	**Approver:**	**Synod Standing Committee**

Version	Date	Update by	Summary of changes	Approval date
1.0	May 2026	Jennifer Bars – Synod Archivist Tamika McLaren – Dir. Audit, Risk and Records Management	New policy to supersede previous mix of policy and by-laws.	21/10/2026

Document management:

- *Any minor changes made between review periods should be reflected in the above table. Only changes of a material nature will require approval by the nominated approver between formal review periods.*
- ***Note:** when reviewing this document, the reviewer should ensure the template used is still the most current template for Synod policies and procedures, as found on the Synod intranet. This document is based on the **November 2025** template as approved by the Senior Leadership Team.*