DATA RETENTION POLICY

Elmwood Presbyterian Church
(Registered Charity in Northern Ireland: NIC105264)

INTRODUCTION

The law does not specify minimum or maximum periods for retaining personal data but rather gives the general principle:

'Personal data processed for any purpose or purposes shall not be kept for longer than necessary for that purpose or purposes.'

In practice this means that we need to:

- review the length of time we keep personal data
- consider the purposes for which we hold the information, as a guide to determining whether, and for how long, we retain it
- securely delete or destroy information that is no longer needed for those purposes; and
- update, archive or securely delete or destroy information if it goes out of date

PURPOSE

This Policy is to be read in conjunction with the Data Protection Policy and is designed to outline the time period for which we, Elmwood Presbyterian Church, will hold certain types of data. As noted in the Data Protection Policy it is a legal requirement that personal data is not be kept for longer than is necessary.

We are required by law to keep certain records, usually for a specific amount of time. The accidental or intentional destruction of these records during their specified retention periods could result in the following consequences for the congregation including:

- Fines and penalties.
- Civil action.
- Criminal action.
- Reputational damage.

Therefore we prohibit the inappropriate destruction of any records, files, documents, samples, and other forms of information. This Policy is part of a congregation-wide system for the review, retention, and destruction of records we create or receive in connection with the activities we conduct.

TYPES OF DOCUMENTS

This Policy explains the differences among records, disposable information, and confidential information belonging to others.

Records. A record is any type of information created, received, or transmitted in the transaction of our activities, regardless of physical format. Examples of where the various types of information are located include:

- Appointment books and calendars.
- Audio and video recordings.
- Computer programs.
- Contracts.
- Electronic files.
- Emails.
- Handwritten notes.
- Invoices.
- Letters and other correspondence.
- Memory in mobile phones, tablets, laptops and any other portable electronic device.
- Online postings.
- Performance reviews.
- Test samples.

- Voicemails.

Therefore, any paper records and electronic files, including any records of donations made online, that are part of any of the categories listed in the Records Retention Schedule contained in the Appendix to this Policy, are be retained for the amount of time indicated in the Records Retention Schedule or such other time as is necessary in the circumstances. A record must not be retained beyond the period indicated in the Record Retention Schedule**, unless a valid reason (or there is potential for litigation or other special situation) or specific legal requirement calls for its continued retention**. If you are unsure whether to retain a certain record, contact the Data Protection Lead.

Disposable Information. Disposable information consists of data that may be discarded or deleted at the discretion of the user once it has served its temporary useful purpose and/or data that may be safely destroyed because it is not a record as defined by this Policy. Examples may include:

- Duplicates of originals that have not been annotated.
- Preliminary drafts of letters, memoranda, reports, worksheets, and informal notes that do not represent significant steps or decisions in the preparation of an official record.
- Books, periodicals, manuals, training binders, and other printed materials obtained from sources outside of the Organisation and retained primarily for reference purposes.
- Spam and junk mail.

Confidential Information Belonging to Others. Any confidential information that an employee may have obtained from a source outside of the congregation, such as a previous employer, must not, so long as such information remains confidential, be disclosed to or used by us. Unsolicited confidential information submitted to us should be refused, returned to the sender where possible, and deleted, if received via the internet.

MANDATORY COMPLIANCE

Responsibility of All Employees and Volunteers. We strive to comply with the laws, rules, and regulations that govern compliance and with recognised compliance practices. All congregation employees and volunteers must comply with this Policy and the Records Retention Schedule. Failure to do so may subject the congregation, its employees, contract staff and volunteers to serious civil and/or criminal liability. An employee's failure to comply with this Policy may result in disciplinary sanctions, including suspension or termination.

Reporting Policy Violations. We are committed to enforcing this Policy as it applies to all forms of records. The effectiveness of our efforts, however, depends largely on employees and volunteers. If you feel that you or someone else may have violated this Policy, you should report the incident immediately to the Data Protection Lead.

HOW TO STORE AND DESTROY RECORDS

Storage. Our records must be stored in a safe, secure, and accessible manner. Any documents and financial files that are essential to our purpose and activities during an emergency must be duplicated and/or backed up at regular intervals.

Destruction. The Data Protection Lead is responsible for the continuing process of identifying the records that have met their required retention period and supervising their destruction. The destruction of confidential, financial, and personnel-related records must be conducted by shredding if possible. Non-confidential records may be destroyed by recycling. The destruction of electronic records must be undertaken with appropriate expert advice and oversight.

The destruction of records must stop immediately upon notification that litigation to which the said documents would be relevant is likely to occur.

INTERNAL REVIEW

The Data Protection Lead will periodically review this Policy and its procedures to ensure that the congregation is in full compliance with relevant new or amended regulations.

APPENDIX – RECORDS RETENTION SCHEDULE

Please note that the timeframes in the table above are designed to be a rough guide and are based on a number of factors (such as ensuring that the limitation period for taking an action to which the documents would be relevant has passed). In all cases documentation is to be retained for as long as it is reasonably necessary to hold it and not any longer than this.