

ATTENTION CHURCH HISTORIANS AND RECORD KEEPERS

Date: August 1, 2019

From: Laureen Harder-Gissing, Mennonite Archives of Ontario

Re: The Archives and your congregation

Greetings from the Mennonite Archives of Ontario! We are now approaching our 80th year of supporting MCEC congregations in your task of preserving and telling your congregation's story.

I've had the privilege of meeting many of you and even visiting your congregations. For those I haven't met yet, here is a brief introduction. I have been the Archivist-Librarian here at Conrad Grebel for 10 years. Before this, I managed the Mennonite & Brethren in Christ Resource Centre (an audiovisual library) and worked as a freelance researcher helping Mennonite organizations write their stories. I have a degree in library and archival studies from the University of Toronto. I live in downtown Kitchener, however I grew up on a farm in Niagara. I have attended MCEC congregations all my life. The variety and richness of Mennonite history and experience in Ontario continues to amaze and inspire me.

The most common question I get from congregations is "what should we send to the Archives?" Here is a list of materials you should consider depositing with us:

- ✓ Annual report books
- ✓ Minutes of congregational meetings and church council meetings, as well as minutes of other significant groups within your church
- ✓ Membership directories
- ✓ Programmes of special events
- ✓ Congregational newsletters
- ✓ Deeds, cemetery records and other unique documents requiring safe storage
- ✓ News clippings involving church members
- ✓ Most-treasured photographs, such as pictures of leaders, new buildings, or special events
- ✓ Sound or video recordings of a typical church service. See our website for details.
- ✓ Congregational histories (published or unpublished)
- ✓ Church bulletins
- ✓ Annual financial statements

In addition, if you know of individuals or families in your congregation with records that may be of historical interest (diaries, letters, photographs, family histories, rare books, papers of pastors, etc.) please encourage them to contact the Archives.

A question I am asked with increasing frequency is “what do we do about electronic documents?” My response is that currently electronic formats are not designed for long term preservation. Printing to paper is still the best option to ensure your information survives for the long term. Some exceptions are photographs that are created with a digital camera, and sound and video recordings. Our climate-controlled, fire resistant archival vault helps lower the risk of loss.

To see a list of your congregation’s archival inventory, go to grebel.ca/mao and find your name in the “congregational collections” list. You are always welcome to visit your records here.

I hope this brief memo answers some basic questions. Please do not hesitate to visit our website, especially the **Help! I’m a Congregational Historian** section at uwaterloo.ca/grebel/historian, or contact me for additional advice and to learn more about the work of the Archives.

In faith,

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