



3001 Mercer University Dr., Atlanta, GA 30341 • 678/547-6680 • www.abhsarchives.org

Where should my congregation's historical records best be preserved? Should we keep them at the church, deposit them locally, or give them to ABHS? All of the above?

First, make copies of the originals by photocopying on acid-free paper or by microfilming. (A microfilm project can include creating an electronic file from the microfilm). These copies can be used, saving the originals from frequent or careless use.

Second, ABHS accepts congregational records only under special circumstances. Members of congregations benefit from familiarity with their own history. Learning about past ministry can strengthen church identity and enhance present ministries.

Third, ABHS is also reluctant to accept records because of space/money issues. In our ideal world, each congregation makes copies and keeps them in two very separate places: one a public repository (historical society or library) and the other on the church property in a fireproof, climate-steady vault. Archivists encourage organizations to keep records as close to their home of origin as possible. If the greater value of the records is the Baptist history contained in them (and not the pieces of community history), then giving the records to ABHS makes sense.

If you think your records might belong at ABHS, two matters need discussion:

1. Would the church willing to put something in its annual budget toward the costs of housing the records at ABHS?
2. What is the size of the collection you are interested in giving to ABHS?

Regardless of your decision in these important matters, it is important for the church to find a volunteer to create an inventory of the records; i.e. list each record book (or other grouping--if the records are in files, not record books) with a title and years covered; for examples, Women's Society Minutes, 1843-1862, or Congregational Minutes, 1900-1905.

A list of the kinds of records we recommend be preserved is also available for free by calling 678 547 6680. *Doing Church History – Your Own*, a booklet and packet, is available (Spanish or English edition) for \$20, postage included.

Please contact a staff member for advice or before sending records to ABHS.

Shipping Address (FedEx/UPS):

American Baptist Historical Society
2930 Flowers Road South Suite 150
Atlanta, GA 30341
678-547-6680



Procedures for working with historical records

Guidelines for what to look for and what may be of value are available from the Historical Society. Please contact us if you have not already done so. Answering the questions WHO, WHAT, WHEN, AND WHY of good reporting will help you start the process. The initial first step is always to survey what categories of materials you have and what should be kept.

The essential records you select for archiving will constitute a record group. The “creator” who knows their value best prepares them for storage.

Step 1: Arrangement

Creating order, sorting the materials

If the collection already has order, keep that order.

For instance, is it filed alphabetically or chronologically?

If there is no order, start by putting like with like: letters go together, minutes with other minutes, photos with photos, etc.

Physical care

Unfold; remove metal fasteners, rubber bands, and string

Photocopy acidic (browned and deteriorating) paper and newsprint

Remove items from binders

Throw away duplicates (no more than 2 file copies are needed of anything!)

Discard cardboard, Kraft envelopes, junk records

Storage

Items should be in folders and placed in order

Re-folder in acid-free archival folders

Each folder needs clear identification (either handwritten or with labels)

Bound volumes should be placed in consecutive order

Additional archival supplies, particularly records storage boxes, may be purchased from an office supply store, rather than using cardboard boxes to send them to ABHS.

Step 2: Description

Inventory

You have to know what you are transferring

An inventory list functions as an “index”

List the items in detail as you place them in a box, include dates

Make a list for each box you plan to transfer

There is no category “miscellaneous”

Only materials with an inventory list and a signed transfer form are accepted by the American Baptist Historical Society.