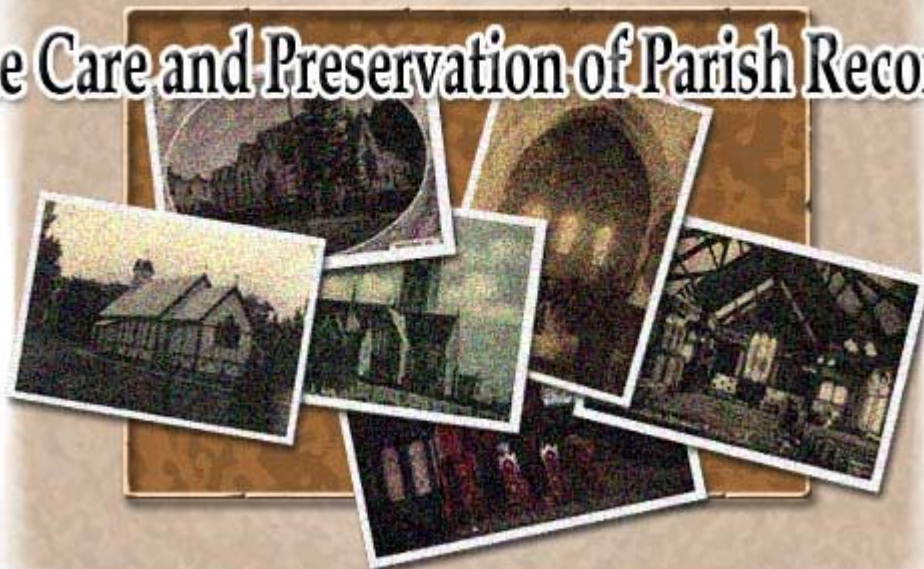


# The Care and Preservation of Parish Records



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**Anglican Archives Committee  
Anglican Church in Aotearoa New Zealand and  
Polynesia**

**Te Hahi Mihinare ki Aotearoa Ki Niu Tireni, ki Nga  
Moutere o Te Moana Nui a Kiwa**

**2002**

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## CONTENTS

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1. Introduction
2. What to do with artefacts
3. What to do with audiovisual items
4. What to do with clergy/staff records
5. What to do with correspondence
6. What to do with electronic records
7. What to do with maps, plans, architectural drawings and related records
8. What to do with minutes
9. What to do with photographs, negatives, slides, lantern slides and glass plate negatives
10. What to do with newspaper clippings and scrapbooks
11. What to do with printed/published items
12. What to do with the records of parish organizations
13. What to do with registers
14. What to do with school records
15. A quick guide to the use of ...
16. Glossary

## INTRODUCTION

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Local churches, parishes and hui amorangi and their organisations possess many different records which tell the story of our past. These records need careful preservation in order to be available for the future.

The guidelines contained in these pages are an updated version of the *Parish Archives Handbook* published in 1986.

In 1982, General Synod passed a new statute 'On Provincial Archives'. This was updated in 1992, which provided for a Canon (Title B, Canon X) on archives. Clause 4 (d) of the canon asks the archives committee to take responsibility in encouraging proper care for diocesan and parochial archives, and to draw up guidelines for this care. The guidelines here offers parishes simple charts to enable basic care of records to be taken, and assistance in knowing when to seek further help.

### **WHY KEEP PARISH ARCHIVES?**

Parish records arise out of, and reflect the work of the church. The permanently valuable records of a parish, which are known as it's "archives" have an enduring importance beyond the purpose for which they were originally created.

The records produced by individual parishes' form a valuable archival record of the work and activities of the church, and as time passes they become a more and more important research resource.

### **Some archives are held in trust**

Every Vestry has a responsibility to keep and preserve the parish registers: those of Baptism, marriage, burial and registers of services. In the case of the marriage register the obligation is much stronger than mere ecclesiastical practice: the Marriage Act 1955 requires that it be kept.

### **Archives are the memory of the parish**

It is in the interest of the parish and its parishioners to keep the records intact. Vital information about properties needs to be preserved. For example, it may be necessary in the future to have detailed records of how they were acquired and financed, obligations undertaken at the time, changes in the use of the land, or alterations to buildings.

When a parish records the problems it experiences (and even its mistakes!) its future planning and decision-making techniques and be assisted.

By emphasising continuity with the past, records may foster a sense of loyalty and pride. Parish histories continue to be written in growing numbers.

Registers, minute-books, scrapbooks, photographs, plans, parish newsletters and magazines, and reminiscences recorded on paper or cassette are all sources for re-creating the past life of parish and Church.

### **Archives have a value beyond the parish**

Interest in local history and family history has never been stronger than today. Church records have a unique value for many people. Lacking birth certificates, some people have turned to baptismal registers and found there the authoritative details that they have wanted. At a personal level such records may help to provide some people with a sense of identity and belonging.

The registers of baptism, marriage and burial have a high value for genealogists and family historians. Registers record important events which have religious significance both for the persons involved, and for the worshipping congregation. Also, the events to which they point may express a sense of belonging and corporate unity, for they focus the community identity shared by the family and friends of the individual persons concerned. Even brief entries in registers identify high points in family life, the importance of which increases rather than diminishes with the passage of time.

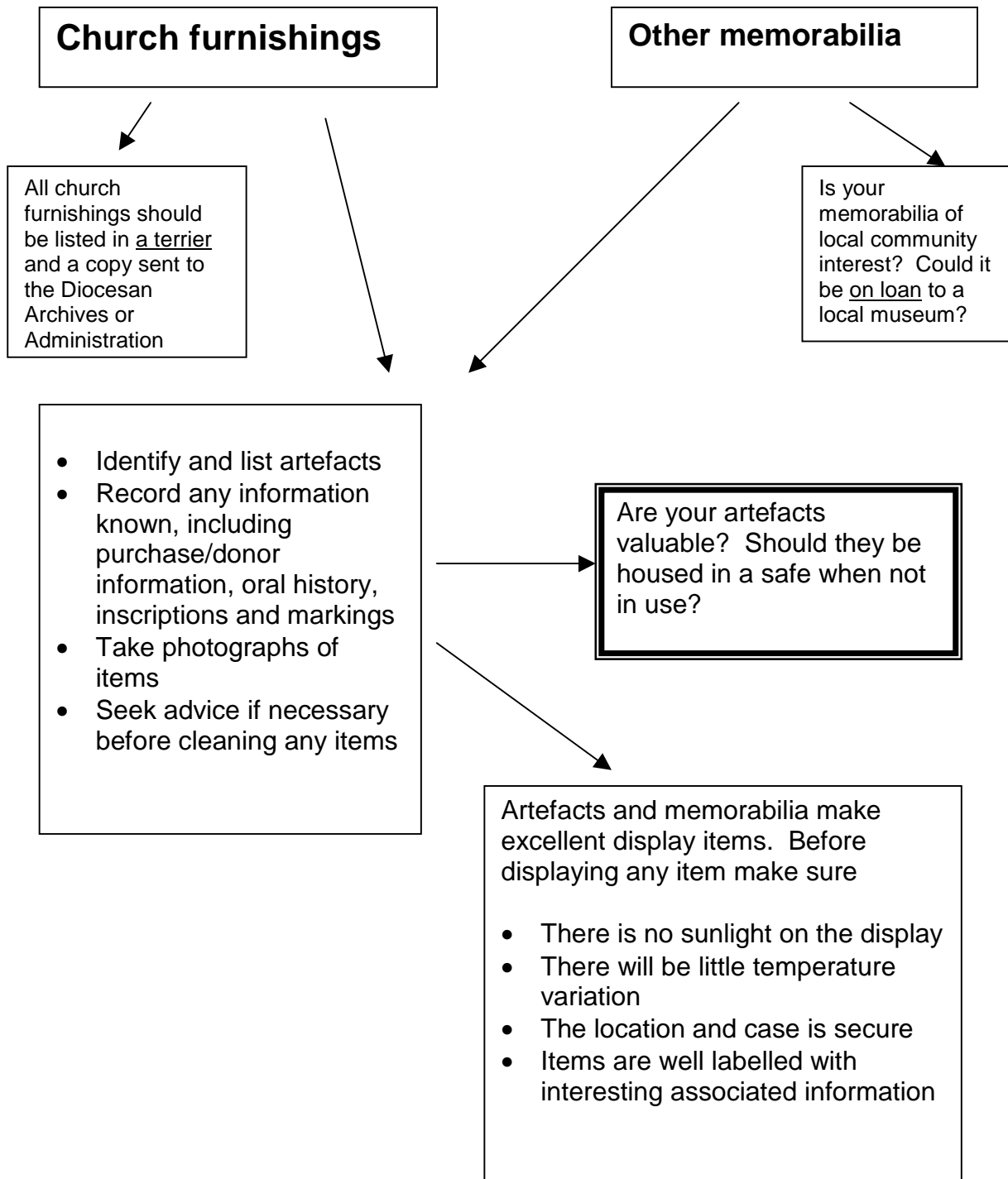
### **Three phases of records**

1. *Current phase*: during this phase records come into existence and are referred to regularly. Registers are being filled, minutes are being written and correspondence is being dealt with.
2. *Semi-current or intermediate phase*: during this phase the records are referred to with diminishing frequency. They may be separated physically from current records and placed in low cost storage. The records are no longer at all kept and those thought to have no future importance are at various stages systematically identified and destroyed. For instance, some financial vouchers may be destroyed after ten years.
3. *Archival phase*: this stage is reached when those records which come through the previous stage are preserved to become archives. They are likely to be referred to for historical or cultural reasons rather than current administrative needs. They are separated from current and semi-current records to avoid risk of confusion, and are kept in the right physical conditions to ensure their permanent preservation. Of course the archival quality of some records (e.g. parish registers) is clear from the beginning, and in such cases the intermediate stage for all practical purposes, may be omitted altogether.

## WHAT TO DO WITH ARTEFACTS

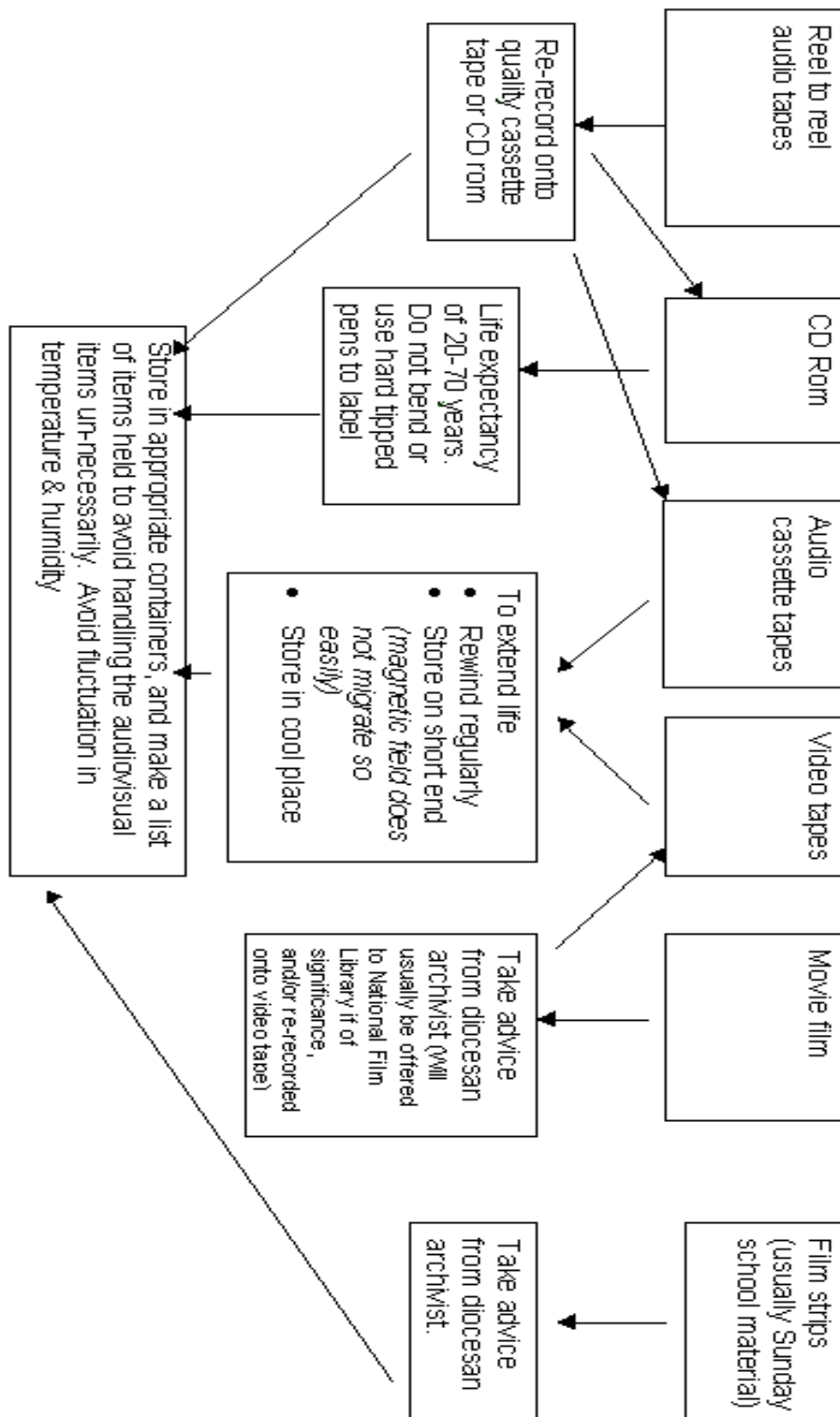
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Artefacts are both items of church furnishing and cups, plaques, trowels, foundation stone containers, coins, busts, shields, honours boards and other such memorabilia.



## WHAT TO DO WITH AUDIOVISUAL ITEMS

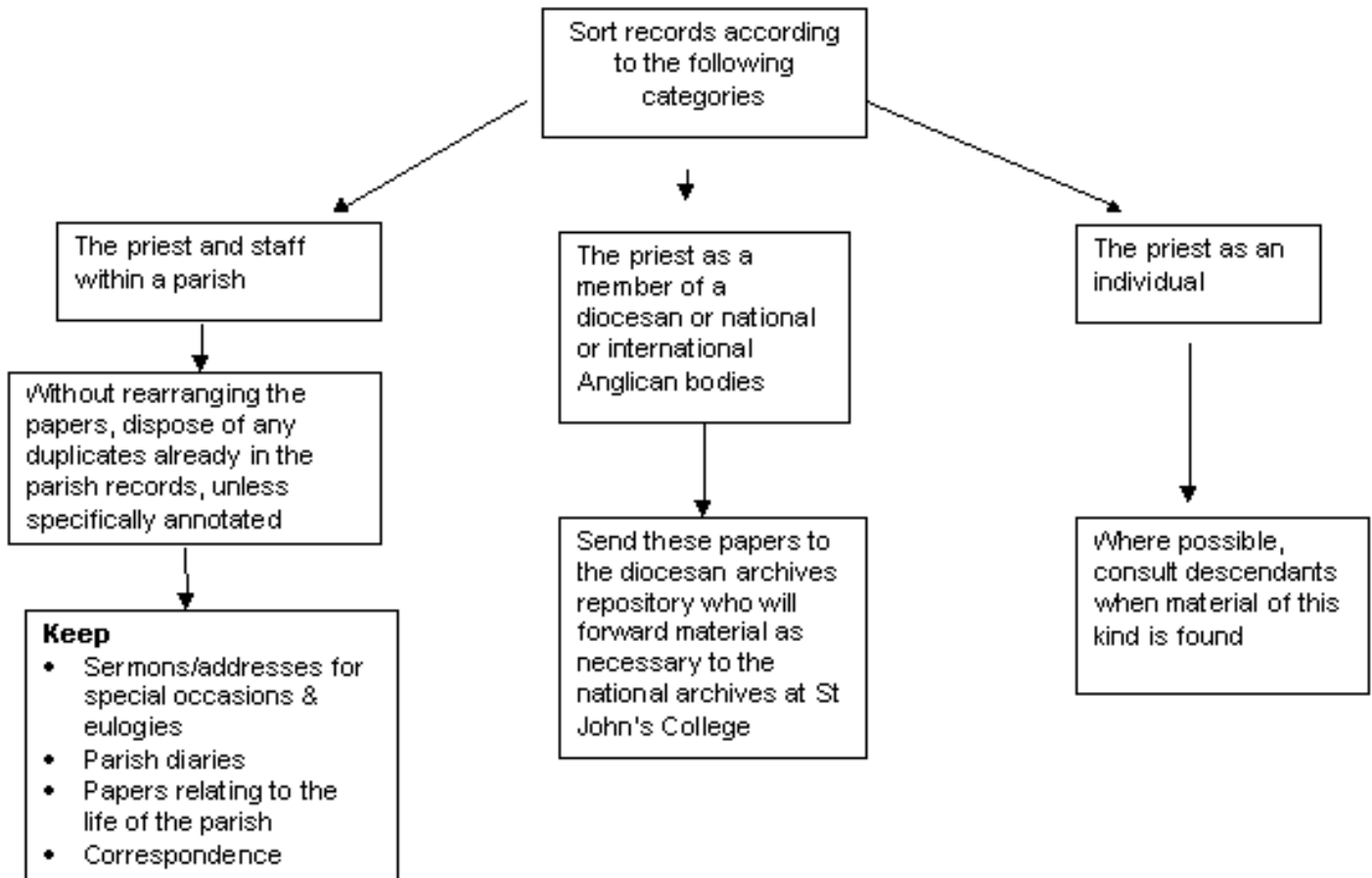
Audiovisual items require special handling to ensure that the contents are accessible in the future. Rapidly changing technology can make it impossible to access data only a few years after it is recorded. In all cases, seek advice from the diocesan archivist as to the value of keeping such material in the parish.



## WHAT TO DO WITH CLERGY/STAFF RECORDS

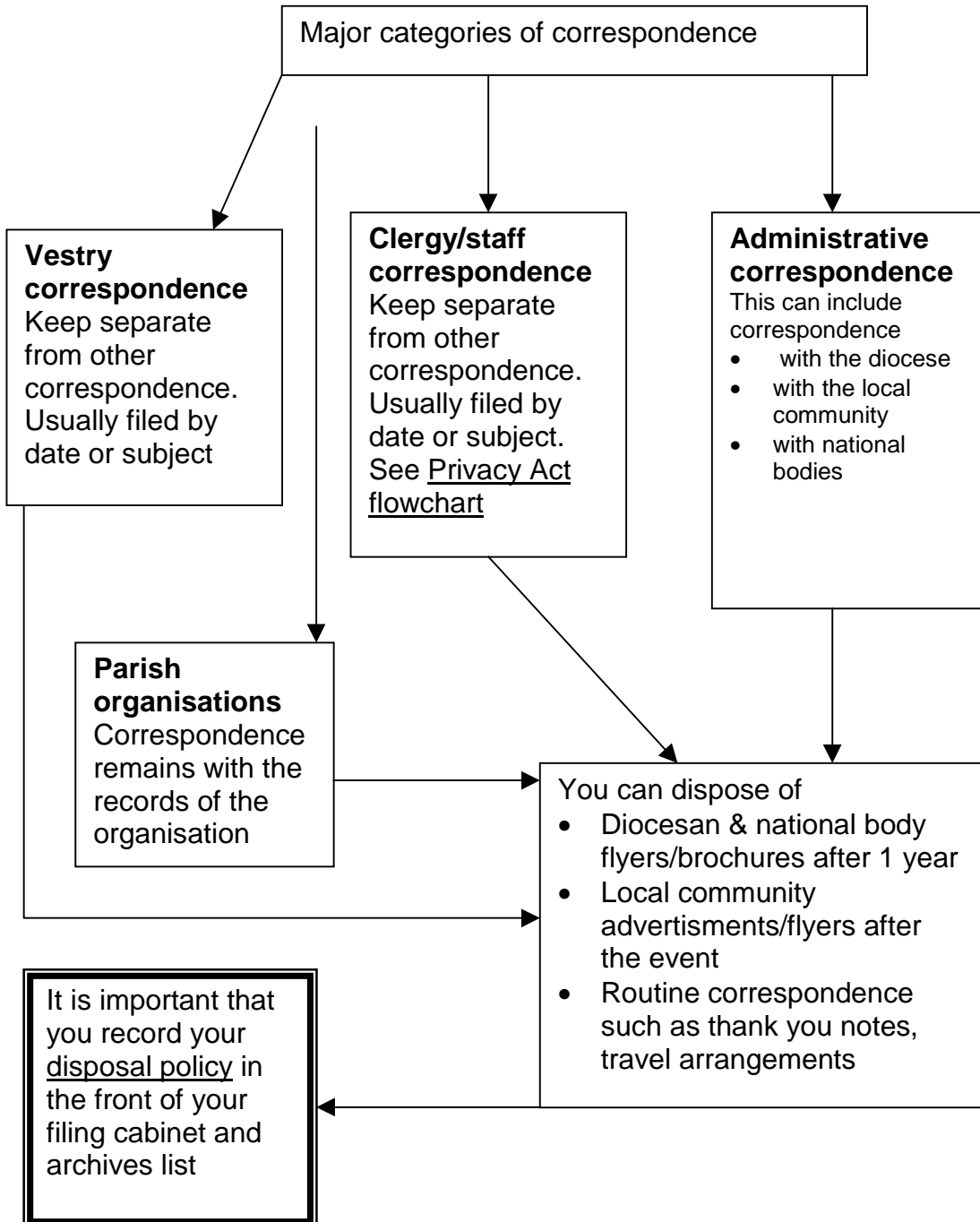
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It is important to differentiate between material created by clergy in differing roles, eg vicar of a parish, ministry enabler, chaplain or in a non parish role such as a member of a diocesan or national committee. Clergy as individuals also create records, eg diaries, photographs and family memorabilia.



## WHAT TO DO WITH CORRESPONDENCE

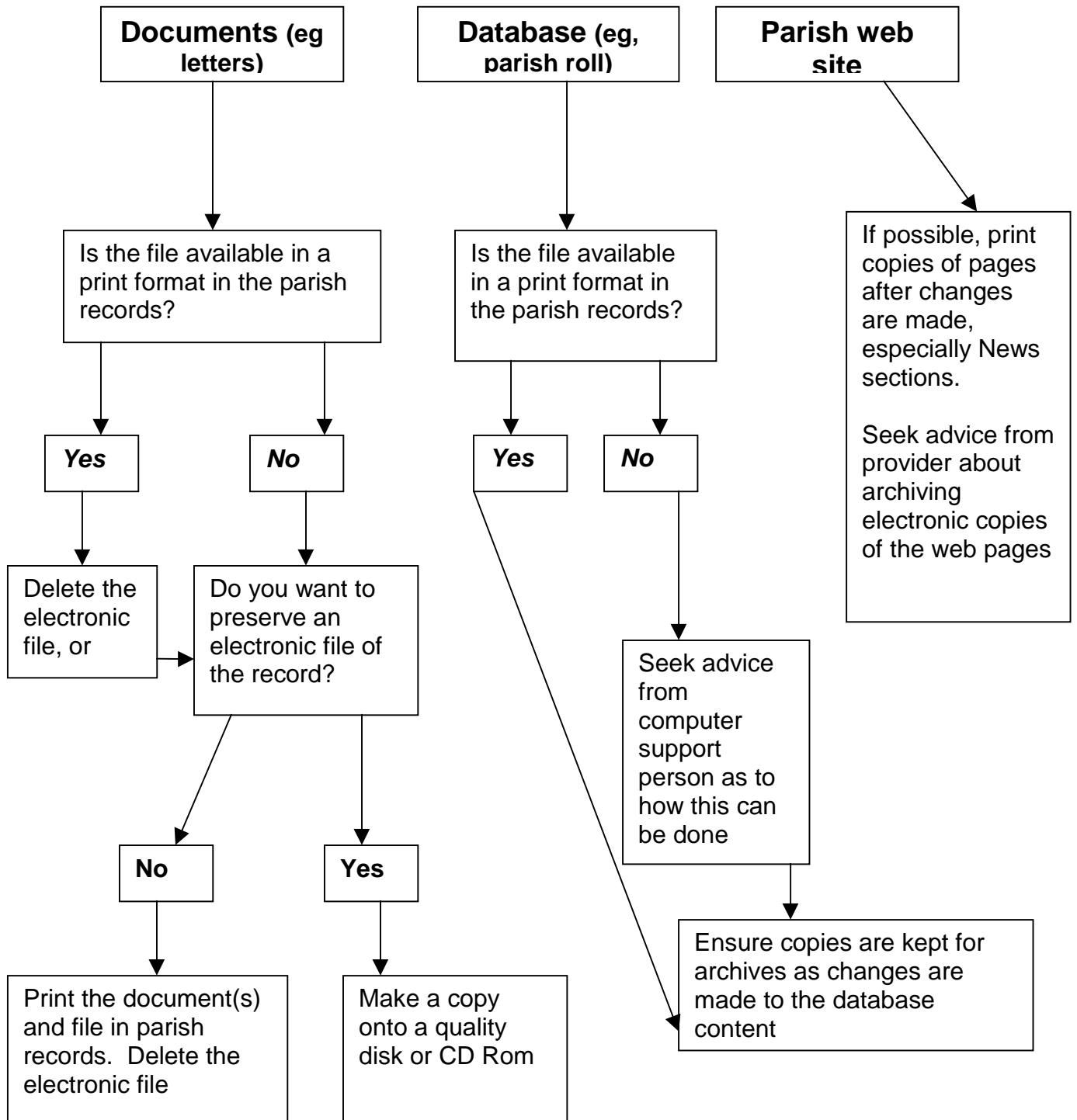
Not all correspondence needs to be retained. Selection needs to take into account not only parish interests but diocesan and local community as well. Follow the guidelines below, and ask for help from the diocesan archivist. *Before starting to sort correspondence, see the definition of "original order" on page...*



## WHAT TO DO WITH ELECTRONIC RECORDS

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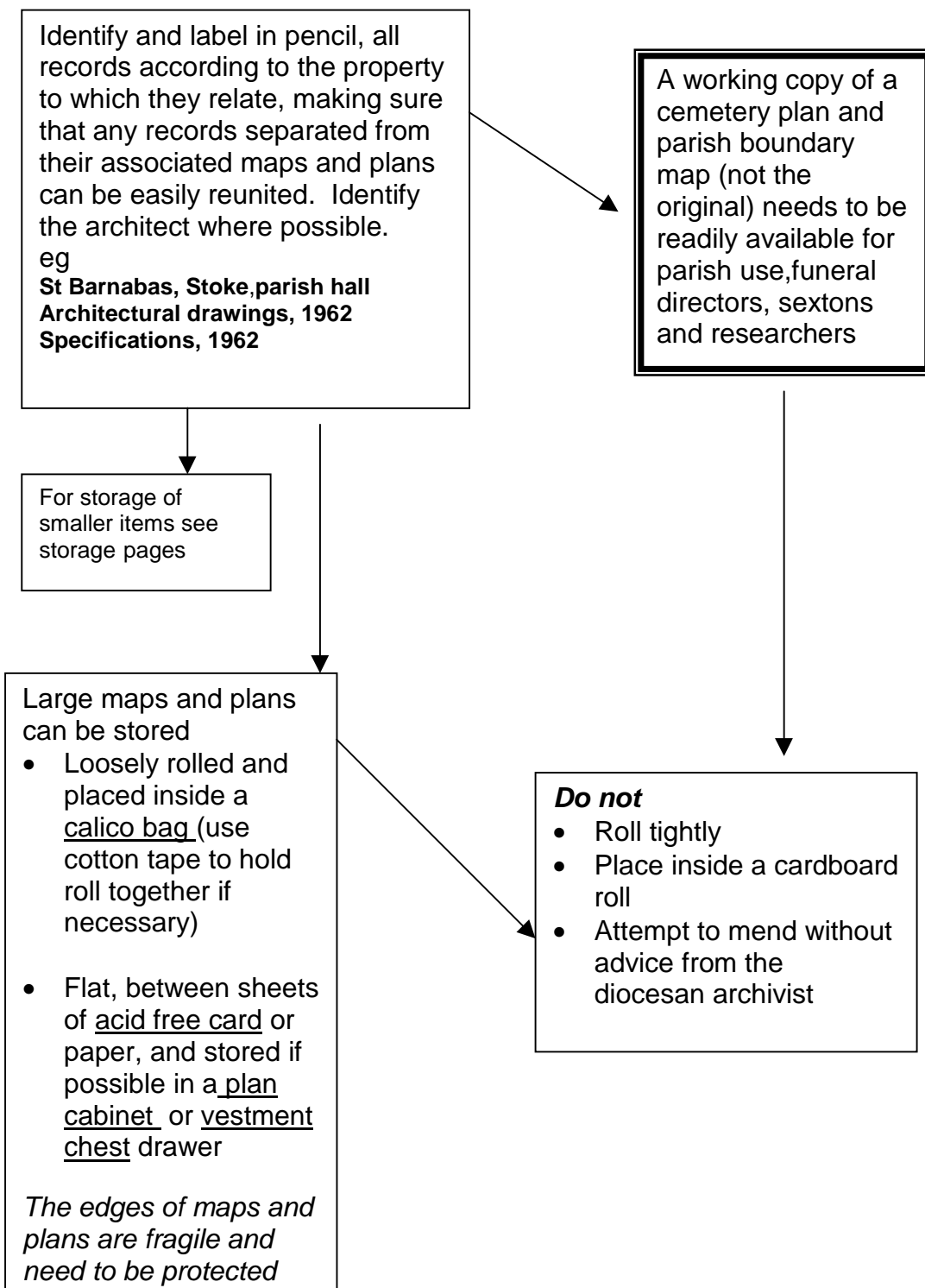
Electronic records are those records held on a computer's hard drive or on a floppy disk. These may include word processing documents (correspondence, orders of service, newsletters), and databases such as a parish roll. It is the content rather than the format of word processing documents that needs to be preserved. Most parish electronic files will already exist in the records as a printed copy. Computer disks will deteriorate and the hardware and software required to access the data will go out of date very quickly.



## WHAT TO DO WITH MAPS, PLANS, ARCHITECTURAL DRAWINGS AND RELATED RECORDS

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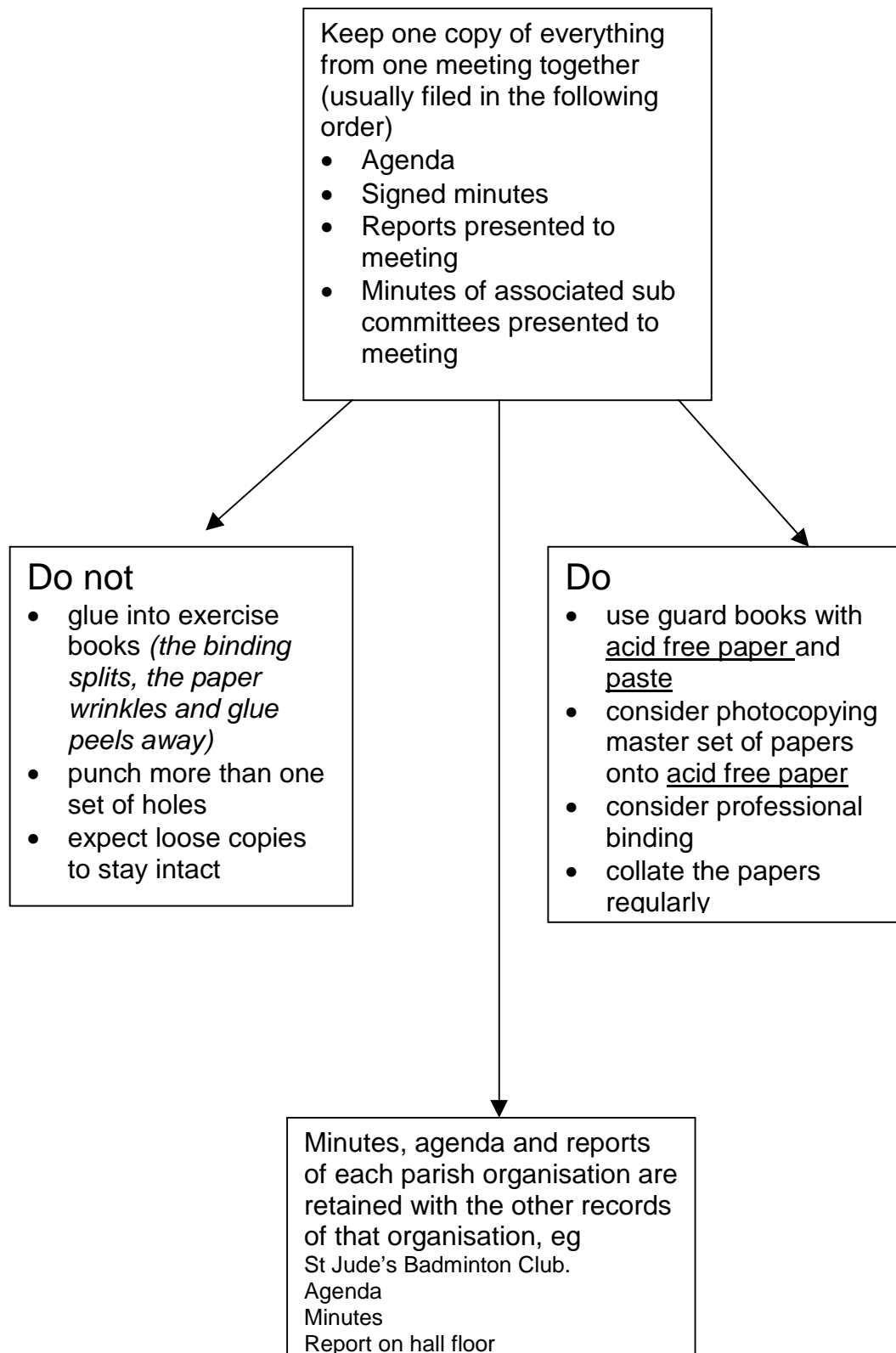
All records relating to parish property, location and buildings should be retained. These may include churches and associated buildings, boundary maps, cemeteries, leasehold and investment properties and land. Records may include contracts, certificates of title, correspondence, specifications, leases and financial arrangements for both currently and formerly owned properties.



## WHAT TO DO WITH MINUTES

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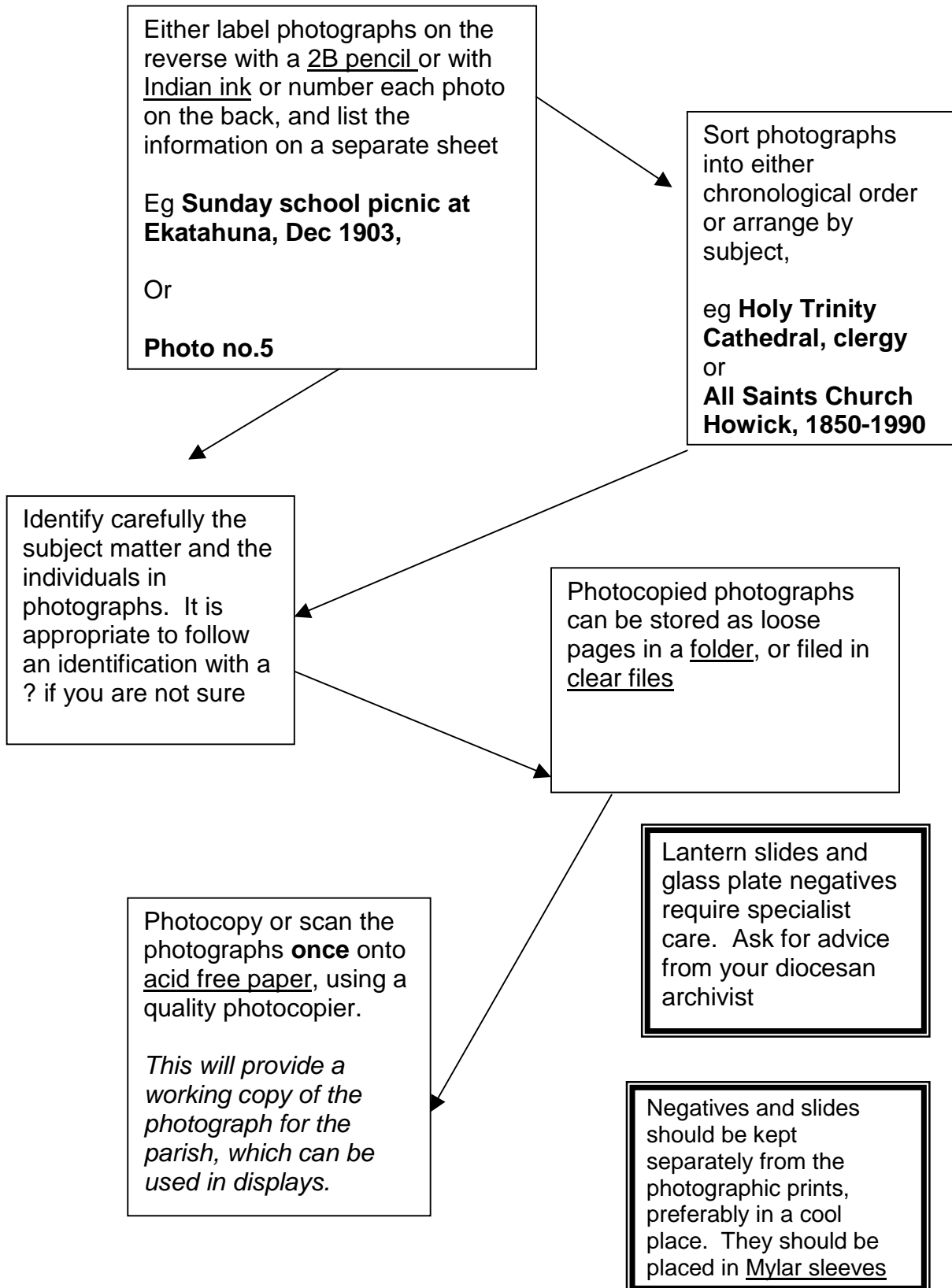
Minutes include agenda, signed minutes, associated reports, annual and special meetings of vestry/parish council/individual churches. Sometimes this material also includes annual financial reports. These minutes also include the reports and minutes of subcommittees created by the central body, eg pastoral care committee, and finance committee.



## WHAT TO DO WITH PHOTOGRAPHS, NEGATIVES, SLIDES, LANTERN SLIDES AND GLASS PLATE NEGATIVES

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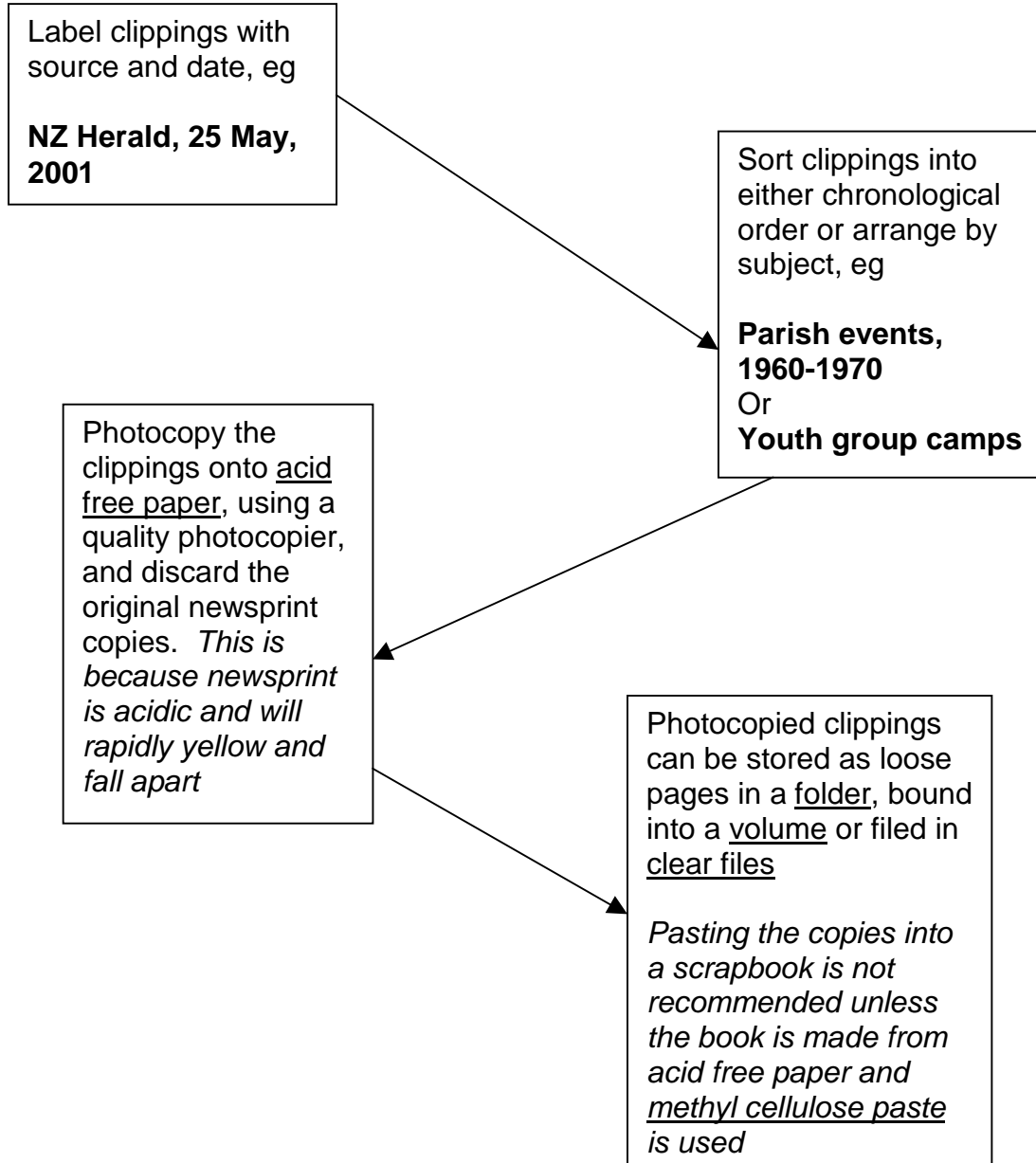
Photographs of individuals and groups associated with the parish should be kept along with those of buildings and events.



## WHAT TO DO WITH NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS AND SCRAPBOOKS

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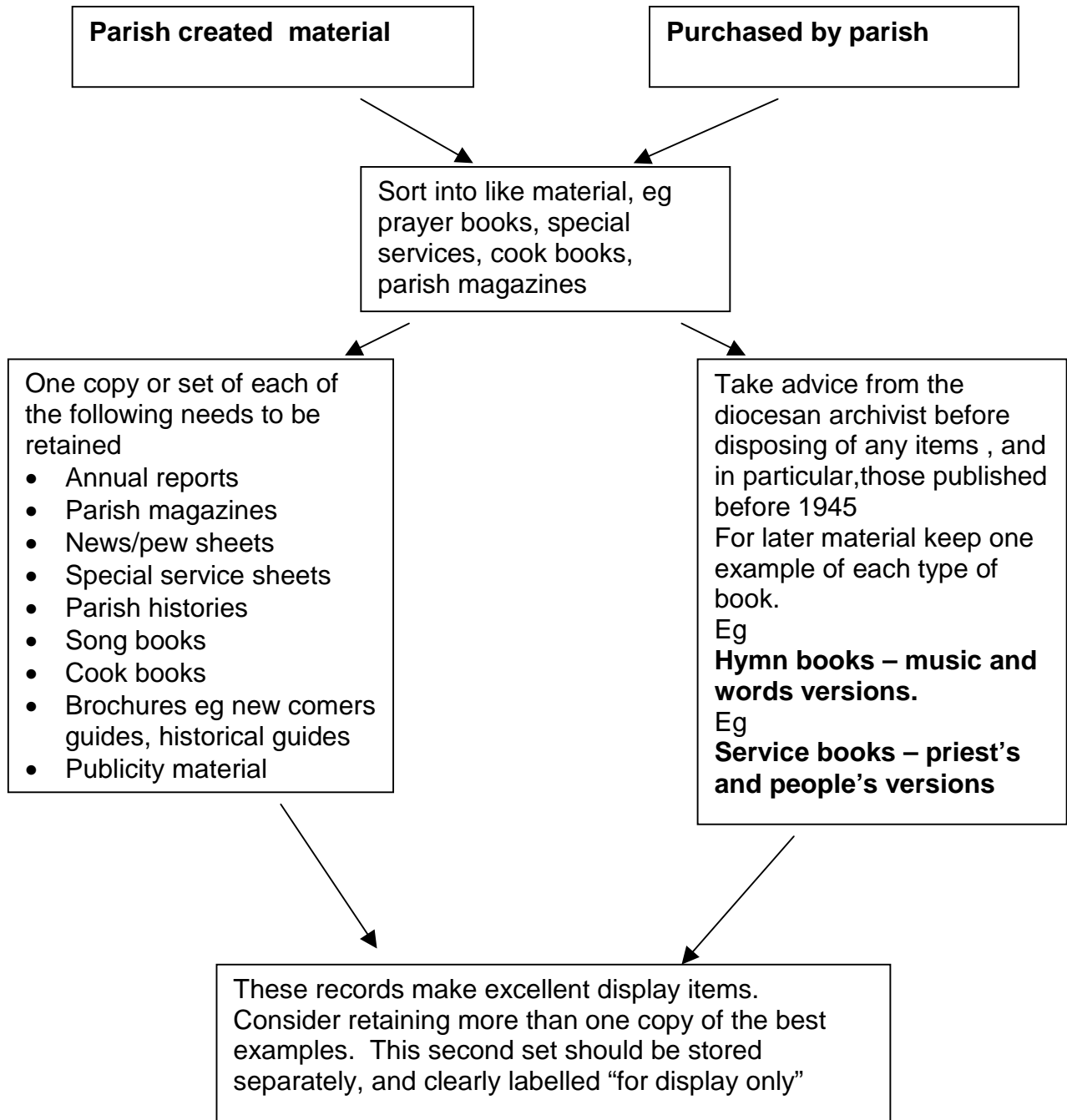
Newspaper clippings from local and national newspapers about a parish and prominent members of the parish should be kept



## WHAT TO DO WITH PRINTED/PUBLISHED ITEMS

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Includes material created by the parish, and purchased for use in the parish, eg parish magazines, news sheets, histories, hymnals, Bibles, Psalters and prayerbooks. This material can all be regarded as being publicly available.



## WHAT TO DO WITH THE RECORDS OF PARISH ORGANISATIONS

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*Parish organisations have a tendency to come and go over time. Try to identify all those which have been in your area over the life of the parish. Annual reports are a very useful way of finding this information, and requests in both parish and community newsletters will often result in additional records being found.*

The records of these groups will come from all sorts of places, and trying to maintain original order is not always possible.

### **Parish organisations may include**

- Choir
- Sunday school
- Bible Class
- Mothers' Union
- AAW
- Young Wives Group
- Ladies Guild
- Sanctuary Guild
- Sewing Guild
- Fair Committee
- Church of England Men's Society
- Anglican Bible Class Union
- Badminton Club
- Indoor Bowls Club
- Girl Guides – brownies, guides, rangers
- Boy Scouts – cubs, scouts, senior scouts
- Missionary Associations

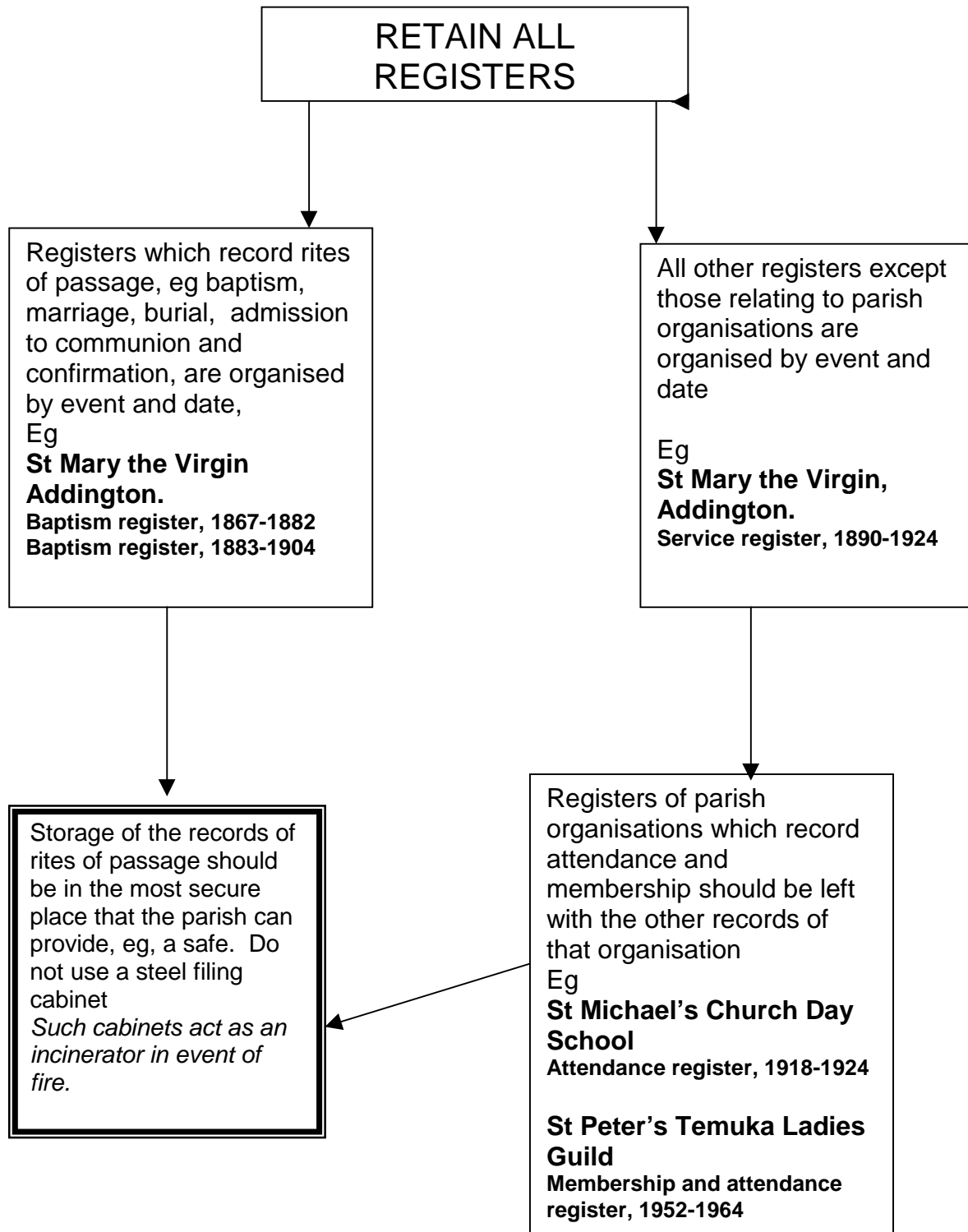
### **Records of these groups may include**

- Agenda, minutes, reports
- Correspondence
- Financial records
- Membership lists
- Memorabilia, including cups, banners, badges, tablecloths
- Records of inter-group competitions, eg tennis

## WHAT TO DO WITH REGISTERS

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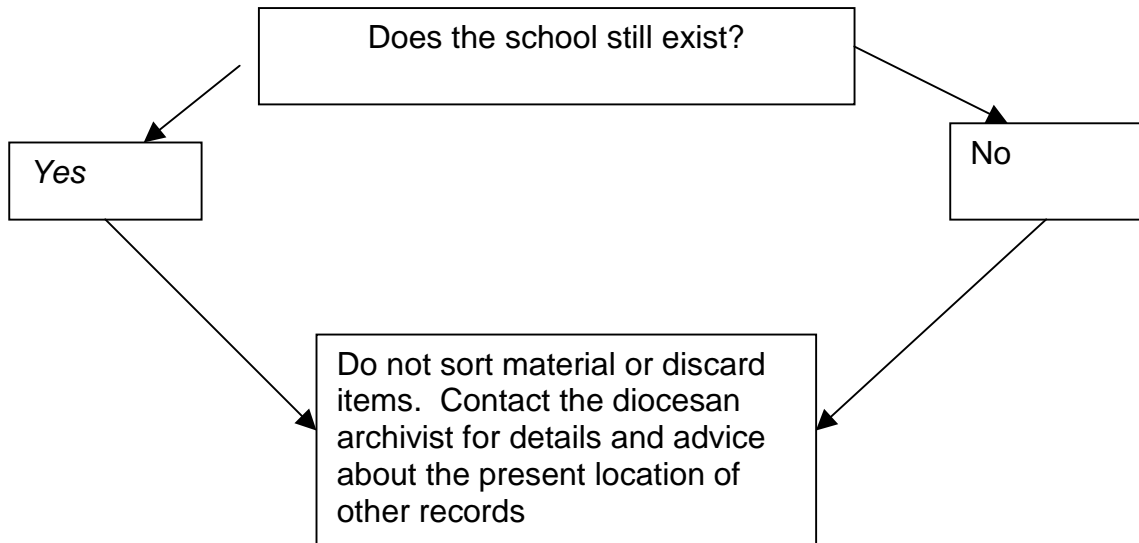
Registers to be retained are baptism, marriage, burial/funeral confirmation, admission to communion, service, attendance (eg Sunday school), and those kept less regularly (eg banns of marriage, marriage of divorced persons, plot registers)



## WHAT TO DO WITH SCHOOL RECORDS

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Parish records may include items relating to schools of various kinds, eg parish schools, day schools, public and private schools.



## A QUICK GUIDE TO THE USE OF ...

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	<b>Don't use because</b>	<b>Replace with</b>
<b>Fly/insect spray</b>	Chemical content can mark and damage artefacts and paper	Regular cleaning and approved <u>silverfish baits</u> use professional exterminators where needed
<b>Glue</b>	It can peel off, or leave a cracked residue, or shrink and damage paper	<u>Methyl cellulose paste</u>
<b>"Magic" tape</b>	It dries out and peels off, leaves stains and sticky residue	If something needs mending, see an archivist
<b>Magnetic/clingfile photograph albums</b>	Leaves sticky residue on photographs and chemicals from PVC damage front of photograph	Talk to diocesan archivist about alternative storage
<b>Manilla folders</b>	Made of acidic card which damages contents	<u>Acid free folders or envelopes</u>
<b>Paper clips</b>	Metal paper clips rust, stain and corrode	<u>Vinyl coated paper clips</u>
<b>Pens/biros</b>	Ink is irreversible	<u>2B or 3B pencil</u>
<b>Rolls of cardboard</b>	Made of acidic card which damages contents; rolling paper tightly causes irreversible damage	Approved wrapping: see "What to do with maps, plans etc..."
<b>Rubber bands</b>	They mark, perish and remain "glued" to papers	<u>Cotton tape</u>
<b>Sellotape</b>	It dries out and peels off, leaves stains and sticky residue	If something needs mending, see an archivist

### *Where to get the suggested products*

Silverfish bait	Ask your diocesan archivist
Methyl cellulose paste	Ask your diocesan archivist
Acid free envelopes & folders	Ask your diocesan archivist
Vinyl coated paper clips	Supermarket or stationery shop
2B or 3B pencil	Stationery shop
Cotton tape	Available as legal tape from stationery

**GLOSSARY** of terms underlined in the text

Acid free paper and acid free card	Paper in which the active acid pulp is eliminated during processing, and which has a minimum pH of 8.5. This paper has a long life and will not damage other papers in which it comes in contact
Acid free paste <i>see Methyl cellulose paste</i>	
Calico bag	Bag made from washed calico fabric, often with a drawstring closure and used to store rolled items such as maps
Clear files	A file with clear pages, made of polyester, not PVC
Disposal policy	A policy which states which records will be retained for archives
Folder	Made from acid free card or heavy paper if used for storing archives
Indian ink	A dark ink available from stationery shops
Methyl cellulose paste	A neutral paste that is soluble in cold water, non-staining and does not decompose.
On Loan	Placing archives on loan needs a written agreement. Seek advice from your diocesan archivist.
Original order	The order in which records and archives were kept when in active use
Plan cabinet	A cabinet with large flat drawers which allows maps, plans and large photographs to be stored flat
Privacy Act flowchart	Written by the Anglican Archives Committee and available from the Diocesan Administrator, or the Committee
Terrier	A register of the land or property belonging to a person or organisation
2B pencil	A soft leaded pencil which can be easily erased
Vestment chest	A chest with shallow drawers used for storing church vestments. Also useful as a plan cabinet
Volume (bound)	