

ELCA Region 3 Archives Report to 2025 Synod Assemblies

Introduction

2025 marks the 37th year of the ELCA Region 3 Archives. Paul Daniels continues in the archivist position at 80% time, half-time for the 9 synods of ELCA Region 3 and half-time for Luther Seminary. This shared position works well with Luther providing office and storage space as well as access to a much-needed volunteer pool and IT support. Luther profits from hosting the largest of the 9 ELCA regional collections as the materials are available for use by the entire seminary community.

Use of the ELCA Region 3 Archives

The Archives website, www.luthersem.edu/archives, continues to work well as our “front door” for promoting archival services to congregations and individuals. Luther Seminary provides IT support for the site and its regular updates. Researchers use the site for information on the collections as well as articles like “Ask the Archivist”, focusing on particular archival topics pertinent to their church settings. Reference uses for the year were:

- +Assisted a total of 512 reference patrons in the past year with a range of research interests. The majority (66%) are congregational committees working on records scanning projects, anniversary celebration planning, church history writing and general records care questions. Other significant user groups include synod leadership, church wide offices and individual researchers.
- +Worked on a regular basis with all 9 synod offices, collecting valuable office records and assisting with retention plans for each office. In an effort to reduce travel costs I now make an average of 2 visits per year to each of the 9 synod offices. In most cases, email, phone calls, and Zoom meetings are sufficient. These virtual visits were coordinated with 15 Zoom congregational visits throughout the 3 states of ELCA Region 3.

Collection Growth

- +Collected 22 linear feet of additional synod office records from the 9 offices. These include legal, financial, personnel and program files. Much of this material is stored off-site in space leased from Iron Mountain Co.
- +Gathered 98 congregational pieces adding to a collection now totaling over 5,300 files.
- +Received 115 biographical pieces on clergy and lay leaders – total is now nearly 9,400 files.
- +Assisted 14 closing congregations in Region 3 with records care (scanning) and critical records collection.

Outreach and Education

- +Daniels’ “Ask the Archivist” series (15 separate units) was accessed over 250 times via the Digital Commons platform. The main users were congregation members, (especially archives and heritage committee members), synod office staff and individuals.
- +Managed off-site secure storage program via Iron Mountain Co. for permanent care of sensitive files, including candidacy, camping staff, and synod financial records.
- +Promoted and managed the congregational records scanning program through Mid-America Business Systems.

Professional Development

- +Daniels remains an active member of the Society of American Archivists, the Midwest Archives Conference, the Twin Cities Archives Roundtable and the Lutheran Historical Conference. Daniels renewed and maintained his professional certification in the Academy of Certified Archivists.

Respectfully submitted 3.13.25 by Paul A. Daniels, ELCA Region 3 Archivist and Luther Seminary Archivist
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