

Annual Report of the Archivist and Registrar - 2021

My Convention report usually begins with a reminder of the extent of the Archives of the Diocese of Missouri... the document and photograph collections, our library, the official records of the Standing Committee, Parochial Trust Fund and the Corporation of the Diocese of Missouri, Diocesan Council, diocesan journals, diocesan newspapers, information about our bishops, our churches, our clergy, our properties and financial history. What we can learn from the past is so important.

But so is what we preserve for the future. Archivists around the world continue to struggle to keep up with preserving the vast amounts of information produced by governments, organizations, institutions and so many other groups during the pandemic. Your diocesan archivist is no different. As I reported last year, little information remains from 1918 and the Spanish flu epidemic to tell us about life in the Diocese that fall and winter and I continue to work to prevent that from happening again. I continue to gather and save all the digital material, weekly iSeek communications, social media posts and other local documentation so it will be available for diocesan archivists and historians in 20 or 50 or 100 years.

Fortunately, we have been able to return to the office, even if only for a day or 2 each week, so while I've been able to do some of the usual archives work of sorting and filing and organizing, I've still had days at home to do things like create the database of all clergy who have served in the Diocese. So far, this database includes entries for more than 1,200 clergy, and is to the corrections/recent additions stage. My hope is that this will become a resource for staff and for successor archivists, as well as an on-line resource.

This second year of the pandemic has seen continued interest, or perhaps just still providing the time for many to work on tracing family history. Even with the increasing number of online genealogy resources available, we have received more than the usual number of requests for birth, marriage and burial records.

We took the Bishop on his first tour this summer to visit the graves of his predecessors, Bishop Hawks, Bishop Robertson and Bishop Tuttle, along with other notable Episcopalians in our history. Check out "Notable Episcopalians at Bellefontaine Cemetery" on the Diocesan website and choose a nice spring, summer, fall, or even winter afternoon to take a drive and get to know some of the individuals who have helped to build our churches and our Diocese.

While no congregation is beginning an archives project this year, I do encourage every parish and mission to create a congregational COVID archives. There may be no Sunday bulletins or program or event flyers, there are digital group communications with parishioners to be saved, like newsletters and social media posts and maybe even pertinent community information, even if this means just keeping a COVID file folder or envelope which can be sorted out later.

And remember that part of my job is to provide archives assistance for congregations. If I can answer questions about what or how to save your congregation's story of 2020 and 2021, or about anything else history-and-archives-related please let me know.

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