



St. Louis Genealogical Society Congregations Project

St. Louis Genealogical Society (StLGS) is currently working on a project to identify, index, digitize, and preserve all St. Louis City and County congregational records. We hope all congregations will choose to participate and allow StLGS to put indexes and images of their historical records on our website. Records we are scanning, digitizing, and indexing include baptisms, confirmations, marriages, deaths, and, in some cases, member lists. During the past ten years, we've identified about 1,700 congregations, both historical and existing, in the City of St. Louis and St. Louis County. To date, in 2021, we've completed only a tiny fraction, 112 congregations, with more than thirty more underway. Our goal is to help preserve as many records as we can and make them more readily available to family historians. To do this, however, we need more congregations to share their records, and for that, we need your help!

If your own or your ancestor's St. Louis City or County congregation has not yet become part of StLGS's online project and you'd like it to be, we encourage you to contact your congregation leaders and urge them to participate. We know from experience that individual church or synagogue members are often more able to convince leaders about the importance of this project than we might be. Here is what you need to know about the StLGS Congregations Project, and we hope you will share this with your church or synagogue leaders.

Why should your congregation participate?

- StLGS wishes to help preserve precious records, prevent further deterioration from constant handling, and protect against destruction by disasters.
- Your staff will be spared from fulfilling family historians' requests, freeing them from needing to copy multiple family members' records, and allowing them to refer requests to StLGS, where experienced volunteers can help.
- The society will provide you with a flash drive containing indexes and scanned images. The flash drive may be recopied as needed, so your office staff can locate records more quickly.
- The society uses Missouri state privacy guidelines for online images to protect living persons. Baptisms are not released for one hundred years, confirmations for eighty-four years, marriages for forty-five years, and deaths for fifty years. We do not publish current personal information of living people.
- Your records will be more widely available than they are today to those interested in genealogy.
- There is no cost to participate in this project.



How does this process work?

First, StLGS will obtain signed permission from a congregation leader for specific records. Congregations choose whether the images and indexes of their records placed on our website will be accessible to only StLGS members or open to the public.

1. StLGS will temporarily borrow records of baptisms, confirmations, marriages, deaths, and/or lists of members. Records will be treated with care by experienced genealogists who understand their value, and they will also be covered by the society's comprehensive insurance plan.
2. StLGS volunteers will scan the records to preserve them electronically and return the originals as soon as the scanning is completed. (Note that StLGS volunteers only work nine hours each week, so scanning could take several months, depending on volume of records and availability of volunteers.)
3. Alternatively, StLGS can borrow only one book or record set at a time, or arrange possible on-site scanning, if necessary.

What happens to the digital records?

- StLGS has a technology team that creates a page for each congregation and uploads scanned images onto our secure website. All uploaded data and images remain within the limits in the state privacy guidelines. We typically put scanned images online for browsing until an index is completed so researchers can access them as soon as possible.
- Indexing records is an ongoing process. All indexes are triple checked for accuracy, so that part of the process does take longer.
- Copies of your records will stay on our office network and on our website, both of which are backed up offsite regularly, giving your congregation additional data backup in case of disaster.

We hope many of you will talk with your St. Louis-based congregation leaders and allow StLGS to preserve more historical records and images on our website. If you or your church and/or synagogue leaders have additional questions, please email projects@stlgs.org or call 314-647-8547 on Tuesday, Thursday, or Saturday from 9 a.m. until noon and ask for Projects Director, Carol Whitton.

