Summary

Creator: Berry, Isaac Reed, 1884-1975

Title: Isaac Reed Berry papers

Date: 1931-1975

Source: Donated by Lennie Berry Williams, Clara Berry Gaines and Emma Lucille Berry, November 22, 1990. SCM 90-24

Abstract: The main body of the Isaac Reed Berry Papers consists of undated sermons, mostly handwritten. There is no indication of where the sermons were delivered, although they are titled. The sermons deal with topical and political as well as spiritual concerns. Additionally, there are printed journals from the Washington Conference of the United Methodist Church for the years 1952, 1955 and 1975.

Access: Advance notice required.

Preferred citation: Isaac Reed Berry papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library

Language of the Material: English

Processing note: Processed by Michael R. West; Machine-readable finding aid created by Apex Data Services; revised by Terry Catapano.

Creator History

The Reverend Isaac Reed Berry, pastor of several Methodist churches in the small towns and cities of the upper South, was born July 8, 1884 in Fodice, Texas, to Sarah Jane Holley and Garrett Reed Berry. His first twenty-one years were spent in Fodice, where he attended grade school and worked on his parent's farm and at his grandfather's cotton gin. Seeking to further his education, he left Fodice around 1905, riding the rails with (according to family legend) $19 in his pocket to Washington, D.C., where he entered Howard University's high school. There he came under the tutelage of the school's principal, sociologist (later Dean of the University's College of Arts and Sciences) Kelly Miller, who helped guide Berry through his secondary and undergraduate education. After graduating with a Bachelor's degree
from Howard in 1913, Berry heard the call of the ministry and enrolled as one of the few African Americans at the Boston University School of Theology, from which he graduated in 1916. Berry was ordained in 1917 and began his ministry at the Methodist Church of New Windsor, Maryland. Subsequently, he assumed pastorates in the West Virginia towns of Montgomery (1919), Hinton (1920), Alderson (1921), Lewisburg (1922-1924), Martinsburg (1925-1926), Parkersburg (1927-1932), in Roanoke, Virginia (1933-1937), and in McKeesport, Pennsylvania (1938-1941), before settling in Annapolis, Maryland, where he led the Asbury United Methodist Church from 1942 until his retirement in 1965. In addition to leading his congregation, Berry was an active participant in the Washington Conference of the United Methodist Church, serving as its treasurer for more than two decades. Berry was married to Emma Lucille Wells in 1922 and the father of two daughters. In retirement, the Berry's lived in Hinton, the site of one of his early pastorates, where Reverend Berry died on May 20th, 1975.

Scope and Content Note
The Reverend Isaac Reed Berry Papers contain documents from Berry's career as a minister. The main body of the collection consists of undated sermons, the majority of which are handwritten and offer little evidence of when and where they were delivered. The sermons are listed by title, or by a partial title where damage to a particular manuscript has made it impossible to determine a full title. The sole dated document is a Fourth of July oration Berry delivered in 1931. The Berry Papers would be of interest to scholars, church historians, and theologians concerned with learning what was said from the pulpit of African American churches in the small towns and cities of the upper South. The Fourth of July sermon and others deal with topical and political, as well as spiritual, concerns, and Berry's response to those concerns may be of use to students of African American and Southern history interested in learning more about the social history of the African American church in the South. For example, the sermon Retributive Justice addresses directly Berry's thoughts on how his congregation and the African American community generally should respond to a lynching that had apparently just occurred in the vicinity of Berry's pastorate.

Key Terms

Subjects
African American clergy
African American Methodists
African American preaching
African Americans -- Religion
Sermons, American -- African American authors

Titles
Preservation of the Black Religious Heritage Project funded by the Lilly Endowment
Schomburg NEH Automated Access to Special Collections Project

Genre/Physical Characteristic
Sermons

Names
Berry, Isaac Reed, 1884-1975
## Container List

**Sermons**

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- **b. 1 f. 2** *Address To The Young People...*
- **b. 1 f. 3** *Asleep In Gethsemene*
- **b. 1 f. 4** *An Attempt To Destroy God's World*
- **b. 1 f. 5** *The Besetting God*
- **b. 1 f. 6** *Blessedness In Sight*
- **b. 1 f. 7** *A Boy Crowned King*
- **b. 1 f. 8** *The Brotherhood Of Man*
- **b. 1 f. 9** *A Business Man's Experience*
- **b. 1 f. 10** *The Call Of Service*
- **b. 1 f. 11** *Can We Talk With The Dead?*
- **b. 1 f. 12** *Character*
- **b. 1 f. 13** *The Child And The Kingdom*
- **b. 1 f. 14** *Children Crying In The Temple...*
- **b. 1 f. 15** *Christ's Crowning Miracle*
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- **b. 1 f. 23** *A Christmas Thought*
- **b. 1 f. 24** *Church Unity*
- **b. 1 f. 25** *A City Of Refuge*
- **b. 1 f. 26** *Clearing A Free Way For The Feet Of God*
- **b. 1 f. 27** *The Coming Great Day*
- **b. 1 f. 28** *A Conversation With Christ*
- **b. 1 f. 29** *Cooperation, Or Working Together*
- **b. 1 f. 30** *Corinthians 2:2*
- **b. 1 f. 31** *The Cost Of Being Loyal To Christ*
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- **b. 1 f. 38** *The Discovery Of God*
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Our Unseen Helper, Or The Holy Spirit As Helper
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Paul Before Agrippa
Paul In Athens
Paul In Ephesus--Jesus Magnified--The Gospel In The Center Of Paganism
Paul In Iconium And Lystra
Paul's Conversion, Or Saul's Surrender
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Peter Doing Wonderful Works
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b. 4 f. 234  Miscellaneous Cards
b. 4 v. Volume  Washington Annual Conference, Official Journal 1952
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