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Guide to the

**Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ (Washington, D.C.)
records**

1896-1982

Sc Micro R-7089

This inventory was prepared under the auspices of the Preservation of the Black Religious Heritage Project of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. The project, which was funded by the Lilly Endowment, was established to identify,

preserve and acquire primary research materials essential for the documentation of African-American religious life.
Processed by Ophelia T. Pinkard & Victor Smythe, 1997.

Summary

Creator: Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ (Washington, D.C.)

Title: Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ (Washington, D.C.) records

Date: 1896-1982

Size: 2 microfilm reels

Abstract: The Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ records are divided into three series: Minutes and Church records, Christian Education and Publications.

Access: Advance notice required.

Conditions Governing Use: Permission from church is required to purchase copy of microfilm. Letter authorizing reproduction should be sent to the Curator of Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Book Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, 515 Malcolm X Blvd., New York, NY 10037

Location of Originals: Originals in Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ; 5301 North Capitol Street N.E., Washington, D.C. 20011

Preferred citation: Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ (Washington, D.C.) records, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library

Language of the Material: English

Processing note: Processed by Ophelia T. Pinkard & Victor Smythe, 1997; Machine-readable finding aid created by Apex Data Services, 2000; revised by Terry Catapano, 2000, and Hillel Arnold, 2009

Creator History

In the spring of 1881 sixty-three former members of Union Bethel Methodist Church met for worship, according to their own beliefs, in the home of Mrs. Hannah Davis, 1608 L Street, N.W. Three weeks later, on June 7, they assembled in Shiloh Hall, L Street near 17th, and adopted a committee report for formal organization as a church. The First Congregational Methodist Church of Washington, D.C. was

chosen as a temporary name and William T. Peele, a local preacher and class leader, was selected pastor. On October 5, 1881, the church name was changed to Plymouth Congregational Church. With financial help from Howard University, the membership celebrated the laying of the cornerstone in the same year. The dedication of the new Plymouth Church building at 17th and P Streets, N.W. was held on Sunday, April 20, 1887.

Eight months after Rev. Peele's ministry ended in 1888, Rev. Sterling Brown of Cleveland, Ohio began his tenure. He strengthened the church in the tenets of Congregationalism and in 1892 he had a new church manual published. Rev. A. C. Garner came to Plymouth in 1897. During his tenure he sought to eliminate the church's indebtedness to the American Missionary Association. On June 1, 1921, Rev. Garner resigned to accept the pastorate of Grace Congregational Church in New York City. In September of the same year, Rev. J. C. Olden and his family came to Plymouth where he made advancement in music and missions. He was succeeded in 1930 by Rev. Herbert King a theologian, counselor and youth leader. In 1933, Rev. King resigned to resume study at Oberlin College. Plymouth launched a new program of Christian education with the tenure of Rev. Arthur D. Gray in 1934. He projected Plymouth into the civic life of the community and became moderator of the Middle Atlantic Conference.

In 1947, the Rev. L. Maynard Catchings began a six-year expansion effort. In 1953, when Jefferson P. Rodgers came, he renewed the emphasis on spiritual and cultural enrichment. After four years, he was succeeded by Rev. Theodore Ledbetter, who was installed as the tenth Minister of Plymouth on October 19, 1958. Rev. Ledbetter inaugurated another period of expansion, including the construction of a new church building. Final services were held at the 17th and P Streets site on October 8, 1961. On Monday, October 9th, the church moved to its present location at 5301 North Capitol Street, N.E. In 1980, Rev. Ledbetter retired. Dr. Lawrence N. Jones, Dean of the Howard University, School of Divinity, served two years. This was a period of preaching and spiritual enrichment and social outreach. Rev. John S. Fortt followed Dean Jones in 1984 with a vision of further expansion of the church in the community.

Reverend Rubin Tendai became a respected and beloved Interim Minister from 1990 to 1992. Reverend Grayland Scott Ellis-Hagler, the current senior minister, came in October 1992. With him the church has taken on a new atmosphere with increased membership, attention to local, community and international interests and renewed participation of the younger members of the church.

Submitted by Ophelia T. Pinkard, Church Archivist

Scope and Content Note

The records of Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ, Washington, D.C. were microfilmed by *The Preservation of the Black Religious Heritage Project (PBRHP)* of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture during the month of April 1992. Originals were retained by the church. Three types of records were filmed for the (PBRHP) project: Minutes and Church Records, Christian Education Records, and Publications.

Arrangement: Records organized into three series: I. Minutes and Church Records; II. Christian Education; and III. Publications

Key Terms

Subjects

African American -- Religion
African American -- Washington (D.C.)
African American churches -- Washington (D.C.)
African American Methodists -- Washington (D.C.) -- History
Methodists -- Washington (D.C.)

Titles

Preservation of the Black Religious Heritage Project funded by the Lilly Endowment

Geographic Names

Washington (D.C.) -- Church history

Names

Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ (Washington, D.C.)

Container List

MINUTES AND CHURCH Records 1890-1964

The **MINUTES AND CHURCH RECORDS, 1890-1964**, series is comprised of ledgers and bound books containing trustee board minutes, deacon board reports and listings of baptisms, marriages and deaths. Registers of officers and minutes of church organizations are also included.

Report, Church Founders and Descendants 1896-1897

Plymouth Church History

Minutes, Board of Trustees 2/2/1903-10/22/1905

Registers

Trustee Board Minute Book Nov. 6, 1890-Aug. 1, 1903

Church Roster, Register, with records of baptisms, marriages, deaths, minutes of church committees, annual church meeting minutes, etc 1934-44

Plymouth Church Register (officers) 1896-1963

Church Roster 1951-1953

Fellowship Guild Minutes 1941-1942, 1949

Missionary Society Minutes 1952-1964

NAACP Club Minutes 1943-1948

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION 1943-1990

The **CHRISTIAN EDUCATION, 1943-1990**, series includes minutes, reports, and church rolls and records of the Christian Education division.

Minutes and Reports Oct. 6, 1943-1990

Church Roll & Records 1959-79

PUBLICATIONS 1942-1982

The **PUBLICATIONS, 1942-1982**, series includes annual records and church newsletters.

Annual Records 1947-1982

The Plymouth Monthly June 1942-June 1955

The Plymouth Monthly October 1955-June 1956

The Plymouth Prompter 1961-1982