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**SHILOH BAPTIST CHURCH  
WASHINGTON, D.C.  
RECORDS**

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**SHILOH BAPTIST CHURCH, WASHINGTON, D.C. (1863-).  
RECORDS, 1863-1992. 4 reels of microfilm.**

**History**

Shiloh Baptist Church of Washington, D.C. was founded in 1863 by twenty-one black men and women who had been members of the Shiloh Baptist Church of Fredericksburg, Virginia. Originally, a white-controlled church with a black membership made up of slaves and some free blacks, the Fredericksburg church was purchased in 1854 by the black congregants after the white membership built a new church building. By 1861 Shiloh had 750 members, most of whom were slaves.

It was the Civil War, however, which set in motion the chain of events that led to the founding of Shiloh in Washington, D.C. In anticipation of a planned attack on Fredericksburg in 1862 the Union Army had sought to protect the city's slave and free black population by providing transportation to Washington, D.C. for those who sought to escape. Thousands of slaves poured into Washington, D.C., which by an act of Congress had emancipated the slaves of the District in 1862, repealed the black codes and lifted the discriminatory restrictions of the slavery era. Approximately 400 members of the Shiloh Baptist Church of Fredericksburg were among those migrants and they soon organized a Sunday School on 'L' Street between 16th & 17th Streets, N.W., and also held meetings in members' homes. One year later, a group of twenty-one members meeting in the home of Henry D. Peyton decided to form a Shiloh Baptist Church in Washington, D.C. The group was formally recognized as a church by the Council of Baptist Churches of Washington, D.C. on September 23, 1863, and later that month the Council ordained William J. Walker, a member of the group, as their minister.

Under Rev. Walker's leadership (1863-1889), Shiloh Baptist Church purchased three buildings and by 1868 its membership had grown to 243. Rev. Walker, who also played an influential role in the formation of several other churches in Washington and the neighboring Virginia area, served as pastor of Shiloh until his death in August, 1889.

Following Walker's death, confusion and dissension arose when the deacons refused to address a petition by the members asking for a meeting to consider the election of a permanent pastor. Events escalated and finally climaxed with a split, the loss of some founders, members and deacons and the subsequent formation of Walker Memorial Baptist Church.

Rev. J. Anderson Taylor was selected as Shiloh's new pastor on December 12, 1890. Under Rev. Taylor's leadership (1891-1906), the church purchased adjacent land and enlarged the church building. Rev. Taylor was among the founding members of the Lott Carey Baptist Foreign Mission Convention which was formed at Shiloh in December 1897. After the eruption of a major controversy within the church in 1906, Rev. Taylor left Shiloh with 200 members to form Trinity Baptist Church.

Rev. J. Milton Waldron (1907-1929), a well known civil rights leader and organizer, became Shiloh's third pastor in 1907. Under Rev. Waldron's leadership Shiloh strengthened many of its

traditional programs through reorganization and innovation. Among these innovations were the Silent Mission, an expansive program for religious instruction for the deaf, the establishment of early child care programs and free academic coaching classes open to the community regardless of religious affiliation. Work in missions broadened in scope and direction. In May 1924 Shiloh moved to a larger building at 9th & P Streets, but in the following year the sanctuary was destroyed by fires caused by racist arsonists.

Shiloh's membership had dropped to 500 and was in poor financial condition when Rev. Earl Harrison (1930-1971) joined Shiloh in November 1930. Rev. Harrison's administration has been identified by two historic periods. The first, called the *Period of Recovery* encompassed the Depression. Between 1930 and 1943 the church regrouped, reorganized and revived the innovative energy of its past and ultimately regained its strength. By 1942 Rev. Harrison had increased Shiloh's membership to 4000. After 1944, Shiloh entered the *Period of Extension* marked by financial security, the largest membership in the District and extension of its holdings and ministries. This latter period reflected a growing awareness of Shiloh's role in community development. By 1968 the church had built fifty-two low-rental housing units with thirty-six near completion.

Education provided another major direction for branching out into the community. In 1954, a contract was signed to draw up the Youth Education Building. Later, the Church Religious Education Activities Department (CREAD) was established in 1963 to meet the needs of the families in the neighborhood of the church. The CREAD program provided recreation and supervised play periods, and conducted various types of classes including tutoring.

In 1972 Shiloh called Rev. Henry C. Gregory, II (1972-1989) to fill the pulpit left vacant by the death of Rev. Harrison. Rev. Gregory emphasized leadership development as the best strategy for long-range institutional growth. He established specialized ministries and conceptualized the church as "family." The concept of specialized ministries was based on a team approach which established, on the one hand, a professional clergy with specialized areas of responsibility and, on the other hand, a laity trained for greater responsibility. The work of the church was facilitated by a team of ministers consisting of: a senior minister, and ministers for community services and family life, education, visitation, and youth. The team of lay leaders would include vital organizations such as the two deaconess boards, and the deacon and associate deacon boards.

Rev. Gregory's concept of the church as 'family' emphasized the church as an intergenerational bonding agent that links grandparents and grandchildren in a very active and vital way. Through the ministry to family life, the church addressed contemporary problems of radical domestic disintegration--problems acutely present in the black community. In 1982, the Family Life Center was completed which gave concrete meaning to the goal of specialized ministries. The Family Life Center remains the focal point of Shiloh's enormous role in community life.

The current pastor, Rev. Wallace Charles Smith, began his pastorate at Shiloh in 1991.

## Bibliography

*From Strength to Strength: A History of the Shiloh Baptist Church -1863-1988*

## Scope and Content

The records of Shiloh Baptist Church, 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 January 1993. Originals were retained by the church. Because of a recent fire in the church building and offices, church records had been gathered in boxes and stored in temporary storage spaces. The boxes were made available at the time of microfilming and were organized following the survey questionnaire format of the PBRHP.

The **ADMINISTRATIVE RECORDS, 1914-1986**, series is comprised of ledgers containing minutes of deacon board meetings, business meetings, quarterly and annual meetings, as well as church rosters and financial reports for 1934. The minutes chronicle the deacon board's role in assisting the pastor in the administration of the ordinance of the church, investigation of disciplinary cases, admonition of delinquent members and general supervision over the interests of the church. Adoption of a new constitution and amendment to the by-laws are also included. Business meetings are concerned with payment of debts and approval of financial reports. The pastor presides over all business meetings, deacon board meetings and joint meetings of the deacons and trustees. (Box 1) In addition there are a few legal documents, e.g., a 1939 deed of trust and gifts from members; annual reports, 1940-1971, which provide statistical information on church membership; and quarterly financial statements, 1954-1958. (Box 4)

The **CHURCH HISTORY, 1863-1992**, series consists of photographs; pictures and letters of Pastor Walker, 1863; historical documents, programs; church directories; newspaper clippings; and financial reports. Sample copies of early church publications such as *The Shiloh Herald* are included. A copy of the September 23, 1863 proceedings of the Council of Baptist Churches of Washington, D.C. to consider the recognition of the Shiloh Baptist Church formerly of Fredericksburg, VA also appears in this series. (Boxes 2, 5-9, 11, & 12)

The **VITAL RECORDS, 1930-1976**, series is comprised of membership forms, applications, and statistical reports which include information on baptisms; accessions, i.e. members joining through transfers by letters or Christian experience; reinstatements and deaths, etc. (Boxes 3 & 10)

Processed and microfilmed by V.N. Smythe, 1993.  
Finding aid completed, 1995

**Container List**

**Box   Folder   Reel**

			Administrative Records 1914-1987
1	1		Deacons Board Meetings Business Meetings Quarterly and Annual Meetings Financial Reports, 1934 Church Roster of Offices
2			Church History 1863-1945 (see also Boxes 5- 9, 11, 12) Photographs Pictures and Letters of Rev. J. W. Walker, 1863  Proceedings of Shiloh Council of Baptist Churches Certificates Newspaper Clippings Historical Documents Special Events Programs Anniversary Programs Mortgage Burning <u>The Shiloh Herald</u> , Mar. 1923, Mar. 2, 1924, Nov. 23, 1924 <u>Shiloh Baptist Church Wit</u> , 1931
	1		Financial Reports, 1934-1991
	2		Constitution; 60th Anniversary of Shiloh; Programs; Clippings
	3		Circles, 1933, 1934
	4		Letters, 1905-1963
3	2		Vital Records, 1930-1972
	1		Request for Membership Forms, 1930-1950
	2		Request for Membership Form - Completed, 1940-1945
	3		Members Returned Home, 1940-1947
	4		Deceased Members, 1940-1953
	Notebook		
	5		Candidates for Baptism, 1940-1949
	6		Applicants for Membership, 1940-1967
	7		Highlights, 1970-1972

**Container List**

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Reel</u>	
4		2	Administrative Records, 1939-1968
	1		Deed of Trust, 1939; Property Letters and Plans; Yearly Reports of the Membership, 1939-1956
	2		Book 1: Statistical Reports, 1953-1954
	3		Book 2: Statistical Reports, 1955-1960
4	4		Book 3: Statistical Reports, 1961-1971
	5		Book 4: Yearly Reports, 1956-1962
	6		Book 5: Yearly Reports, 1963-1968
			Quarterly Financial Statements, 1954-1958
		3	Church History
5			Certificates; Photographs of Events, Celebrations and Noted Visitors
6			Special Programs, 1926-1992
7			Church Directories, 1974-1991
8			Anniversary Programs, 80th-128th Anniversaries
9			Harrison: Installation and Anniversary Programs, 1931-1970
			Vital Records, 1930-1976
10			Accessions, 1930-1969
		4	Letters of Dismissal, 1933-1967
			Letters of Recommendation, 1953-1966
			Obituaries, 1938-1976
			Church History
11			Anniversary Programs and Installation of Rev. Henry C. Gregory III, 1973-1990
12			Installation Services - Rev. Dr. Wallace Charles Smith, 1991
			Letters (includes a letter of Nannie H. Burroughs of May 31, 1943), 1924, 1943
			Historical Commission Programs, 1988
			Anniversary Program, 1992