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Guide to the

Zoar United Methodist Church records, [microform]

1841-1984

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Processed by Christine McKay.

Summary

Creator: Zoar United Methodist Church (Philadelphia, Pa.)

Title: Zoar United Methodist Church records, [microform]

Date: 1841-1984

Source: Microfilm: Originals at Zoar United Methodist Church, 05--/1992

Abstract: The records of Zoar United Methodist Church are divided into four series: Delaware Conference; Delaware-Philadelphia District; Zoar United Methodist Church; and St. John's Church, Spring Lake, New Jersey. The Zoar Methodist Church series, largest of the four, is divided into seven subseries: history, vital records, organizational records, pastors, financial, legal, and bulletins and miscellaneous printed material.

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Location of Originals: Originals in Zoar United Methodist Church; 1204 Melon Street, Philadelphia, Pa. 19123

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Creator History

Zoar United Methodist Church, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, traditionally the oldest African American congregation within the United Methodist Church, was founded in 1794 by eighteen free African-Americans, fifteen men and three women. The founders had separated themselves from the white-

dominated St. George's Methodist Episcopal Church but chose to remain in Methodism with its traditions of early opposition to slavery, evangelical style of preaching, and ministering to social needs. The early members first worshipped from house to house, then met in an abandoned butcher shop at Brown and Fourth Streets in the Camingtown area of Philadelphia. Originally known as African Zoar, a church was constructed near the site and dedicated on August 4, 1796 by Bishop Francis Asbury.

Although Zoar was mentioned as a separate church in the records of the Philadelphia Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church as early as 1811, it was administered by St. George's, which supplied its pastors. Zoar established two mutual aid societies, the Beneficial Philanthropic Sons of Zoar and the Female Beneficial Philanthropic Society of Zoar in 1826. During this period, a number of members left Zoar to join Richard Allen in the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

In 1832, a "plan of separation" from St. George's was adopted to take effect in three years. In 1835, the "Covenant of Assumption" made possible the assignment of Zoar's first African-American pastor, Rev. Perry Tilghman, who served until 1844. Zoar was chartered by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania on June 14, 1837. During the 1830s and 1840s, the Church was presumably a link on the Underground Railroad along with other African-American Methodist churches in Philadelphia.

A series of conferences of Colored Local Preachers held at Zoar in the 1850s and 1860s resulted in the creation of the Delaware Annual Conference by the 1864 General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church. The Delaware Conference was comprised of twenty-one African-American Methodist churches from Philadelphia, New Jersey, Delaware, and Maryland. Its creation allowed for the ordination of local preachers and travelling elders and gave African-American congregations greater control over their own affairs.

The records of the first meeting of the Delaware Conference list 140 members of the Zoar congregation. As the membership grew throughout the 1870s and 1880s, larger facilities became necessary. At a sheriff's sale in June 1883, a benefactor, Joseph M. Bennett, purchased the red brick Reformed Episcopal Church at Twelfth and Melon Streets for \$3200 and donated it to the congregation. Zoar Methodist Church was incorporated in 1885. The title to the property was still subject to the payment of ground rents, a perpetual lease often held and assigned by a separate owner. By 1889, however, Zoar purchased the ground rents from Girard Life Insurance Company and its title became free and clear. In 1896, it purchased a building at 1310 Parrish Street for use as a parsonage. The Parrish Street house was replaced by one at 3849 North 18 Street (purchased in 1945) and was sold to tenants in 1956.

The first Usher Board was organized in 1886. Under Charles H. Dorsey, it became a model for other congregations and a forerunner of the National Church Ushers Association, founded in 1919. In 1897, under Pastor James H. Richardson, the Church underwent extensive remodelling, financed by a mortgage and loans from the Methodist Church Board of Home Missions and Church Extension. The first Layman's Association and Missionary Society were organized at about that time. After a period of internal dissension and financial difficulty, final payment was made on the mortgage in 1917. Four houses at the rear of the Church, 1203-09 North Street, were purchased in 1920 for Church use as well as rental income. Additional remodelling and modernization of the Church and the addition of a community center took place in 1926.

During the 1920s, Zoar began a Day Nursery, a Mothers and Babies Clinic, Parents Association, and a Mother's Club and Welfare Foundation. A Zoar Community Building and Loan Association was organized in 1924 to provide mortgages for African Americans unable to obtain them from banks. The Armstrong Association (Urban League) worked out of the new community center. The onset of the Depression resulted in a decrease in the Church's income although it contributed to unemployment

relief for parishoners.

With the merger of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and the Methodist Protestant Church in 1939, the African-American conferences were organized into a separate unit, the Central Jurisdiction. The Jurisdiction existed until the mid-1960s when it was dissolved into the mainstream geographical structure of the United Methodist Church. The churches of the Delaware Conference, including Zoar, were transferred to the Newark, Philadelphia, and Peninsula Conferences of the Northeast Jurisdiction in 1964 at the centennial meeting of the Conference held at Zoar.

Zoar's longtime pastor Rev. Joshua E. Licorish (1911-1987) was Secretary of the Conference. He served as pastor of Zoar from 1957 to 1981 and played a role in urban renewal and civil rights issues in Philadelphia during the 1950s and 1960s. Licorish participated with the Rev. Leon H. Sullivan in the late 1950s boycotts of Philadelphia corporations and subsequent meetings to end discriminatory hiring practices. He also oversaw additional renovations of the Church in 1959 and the organization of the Zoar Community Development Corporation in preparation for the construction of low income housing. During Licorish's administration, the membership of Zoar numbered about 900. Licorish was succeeded by Rev. Clyde Henry, who was succeeded by Rev. Ralph Banks in 1985.

The trustees of Zoar also acted as trustees for the St. John's Methodist Church of Spring Lake, New Jersey. The Church, founded in 1887 and open only in the summer months, served members who were employed at the resort hotels of Spring Lake or as domestics for summer residents.

Scope and Content Note

The collection is divided into four series: Delaware Conference; Delaware - Philadelphia District; Zoar Methodist Church; and St. John's Church, Spring Lake, New Jersey. The Zoar Methodist Church Series, largest of the four, is divided into seven subseries: History, Vital Records, Organizational Records, Pastors, Financial, Legal, and Bulletins and Miscellaneous Printed Material.

Arrangement: Organized into four series: I. Delaware Conference; II. Delaware-Philadelphia District; III. Zoar Methodist Church; IV. St. John's Church, Spring Lake, New Jersey

Key Terms

Subjects

African American churches -- Pennsylvania -- Philadelphia
African American clergy
African American Methodists
African Americans -- Religion

Titles

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

Names

Zoar United Methodist Church (Philadelphia, Pa.)
Licorish, Joshua E., 1911-1987
St. John's Methodist Church (Spring Lake, N.J.)
United Methodist Church (U.S.). Delaware Conference

United Methodist Church (U.S.). Delaware Conference. Philadelphia District

Container List

Delaware Conference

The series contains minutes dating from the original organizational meeting in 1864 through its first twenty-five years of existence. The growth of the conference is documented in annual statistics, records of personnel changes, and reports of committees including temperance, freedman's aid, Sunday Schools, and missions. Individual annual reports of each member church are also included in the minutes. The reports often discuss administrative and financial difficulties.

Other significant early material in the series includes membership rolls as well as reports and minutes of layman's conferences and associations. (Additional layman's reports are scattered throughout the Official Board and Joshua E. Licorish sub-series of the Zoar series). Also included are records of disciplinary proceedings against clergymen (1884-1934). These contain minutes of hearings, supporting documents, and decisions in cases often involving intoxication, embezzlement, or sexual misconduct.

The dissolution of the Delaware Conference of the Central Jurisdiction and its merger into other geographic conferences is documented by minutes, resolutions, and other supporting material of its centennial meeting in 1964.

- v. 1 r. 1 Annual Conference Journals
- v. 2 r. 1 Minutes 1864-1878
- v. 3 r. 1 Minutes 1879-1885
- v. 4 r. 1 Minutes 1886-1889
- f. 1 r. 2 Centennial Committee 1963-1964
- f. 2 r. 2 Centennial Meeting and Dissolution 1964-1965
- f. 3 r. 2 Certificates of Admission of Travelling Preachers and Ordination of Deacons and Elders.
- f. 3 r. 2 A-F 1882-1923
- f. 4 r. 2 G-L 1882-1922
- f. 5 r. 2 M-R 1882-1923
- f. 6 r. 2 S-Z 1882-1921
- f. 7 r. 2 Grouped names n.d.
- Disciplinary Proceedings
- f. 8 r. 3 1884-1905
- f. 9 r. 3 1906-1934
- f. 10 r. 3 Education Collection Receipts 1882-1886
- f. 11 r. 3 Lay Conferences - Reports 1894-1912
- v. 5 r. 3 Layman's Association - Journal Minutes 1919-1938
- f. 12 r. 3 Layman's Association - Supplementary Material 1937-1938
- v. 6 r. 3 Membership Rolls 1878-1915
- f. 13 r. 3 Miscellaneous District Conferences - Reports and Proceedings 1912-1922
- f. 14 r. 3 Programs 1892-1965
- f. 15 r. 3 Secretary's Correspondence and Reports 1882-1920
- f. 16 r. 3 Transfer of Haven Memorial Church 1893
- f. 17 r. 3 Transfer of Personnel 1882-1965

Delaware Conference - Philadelphia District

The series includes financial reports and memoranda concerning meetings and other routine administrative matters. Additional reports may be found in the Licorish papers of the Pastor's series.

- f. 18 r. 3 Financial Reports and Memoranda 1957-1965
- f. 19 r. 3 Programs 1956-1964
- f. 20 r. 3 Philadelphia Conference - Miscellaneous Correspondence 1965-1978

Zoar United Methodist Church

The *ZOAR UNITED METHODIST CHURCH series, 1841-1986*, is divided into seven sub-series. The History sub-series includes souvenir journals which commemorate various anniversaries at Zoar and provide brief narrative histories as well as lists and photographs of parish committees and activities. Background research material for the histories, much of it gathered by Rev. Licorish, includes lists of pastors, early members, and important dates in Zoar history. There are additional notes relating to Zoar's history among Licorish's papers in the Pastors series.

History

- f. 1 r. 4 Souvenir Journals 1916-1964
- f. 2 r. 4 Narratives, Lists of Pastors and Early Members 1927-1984

Vital Records

The *Vital Record* sub-series in this collection is sparse. Early records include some membership lists and Sunday school rolls dating from 1879 and a brief listing of unemployed aided by the Church during the Depression. Later material comprises a few baptismal and marriage certificates from the 1940s and 1950s as well as an extensive membership survey taken when Rev. Licorish became pastor in 1957. Members were asked to fill out a two-page questionnaire concerning their background and opinions of church life. The survey draws a portrait of a working class membership, many born in the South, employed as domestics, postal clerks, nurses, porters, Navy Yard or railway workers, who ask for better management of the church, greater unity, attention to youth, and a return to a time when the Church was an active social center for its membership.

- v. 7 r. 4 Record Book of Membership Rolls, Class Records, Baptisms, and Marriages 1879-1886
- f. 3 r. 4 Baptismal and Marriage Certificates - Miscellaneous 1941-1956
- f. 4 r. 4 Membership Lists 1956-1961
- f. 5 r. 4 Membership Survey 1957
- f. 6 r. 4 Membership Survey 1957
- v. 8 r. 4 Class Records - Sunday School 1906-1907
- v. 9 r. 4 Class Records - Sunday School 1909-1910
- v. 10 r. 4 Class Records and Unemployment Relief Records 1932-1934

Zoar United Methodist Church (cont.)

Organizational Records

The *Organizational Record* sub-series is arranged according to traditional Methodist administrative structure mandated by the *Book of Discipline*. It contains incomplete minutes and reports dating from 1887 of the Official Board and the Board of Trustees. The Official Board, which administers the affairs of the church, is comprised of representatives of the Board of Trustees, Stewards, Women's and Men's organizations, and various other commissions and committees. The Board of Trustees is the legal body entrusted with the management of Church property. The Board minutes reflect the continuing efforts of Church leaders to stabilize finances, increase membership, and encourage participation in Church affairs as well as community outreach.

There are additional organizational records of various Church commissions and committees. Six commissions, Christian Social Concerns, Education, Membership and Evangelization, Music, and Stewardship and Finance are mandated by the Methodist Church. Other committees serve traditional functions such as community outreach, women's programs, and building campaigns. These records primarily include reports of activities and scattered correspondence. The documents of the Stewardship and Finance Commission contain detailed, but incomplete, statistical and financial material. Other progress reports may be found in Rev. Licorish's copies of budgets and quarterly conference reports in the Pastors sub-series.

Official Board/Leaders and Stewards

- v. 11 r. 5 Minutes 1887-1892
- v. 12 r. 5 Minutes 1892-1893

Official Board

- v. 13 r. 5 Minutes 1922-1932
- v. 14 r. 5 Minutes 1932-1941
- f. 7 r. 5 Minutes and Supplementary Reports 1957-1960
- f. 8 r. 5 Minutes and Supplementary Reports 1961-1963
- f. 9 r. 5 Minutes and Supplementary Reports 1964-1965
- f. 10 r. 6 Drafts of minutes, notes, agenda 1928-1965

Board of Trustees

- f. 11 r. 6 Minutes and Supplementary Reports 1906-1934
- v. 15 r. 6 Minutes 1923-1930
- v. 16 r. 6 Minutes 1931-1942
- v. 17 r. 6 Minutes 1943-1945
- f. 12 r. 6 Reports to Quarterly Conference 1892-1959

Commissions

- f. 1 r. 7 Christian Social Concerns - Miscellaneous Reports 1959-1964
- f. 2 r. 7 Education - Miscellaneous Reports 1957-1965
- f. 3 r. 7 Membership and Evangelization - Miscellaneous Reports 1956-1965
- f. 4 r. 7 Missions - Miscellaneous Reports 1959-1962
- f. 5 r. 7 Music and Worship - Miscellaneous Reports 1901
- f. 6 r. 7 Stewardship and Finance - Miscellaneous Reports 1926-1959
- f. 7 r. 7 Stewardship and Finance - Miscellaneous Reports 1960-1966

Other Committees

- f. 8 r. 7 Angels of Love/Family Living 1962-1966
- f. 9 r. 7 Building - Miscellaneous Reports 1921-1923
- v. 18 r. 7 Building - Building Campaign Ledger 1923-1925
- f. 10 r. 7 Every Member Visitation 1961-1964

Zoar United Methodist Church (cont.)
 Organizational Records (cont.)
 Other Committees (cont.)

- f. 11 r. 7 Minister's Wives Association (Mrs. Vivian J. Licorish) 1963-1968
- f. 12 r. 7 Treasurer/Financial Secretary - Reports 1892-1961
- f. 13 r. 7 Women's Day Programs 1959-1971
- f. 14 r. 7 Young Men's Business Association of North Philadelphia/Northern and Southern Produce Company - Minutes 1902-1904
- f. 15 r. 7 Miscellaneous Committees and Organizations 1930-1965

Pastors

The *Pastor* sub-series contains little information other than scattered statistical reports prior to Rev. Licorish's twenty-four year administration. The Licorish material includes substantial notes for sermons and for several history projects such as a 1967 pamphlet on the life of early Methodist preacher Harry Hosier (c.1750-1806). Licorish also maintained copies of financial and other reports containing his notes. His service as Secretary of the Delaware Conference and as a member of the Interfaith Interracial Council of the Clergy and other community boards is only sparsely documented and there is very little correspondence.

- f. 16 r. 8 Fletcher, J. T. 1925-1934
- f. 17 r. 8 Ballard, M. O. 1947-1952
- f. 18 r. 8 Trader, Crawford 1954-1957
- Licorish, Joshua E.
- f. 19 r. 8 Church of the Redeemer 1949
- f. 20 r. 8 Clair Methodist Church 1949-1957
- v. 19 r. 8 Camp Hilltop - Ledger 1950
- v. 20 r. 8 Clair Methodist Church-Ledger 1952-1953
- f. 21 r. 8 Miscellaneous Correspondence 1957-1977
- f. 22 r. 8 Miscellaneous Memos and Notes 1957-1972
- f. 23 r. 8 Notes on Methodist History 1974-1986
- f. 24 r. 8 Notes on Zoar History 1969-1975
- Notes for Prayers and Sermons
- f. 25 r. 8 1942-1966
- f. 26 r. 8 1969-1982
- Budgets and Financial Statements Pastor's Copies
- f. 27 r. 8 1958-1961
- f. 28 r. 9 1963-1964
- f. 29 r. 9 1965-1978
- Quarterly Conference Reports - Pastor's Copies
- f. 30 r. 9 1958-1961
- f. 31 r. 9 1962-1963
- f. 32 r. 9 1963-1964
- f. 33 r. 9 1964-1965
- Delaware Annual Conference
- f. 34 r. 9 Philadelphia District - Financial Statements and Memoranda-Pastor's Copies 1958-1965
- f. 35 r. 9 Interfaith Interracial Council of the Clergy - Committee on Housing 1964-1965

Zoar United Methodist Church (cont.)

Financial

The *Financials* sub-series contains many lists of individual contributors and amounts, most dating from the Licorish administration. It also includes miscellaneous ledgers detailing receipts and disbursements.

- f. 1 r. 9 Individual Contributor - Lists 1923-1967
- v. 21 r. 10 Ledger 1894-1911
- v. 22 r. 10 Ledger 1923
- v. 23 r. 10 Ledger 1920-1938
- v. 24 r. 10 Ledger 1957-1958
- v. 25 r. 10 Ledger 1959-1960
- v. 26 r. 10 Ledger 1962-1963
- v. 27 r. 10 Ledger 1964-1965
- v. 28 r. 10 Ledger 1965-1966
- f. 2 r. 10 Receipts and Invoices - Miscellaneous 1888-1930
- not filmed
- f. 3 r. 10 Insurance - Property 1920-1958
- not filmed

Legal

The *Legal* sub-series includes deeds and mortgages for church property dating from 1841 covering the church on Melon Street, parish houses, and rental properties on North Street. The deeds reflect not only the outright purchase of properties, but also the transfer of ground rents, perpetual leases sold separately and amounting to a double ownership characteristic of feudal property. Also significant are title searches documenting the ownership and debt of properties and correspondence for renovation projects.

- f. 4 r. 10 Agreements, Contracts, Invoices-1897 Church Remodelling 1897-1898
- f. 5 r. 10 Agreements, Contracts, Invoices-1926 Church Remodelling 1925-1927
- f. 6 r. 10 Agreements, Contracts, Invoices-Miscellaneous Renovations 1898-1975
- f. 7 r. 10 Deeds - Church - Melon Street 1841-1970
- f. 8 r. 10 Deeds - North Street Properties 1909-1955
- f. 9 r. 10 Deeds - 1310 Parrish Street 1841-1896
- f. 10 r. 10 Deeds - Other Property 1884-1970
- f. 11 r. 10 Inventories 1961-1962
- f. 12 r. 10 Mortgages - Church - Melon Street 1855-1959
- f. 13 r. 10 Mortgages - North Street Properties 1920
- f. 14 r. 10 Mortgages - 1310 Parrish Street 1876-1956
- f. 15 r. 11 Mortgages - 3849 North 18th Street 1945-1958
- f. 16 r. 11 Properties Willed to Zoar - Miscellaneous 1884-1957
- f. 17 r. 11 Taxes 1888-1896, 1956
- f. 18 r. 11 Title Searches and Title Insurance 1856-1920

Bulletins and Miscellaneous Printed Material

The *Bulletins and Miscellaneous Printed Materials* sub-series includes an incomplete series of Zoar Church bulletins and calendars of activities as well as miscellaneous bulletins of other area churches. There are also miscellaneous clippings concerning parish activities or local issues and several photographs of the gymnasium in the 1930s and a speaker in the 1960s.

- f. 19 r. 11 Zoar Bulletins 1924, 1937-1938

Zoar United Methodist Church (cont.)

Bulletins and Miscellaneous Printed Material (cont.)

- f. 20 r. 11 Zoar Bulletins 1953
- f. 21 r. 11 Zoar Bulletins 1954
- f. 22 r. 11 Zoar Bulletins 1955
- f. 23 r. 11 Zoar Bulletins 1956
- f. 24 r. 11 Zoar Bulletins 1957
- f. 25 r. 12 Zoar Bulletins 1958-1982
- f. 26 r. 12 Church Bulletins and Brochures - Miscellaneous 1955-1966
- f. 27 r. 12 Zoar Calendar of Activities 1957-1966
- f. 28 r. 12 Clippings - Miscellaneous 1896-1972
- f. 29 r. 12 Photographs 1930s, 1969

St. John's Church, Spring Lake, New Jersey

The *ST. JOHN'S CHURCH series, 1887-1964*, documents the activities of a summer parish in Spring Lake, New Jersey administered by Zoar Trustees and serving the employees of resort hotels. It contains correspondence regarding repairs, invoices for summer festivities (fairs, ice cream socials), legal documents, and clippings detailing the history of the church and the need for a major fundraising campaign in the 1960s.

- f. 30 r. 12 Correspondence and legal documents 1887-1964