

Harvard, MA. Evangelical Congregational Church
Records, 1821-1959 [microfilm]
1 cubic foot, 2 microfilm reels
RG 4380

No access restrictions.

Microfilmed on behalf of Evangelical Congregational Church (Harvard, Ma.) by the Congregational Library October 1998.

Processed October 1998 by Virginia Hunt.

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Introduction

In July of 1998, a representative from the Evangelical Congregational Church of Harvard, Massachusetts, instructed the Congregational Library to process and microfilm certain volumes of the church and society records.

The records were processed at the Congregational Library in October 1998, and sent for microfilming to Harvard University Reprographics. The records submitted for microfilming contained primarily bound volumes, with some loose sheets contained in the volumes. For preservation purposes, the church's Covenant and Constitution were removed from the volumes, and arranged in individual folders with separation forms indicating their original placement.

Many of the volumes contained loose inserts--primarily reports, correspondence, and ephemera--which, at processing, were kept in place in each volume. However, during microfilming, these materials were removed and filmed at the end of the volume from which they were removed. On the microfilm, a target sheet was filmed before each removed item or group of items, so the user would understand their original arrangement. The inserts were replaced in their original places when filming was complete.

All metal clips and staples were removed as best possible, and pasted materials were left in place and filmed according to their original placement, unless otherwise noted. Acidic paper and clippings were removed whenever possible and replaced with acid-free photocopies. These clippings were placed in individual envelopes and arranged after the volume from which they were removed.

Historical Note

History of the Church and Society

The first incarnation of what is now known as the Evangelical Congregational Church met on March 14, 1821 to form the “Calvinistic Congregational Society in Harvard.” On March 22, 1821, this new religious body presented its constitution at Town Meeting. The constitution was accepted, and, in April 1821, the Society applied to the town and was granted “a piece of the common” upon which to build a Meeting House. The Meeting House was completed in the same year, and remains as the present location of the Evangelical Congregational Church of Harvard, Massachusetts. During construction of the Meeting House, services were held next door at the Center Schoolhouse.

George Fisher of Wrentham served as the first minister to the society and was paid \$500.00 a year. He preached his first sermon in Harvard in May of 1821, and was ordained on September 12, 1821. Rev. Fisher died in 1853, and was replaced by Rev. John Dodge. On March 12, 1855, under Rev. Dodge’s leadership, the society voted to change its name to the “Evangelical Congregational Society.”

In 1927, the Church membership voted to incorporate the Church and the Society, and renamed the Church the “Evangelical Congregational Church of Harvard.” In 1956, the Baptist Church of Still River and the Evangelical Congregational Church of Harvard began holding joint services with one minister serving both parishes. At this point, the Pastoral Seeking Committee included members of both churches. Special services were held on an alternating basis at each of the churches. The Still River Baptist Church disbanded on May 18, 1970, and one of rooms in the Evangelical Congregational Church was named the “Still River Room.”

In April of 1963, at the annual Church Meeting, the members of Evangelical Congregational Church voted to join the United Church of Christ. Since this meeting, the church has retained its official title “The Evangelical Congregational Church of Harvard, United Church of Christ.” At about the same time, members of the church realized that the deed to the church, issued in 1821, had never been recorded. To remedy this the church formally requested that the town of Harvard issue a new deed. In March of 1963, the town voted “to sell and convey to the Evangelical Congregational Church of Harvard for the sum of one dollar (\$1.00), as far as can now be determined, the land which was set off to the Calvinistic Congregational Society by vote of the Town Meeting held on May 7, 1821.” (1)

At present, the church has about 400 members, and participates in many annual events with the surrounding community including the Apple Festival in October and hosting three Christmas Eve services to accommodate both members and visitors. The church also supports many town-wide ecumenical events. In 1988, Evangelical Congregational Church chose their first woman pastor, Rev. Diana J. Augspurger. The church celebrated its 175th anniversary in 1996.

History of the Church Building

The church building's structure went through many changes throughout the church's history. Between 1826 and 1827 the church added a belfry and bell, and a pulpit was built in the "audience room." In the 1860's the gallery pews were refitted and a "piazza" was added in the front of the church. At the same time, a pipe organ was added, which is still in use today. In 1882, the Meeting House was again renovated. The sanctuary and choir were lifted to the second floor, under which was built a vestry, parlor, closets, and a new kitchen.

The church celebrated its one-hundredth anniversary in 1921. At this time, the building was again renovated, primarily within the sanctuary. However, on July 29, 1940, a fire beginning in the belfry burned through the ceiling of the sanctuary. The pulpit, pews, and building were saved, but the organ was damaged, although not completely destroyed. While the church underwent reconstruction, services were held in the Town Hall. On January 5, 1941 services began in the church once again, and, on March 30, 1941, the church was rededicated in a sermon conducted by Philo G. Noon.

In 1958, the church building was repainted and the church architect, Rev. George Owen, designed a new pulpit. In the mid-1960's, architect Lindsay Shives designed renovations to the sanctuary, and, blending the old with the new, added a parish wing. In 1966, the church committee approved the plans and the new church was dedicated on September 17, 1967.

ENDNOTES

(1) Evangelical Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, Harvard, MA, "175th Anniversary," 1996.

Scope and Content Note

The Evangelical Congregational Church Collection consists primarily of early church and society records, and the records of some of its auxiliary organizations. The records are maintained in bound volumes, with each volume containing both vital statistics of the church and minutes of church meetings. Some volumes contain correspondence and reports, which have been bound into the volume. Several of the volumes contain unbound inserts, which consist of correspondence, reports to various committees, and printed ephemera. During microfilming, this material was removed and filmed separately after each volume, with notations on their original placement in the volume. The inserts were replaced in their original places after microfilming was completed. For preservation purposes, the early church's Covenant and its later Constitution were removed from the bound volumes and placed in separate folders. Wherever possible, acidic newspaper clippings were removed and photocopied on to acid-free, preservation-stock paper. The photocopies were substituted for the clippings, and the clippings were placed in acid-free envelopes after each volume.

The records have been divided into three series: Church Records, 1821-1940; Society Records, 1910-1940; and the Records of the Ladies Benevolent Society, 1941-1958. Series I, the Church Records, comprise three bound volumes and two folders, which contain the Church Covenant and the Church and Society's incorporated Constitution. The volumes are arranged chronologically and contain the following: records of members and vital statistics (baptisms,

marriages, deaths, exclusions, etc) for 1821-1940, minutes of the standing and church committee, records of contributions, lists of pastors and church officers, correspondence, legal documents and notes on renovations on the sanctuary, Sunday School participants, and printed ephemera. Volume 3 contains the bulk of the unbound inserts mentioned above. In addition, the minutes contained in Volume 3 are in typescript and have been pasted into the volume. The church's Certificate of Incorporation is also pasted into the front of this volume.

Series II, the Society Records, contains material relating to the formation and workings of the Calvinistic Congregational Society, which later became the Evangelical Congregational Society of Harvard, MA. These records are extant to 1933, although the church incorporated in 1927. This series contains three volumes, and one folder holding the manuscript of the Society's pre-incorporated Constitution. These volumes are also arranged chronologically. The Society Records contain its Treasurer's reports and other financial records, minutes of the Prudential Committee, legal materials, and lists of members of the Society.

Series III, the Ladies Benevolent Society Records consists of one volume. The records included contain the by-laws of the Ladies Benevolent Society, minutes of its meetings, financial records and reports, some correspondence, newspaper clippings, and printed ephemera.

The collection is contained on two microfilm reels. Reel 1 contains the Church Records and the Society Records. Reel 2 contains the Ladies Benevolent Society Records.

Series Description

Series I. Church Records, 1821 - 1940.

- A. Covenant, n.d.
- B. Certificate of Incorporation, 1927.
- C. Constitution of the Evangelical Congregational Church of Harvard, Massachusetts, 1929 [printed].
- D. Calvinistic Congregational Church of Harvard, MA. Records, 1821-1866.
- E. Evangelical Congregational Church, Inc., Harvard, MA. Records, 1872-1910.
- F. Evangelical Congregational Church, Inc., Harvard, MA. Records, 1910-1940.

Series II. Society Records, 1837-1933.

- A. Constitution, [1821] (copied in 1855).
- B. Calvinistic Congregational Society of Harvard, MA. Records, 1837-1863, 1903-1912.
- C. Evangelical Congregational Society of Harvard, MA. Records, 1869-1910.
- D. Evangelical Congregational Society of Harvard, MA. Records, 1911-1933.

Series III. Ladies Benevolent Society. Records, 1941-1958.

Box/Microfilm List

REEL 1

Series I. Church Records, 1821 - 1940.

A. Covenant, n.d.

B. Certificate of Incorporation, 1927.

C. Constitution of the Evangelical Congregational Church of Harvard, Massachusetts, 1929 [printed].

D. Calvinistic Congregational Church of Harvard, MA.
Records, 1821-1866.

Contains: Minutes of meetings (“proceedings”); list of members; baptisms, marriages, and deaths; exclusions and dismissions.

E. Evangelical Congregational Church, Inc., Harvard, MA.
Records, 1872-1910.

Contains: Minutes of the Standing and Church Committee; records of members; marriages, baptisms, and deaths; lists of pastors, deacons, and other church officers; contributions.

F. Evangelical Congregational Church, Inc., Harvard, MA.
Records, 1910-1940.

Contains: Minutes of Standing and Church Committee; Certificate of Incorporation; by-laws; records of members; marriages and baptisms; correspondence; lists of pastors and church officers; notes on renovations on sanctuary; Sunday school and choir rosters.

Series II. Society Records, 1837-1933.

A. Constitution, March 22, 1821.

B. Calvinistic Congregational Society of Harvard, MA.
Records, 1837-1863, 1903-1912.

Contains: Minutes of meetings; treasurer and collector’s records.

C. Evangelical Congregational Parish and Society.

Volume 5

Records, 1869-1910.

Contains: Minutes and acts of the Prudential Committee; financial records; member rosters.

D. Evangelical Congregational Society of Harvard, MA.

Volume 6

Records, 1911-1933.

Contains: Minutes and acts of the Prudential Committee; financial records.

REEL 2

Series III. Ladies Benevolent Society. Records, 1941-1958.

Contains: Minutes of the society; financial records; correspondence and printed ephemera.

BOX LIST

Folder 1

Volume 3

Folder 3

Volume 1

Volume 2

Volume 3

Folder 3

Volume 4

Volume 7

Appendix A.

List of Pastors who have served at Evangelical Congregational Church, United Church of Christ:

1821 – 1853	George Fisher	1923 – 1928	S. Francis Goodheart
1854 – 1865	John Dodge	1929 – 1930	John W. Tennant
1866 – 1872	George H. Pratt	1931 – 1936	William Taylor
1872 – 1874	Alfred E. Tracy	1936 – 1939	George E. Millard
1874 – 1877	Stephen S. Morrill	1939 – 1949	Philo G. Noon
1878 – 1880	John H. Gurney	1950 – 1952	Raymond O. Zorn
1880 – 1883	Frederic A. Reed	1952 – 1955	Arthur N. Sweeney
1884 – 1886	George A. Perkins	1955 – 1958	Fred M. Sevier
1886 – 1899	Charles C. Torrey	1958 – 1960	J. Alastair Haig
1899 – 1904	Jason G. Miller	1960 – 1961	Wendell B. Meggs
1904 – 1908	Joseph S. Grove	1961 – 1964	R. Cameron Borton
1908 – 1918	Henry B. Mason	1964 – 1980	Theodore H. Gregg
1918 – 1919	Feodor Carl Kattner	1981 – 1987	Robert W. Johnson
1919 – 1922	Arthur W. Dycer	1988 -	Diana J. Augspurger