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Grand Rapids, MI. South Congregational Church records, 1850-2001. RG4657

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Congregational Library & Archives

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Summary Information

Repository: Congregational Library & Archives

Creator: South Congregational Church (Grand Rapids, Mich.)

Creator: Collins, Earl

Creator: Cotton, William

Creator: Reikow, Philip E.

Creator: Skidmore, Ronald C.

Creator: Child, Virginia H.

Title: Grand Rapids, MI. South Congregational Church records, 1850-2001.

ID: RG4657

Date [inclusive]: 1850-2001

Physical Description: 6.02 Cubic Feet (7 boxes, 214 items)

Language of the Material: English .

Abstract: The origins of South Congregational Church start in 1874 when women from the Park Avenue Congregational Church organized a Sunday School. This would eventually lead to a "Mr. Gilbert" donating land for construction of a chapel. The new chapel was located between Sheldon and Jefferson on Delaware Street and finished in 1876. The South Congregational Church was officially organized on December 12, 1878 with 43 charter members. The church would see steady growth until the end of the 1900s, when membership began to decline and financial resources became stretched. The community decided to close in 2001 and held its final service on September 9th. This collection contains church records such as vital statistics and meeting minutes, historical records such as anniversaries and newspaper articles, financial records such as account books and mortgages, organizational records for groups like the Ladies Aid Society and Missionary Society, and pastoral records like sermons and correspondences.

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], in the Grand Rapids, MI. South Congregational Church records, 1850-2001, RG4657. The Congregational Library & Archives, Boston, MA.

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Historical Note

The origins of South Congregational Church start in 1874 when women from the Park Avenue Congregational Church organized a Sunday School. This would eventually lead to a "Mr. Gilbert" donating land for construction of a chapel. The new chapel was located between Sheldon and Jefferson on Delaware Street and finished in 1876. The South Congregational Church was officially organized on December 12, 1878 with 43 charter members. The group was accepted into the Grand River Conference the following year. Also in 1879, the minister Rev. Sarjent oversaw the expansion of the building due to growth of membership. The building was moved in 1886 to the cordner of Delaware and Sheldon, accompanied by additional expansion. Four separate ministers took the pulpit in the 1890s including Rev. Frederick York in 1896. The following year, the church suffered a fire which nearly destroyed everything. Funds were raised to not only repair but expand as the membership had seen continual growth.

Multiple ministers would take over during the early 1900s with the longest tenured being Rev. Charles Grieshaber who served from 1909-1926. The church was hit by a fire again, this time during building repairs in 1936. When Rev. Earl Collins took over in 1941, he oversaw another large increase in membership. This increase led the community to seek a new home in the growing south part of the city. The church moved to the corner of Madison and Alger and included a social hall, offices and classrooms. At this time, the number of people in the Sunday School was nearly 800. The church would continue at this new location with numerous other pastors until a tornado struck on April 21, 1967. A building fund was launched shortly after and a brand new Sanctuary was dedicated two years later in February 1969. The church mortgage was completely paid off in 1970. At this time, the church was still fully committed to education, having around 450 students.

The church membership began to decline and financial resources became stretched. The community decided to close in 2001 and held its final service on September 9th. At the final dedication, the church noted all the different ways they would provide resources after disbanding. This included selling the building to the New Covenant Life Ministries, while donating other items to Remember, Burton Heights Elementary School, and to the Interfaith Hospitality Network. Proceeds of the sale were given to the Pilgrim Manor Foundation, United Church Outreach Ministries, Habitat for Humanity, and finally a trust given to the Michigan Conference UCC for a Southside Grand Rapids New Church Start.

Ministers	
Rev. Mr. Brown	1876
Rev. Eugene C. Olney	1877-1879
Rev. Benjamin F. Sargent	1880-1889
Dr. Franklin Noble	1889-1891
Rev. James E. Smith	1891-1894
Rev. Gainor P. Moore	1894-1896
Rev. Frederick E. York	1896-1904
Rev. John Gordon	1904-1908
Rev. Charles O. Grieshaber	1909-1926
Rev. William A. Minty	1926-1931
Rev. Harold M. Skidmore	1931-1941
Rev. Earl F. Collins	1941-1951
Rev. Charles W. Scheid	1951-1966
Rev. W. R. Catton (Interim)	1966
Rev. Richard L. Ford	1966-1976
R. H. McConnell (Interim)	1977
Rev. Philip E. Reikow	1977-1989
Rev. Ronald C. Skidmore	1989-1998
Rev. H. A. Martling (Interim)	1998-1999
Rev. Dr. Virginia H. Child	1999-2001

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Scope and Contents

This collection contains church records such as vital statistics and meeting minutes, historical records such as anniversaries and newspaper articles, financial records such as account books and mortgages, organizational records for groups like the Ladies Aid Society and Missionary Society, and pastoral records like sermons and correspondences.

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Arrangement

This collection has been arranged into five series and four sub-series. The records in each series has been arranged chronologically by start date except in the meetings and reports sub-series.

Series 1: Church records, 1850-2001

Subseries 1: Vital statistics, 1850-2000

Subseries 2: Meetings and reports, 1899-2001

Subseries 3: Newsletters, 1922-2001

Subseries 4: Visual materials, 1978-1996, undated

Series 2: Historical records, 1880-2001

Series 3: Financial, 1891-2001

Series 4: Pastoral, 1896-2000

Series 5: Organizations, 1905-1935, 1966-2001

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Administrative Information

Publication Statement

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URL: <http://www.CongregationalLibrary.org>

Restrictions on Access

Access to this collection is unrestricted and open to the public.

Restrictions on Use

Items in this collection are subject to U.S. Copyright Law. It is the responsibility of the researcher to determine the copyright status of collection items and to secure any permissions necessary for their reproduction and publication. Requests for permission to publish material must be discussed with the archivist or librarian.

Acquisition Information

Materials were donated to the Congregational Library by Virginia Child in September 2001; 2001-04.

Processing Information

Processed by William McCarthy, September 2021, using DACS second edition.

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Controlled Access Headings

- Church records and registers.
- Vital statistics.
- Installation (clergy).
- Church finance.

- Photographs.
- Letters.
- Church newsletters.
- Christian stewardship.
- Church societies.
- Sermons.
- Church buildings
- South Congregational Church (Grand Rapids, Mich.)

Technical Requirements

The collection contains VHS tapes and a reel which the library does not have the equipment to properly play.

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Bibliography

1. Historian's reports and sketches, in the Grand Rapids, MI. South Congregational Church records, 1850-2001, RG4657. The Congregational Library & Archives, Boston, MA.
2. Closing service of worship, in the Grand Rapids, MI. South Congregational Church records, 1850-2001, RG4657. The Congregational Library & Archives, Boston, MA.

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Collection Inventory

Church records, 1850-2001

Physical Description: 118 Items (1 reel, 6 tapes, 111 folders)

Scope and Contents

This series contains church records from the South Congregational Church and includes vital statistics, meeting minutes, various church reports, newsletters and visual materials.

Vital statistics, 1850-2000

Physical Description: 20 Folders

Scope and Contents

This subseries contains the vital statistics from the South Congregational Church and includes membership lists, transfers, dismissals, marriages, baptisms, directories and a membership survey.

Title/Description	Instances	
Vital statistics and meeting minutes, 1850-1923	box 4	folder 8
Membership records, 1878-2000	box 3	folder 2
Membership list, 1889-1978	box 3	folder 6
Removed members list, 1889-1978	box 3	folder 7
Membership list, 1880-1943	box 3	folder 9
Transfers and Dismissals, 1891-1924	box 3	folder 1
Jesse Fry's handbook of records, 1893-1930	box 4	folder 1
Jesse Fry's handbook of records, 1898-1932	box 4	folder 2
Jesse Fry's handbook of records, 1899-1927	box 4	folder 3
Jesse Fry's handbook of records (1 of 2), 1903-1933	box 4	folder 4
Jesse Fry's handbook of records (2 of 2), 1903-1933	box 4	folder 5
Records of weddings and funerals, 1906-1967	box 3	folder 4
Baptism list, 1922-2000	box 3	folder 8
Marriage records, 1931-1989	box 5	folder 6
Baptismal records, 1965-1983	box 4	folder 7
Directories, 1968-1978	box 3	folder 10
Directories, 1984-1994	box 3	folder 11
Inactive member survey, 1997	box 3	folder 5
Marriage services, undated	box 3	folder 3
Membership index file, undated	box 4	folder 6

Meetings and reports, 1899-2001

Physical Description: 55 Folders

Scope and Contents

This subseries contains meetings and reports related to the South Congregational Church. This includes the Board of Trustees, Annual reports, meeting minutes, Church council meeting minutes, and yearbook reports.

Arrangement

This subseries is arranged chronologically by group, with one-offs at the end.

Title/Description	Instances	
Board of Trustees meeting minutes, 1899-1907	box 4	folder 18
Board of Trustees meeting minutes, 1907-1922	box 4	folder 19
Board of Trustees meeting minutes, 1923-1934	box 4	folder 20
Board of Trustees meeting minutes, 1934-1943	box 4	folder 21
Board of Trustees meeting minutes, February 1973-August 1977	box 1	folder 28
Board of Trustees meeting minutes, September 1977-June 1980	box 1	folder 29
Board of Trustees meeting minutes, January 1981-December 1982	box 1	folder 30
Board of Trustees meeting minutes, 1983-1986	box 1	folder 31
Board of Trustees notes and correspondences, 1984-1990	box 2	folder 2
Board of Trustees meeting minutes, January 1987-May 1989	box 1	folder 32
Board of Trustees booklet, 1988-1992	box 2	folder 1
Board of Trustees meeting minutes, June 1989-December 1991	box 1	folder 33
Board of Trustees meeting minutes, 1992-1993	box 1	folder 34
Board of Trustees meeting minutes, 1994-1997	box 1	folder 35
Annual reports, 1900-1920	box 5	folder 1
Annual reports, 1922-1930	box 1	folder 8
Annual reports, 1931-1938	box 1	folder 9
Annual reports, 1939-1945	box 1	folder 10
Annual reports, 1946-1949	box 1	folder 11
Annual reports, 1950-1954	box 1	folder 12
Annual reports, 1955-1956	box 1	folder 13
Annual reports, 1958-1959	box 1	folder 14
Annual reports, 1960-1962	box 1	folder 15
Annual reports, 1963-1966	box 1	folder 16
Annual reports, 1967-1968	box 1	folder 17
Annual reports, 1970-1971	box 1	folder 18

Annual reports, 1972-1975	box 1	folder 19
Annual reports, 1976-1978	box 1	folder 20
Annual reports, 1979-1981	box 1	folder 21
Annual reports, 1982-1984	box 1	folder 22
Annual reports, 1985-1987	box 1	folder 23
Annual reports, 1988-1991	box 1	folder 24
Annual reports, 1992-1995	box 1	folder 25
Annual reports, 1996-1999	box 1	folder 26
Annual reports, 2000-2001	box 1	folder 27
Meeting minutes, 1930-1931	box 1	folder 1
Meeting minutes, 1941-1961	box 1	folder 2
Meeting minutes, 1961-1962	box 1	folder 3
Meeting minutes, 1963-1967	box 1	folder 4
Meeting minutes, 1967-1978	box 1	folder 5
Meeting minutes, 1978-1994	box 1	folder 6
Meeting minutes, 1995-2001	box 1	folder 7
Church council meeting minutes, 1951-1968	box 2	folder 7
Church council meeting minutes, 1969-1982	box 2	folder 8
Church council meeting minutes, 1983-1989	box 2	folder 9
Church council meeting minutes, 1990-1992	box 2	folder 10
Church council meeting minutes, 1992-October 1993	box 2	folder 11
Church council meeting minutes, November 1993-1996	box 2	folder 12
Church council meeting minutes, 1997-January 1998	box 2	folder 13
Congregational yearbook reports, 1910-1930	box 3	folder 27
Congregational yearbook reports, 1966-2000	box 5	folder 5
Church records and reports, 1877-1941	box 3	folder 50
Church reports, 1924-1926	box 5	folder 29
Refugee family records, 1985	box 5	folder 8
Board and committee reports and notes, undated	box 2	folder 17

Newsletters, 1922-2001

Physical Description: 27 Folders

Scope and Contents

This subseries contains newsletters produced by the South Congregational Church and includes the South Church Messenger, The Fountain Pen, South Church Page, and The Messenger.

Title/Description	Instances	
South Church Messenger, 1922	box 2	folder 18
The Fountain Pen, April-June 1931	box 2	folder 19
South Church Page, September-December 1931	box 2	folder 20
South Church Page, January-November 1932	box 2	folder 21
South Church Page, December 1932-December 1933	box 2	folder 22
South Church Page, January 1934-February 1935	box 2	folder 23
South Church Page, March-December 1935	box 2	folder 24
South Church Page, January-June 1936	box 2	folder 25
South Church Page, undated	box 2	folder 26
South Church Messenger, 1968-1971	box 2	folder 27
South Church Messenger, December 1972-April 1974	box 2	folder 28
South Church Messenger, May 1974-January 1978	box 2	folder 29
The Messenger, February-December 1978	box 5	folder 30
The Messenger, 1979-1980	box 2	folder 30
The Messenger, 1981-July 1982	box 2	folder 31
The Messenger, September 1982-November 1983	box 2	folder 32
The Messenger, 1984-February 1988	box 5	folder 31
South Church Messenger, February 1988-September 1989	box 2	folder 33
South Church Messenger, October 1989-December 1990	box 5	folder 32
South Church Messenger, 1991	box 5	folder 33
South Church Messenger, 1992	box 5	folder 34
South Church Messenger, 1993-1994	box 5	folder 35
South Church Messenger, January-August 1995	box 5	folder 36
The Messenger, September 1995-1997	box 5	folder 37
The Messenger, 1998-1999	box 5	folder 38
The Messenger, 2000	box 5	folder 39
The Messenger, January-August 2001	box 2	folder 34

Visual materials, 1978-1996, undated

Physical Description: 16 Items (1 reel, 6 tapes, 9 folders)

Scope and Contents

This subseries contains visual materials from the church and includes photos, VHS tapes of church events and a rededication service on a reel.

Title/Description	Instances	
Centennial Sunday rededication service, October 27, 1978	box 6	reel 1
Jonah, 1992	box 6	Tape 1
Children's Cantata-Elijah, Man of Fire, April 17, 1994	box 6	Tape 5
Adam's Apple children, May 17, 1995	box 6	Tape 4
Church Activities , April 2, 1996	box 6	Tape 3
Photos (1 of 5), undated	box 7	folder 1
Photos (2 of 5), undated	box 7	folder 2
Photos (3 of 5), undated	box 7	folder 3
Photos (4 of 5), undated	box 7	folder 4
Photos (5 of 5), undated	box 7	folder 5
Church slides, undated	box 7	folder 6
Planting the Seeds of our Faith (copy 1), undated	box 6	Tape 2
Planting the Seeds of our Faith (copy 2), undated	box 6	Tape 6
Do Things Right class pins, undated	box 6	folder 1
Oversize Images (1 of 2), undated	Drawer 11	folder 6
Oversize Images (2 of 2), undated	Drawer 11	folder 7

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Historical records, 1880-2001

Physical Description: 27 Folders

Scope and Contents

This series contains historical records related to the church and includes anniversaries, pamphlets, newspaper articles, order of services and constitutions.

Title/Description	Instances	
Does it play to support the gospel here?, October 24, 1880	box 3	folder 35
Church pamphlets and manuals, 1884-1923	box 3	folder 36
Constitution with amendments , 1895-1912, 1940	box 3	folder 37

25th Anniversary, 1903	box 2	folder 35
Order of services, 1904-1931	box 5	folder 15
Resolutions, 1912-1920	box 3	folder 52
Michigan Congregational Conference appointment, 1912-1922	box 2	folder 40
Newspaper articles, 1916-1972	box 5	folder 40
50th Anniversary, 1928	box 2	folder 36
Ye Olde Singing Skule, February 28, 1933	box 3	folder 38
Historical Sketches, 1944-1949	box 3	folder 39
70th Anniversary, 1948	box 2	folder 37
Cornerstone time capsule, 1949	box 3	folder 41
Historian's reports and sketches, 1950-1994	box 3	folder 40
75th Anniversary, 1953	box 2	folder 38
Order of services, 1962-1975	box 3	folder 42
Certificate, 1965	box 3	folder 43
90th Anniversary, 1968	box 2	folder 39
Church dedication services, 1968-1970	box 3	folder 44
Sharing the good news, 1975-1976	box 3	folder 45
Order of services, 1977-1991	box 5	folder 16
100th Anniversary, 1978	box 5	folder 4
Constitution, 1989	box 3	folder 46
Certificates, 1991-2000	box 3	folder 47
Order of services, 1992-2000	box 5	folder 17
Constitution, 1999-2001	box 3	folder 48
Closing service of worship, September 9, 2001	box 3	folder 49

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Financial, 1891-2001

Physical Description: 39 Folders

Scope and Contents

This series contains financial records from the church and includes account books, indentures, building records, mortgages, treasurer's reports, non-profit paperwork, deeds and information on selling property.

Title/Description	Instances	
Indentures, 1891-1950	box 5	folder 19
Financial reports, 1894-1919	box 3	folder 23
Account book, 1899-1902	box 5	folder 2
Financial statements, 1899-1919	box 3	folder 24
Treasurer's book, 1909-1929	box 4	folder 9
Tax history, 1919-1942	box 5	folder 21
Real estate records, 1919-1974	box 3	folder 12
Articles of incorporation, 1922-1925	box 5	folder 26
Treasurer's book, 1922-1952	box 4	folder 10
Account book, 1923-1924	box 4	folder 11
Grand Rapids Association , 1924, 1928-1930	box 3	folder 28
Christian endeavor society reports, 1926-1929	box 3	folder 29
Account book, 1927-1929	box 4	folder 12
Treasurer's reports, 1928-1935	box 3	folder 25
Proposal plans for the enlargement and improvement of First Congregational Church, 1929	box 5	folder 18
Account book, 1929-1935	box 4	folder 13
Bequests, 1931-1998	box 5	folder 12
Indenture of Mortgage, 1935, 1945	box 5	folder 27
Mortgages, 1935-1976	box 5	folder 14
Abstract of title, October 29, 1942	box 5	folder 22
Treasurer's reports, 1942-1943	box 3	folder 26
Articles of incorporation, 1943-1947	box 5	folder 28
Building committee meeting minutes, 1943-1949	box 3	folder 13
Church building fund reports, 1944	box 3	folder 14
Barnes construction and sanctuary, 1949-1950	box 3	folder 15
Michigan non-profit paperwork, 1949-1978	box 5	folder 25
Subordination Agreement, 1950	box 5	folder 20
Abstract of title, May 24, 1951	box 5	folder 23

Subordination agreement, July 6, 1956	box 5	folder 13
Pilgrim Manor records, 1957-1964	box 3	folder 16
Construction and dedication of new sanctuary, 1967-1971	box 3	folder 17
Friendship Sunday survey, October 6, 1974	box 3	folder 30
Board for world service, 1980-1983	box 3	folder 31
New Life Covenant Ministries tenant records, 1999	box 3	folder 18
Warranty Deed, 2001	box 5	folder 24
Appraisal of sanctuary, 2001	box 3	folder 19
Sale of church property, 2001	box 3	folder 20
Mortgage, 2001	box 3	folder 21
Building Fund bonds, undated	box 3	folder 22

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Pastoral, 1896-2000

Physical Description: 13 Folders

Scope and Contents

This series contains records related to the pastors of the church and includes reports, messages, correspondences, sermons, and installations.

Title/Description	Instances	
Church correspondences, 1896-1903	box 5	folder 11
Church correspondences, 1907-1931	box 3	folder 51
Pastor reports and messages, 1913-1931	box 2	folder 41
Pastor reports and messages, 1925-1926	box 2	folder 42
Rev. Earl Collins correspondences, 1948-1951	box 5	folder 10
Rev. William Cotton biographies, 1958-1964	box 2	folder 43
Condolence on death of Rev. Earl Collins, 1969	box 2	folder 44
Sermons, 1971	box 2	folder 45
Pastoral notes and records, 1972-1975	box 2	folder 46
Installation of Rev. Philip E. Reikow, October 23, 1977	box 2	folder 47
Installation of Rev. Ronald C. Skidmore, October 29, 1989	box 2	folder 48
Pastoral notes and records, 1998-1999	box 2	folder 49
Installation of Rev. Dr. Virginia H. Child, March 19, 2000	box 2	folder 50

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Organizations, 1905-1935, 1966-2001

Physical Description: 17 Folders

Scope and Contents

This series contains records related to the various organizations of South Congregational Church and includes the Home society, Missionary society, Ladies Aid Society, Women's Fellowship, service team, nomination committee, Top of the Hill club, Diaconate, and Vision team.

Title/Description	Instances	
Home and Missionary Society reports, 1905-1922	box 5	folder 3
Missionary Society meeting minutes, 1922-1930	box 4	folder 16
Ladies Aid Society minute book, 1928	box 4	folder 14
Ladies Aid Society meeting minutes, 1931-1932	box 4	folder 15
Missionary Society meeting minutes, 1931-1935	box 4	folder 17
Rules and By-laws of the Women's Fellowship, 1966-1971	box 5	folder 9
Top of the Hill club records, 1975-1978	box 5	folder 7
Diaconate meeting records, 1977-1980	box 2	folder 3
Women's Fellowship records, 1981-1991	box 3	folder 32
Diaconate meeting records, 1981	box 2	folder 4
Diaconate meeting records, 1982-1985	box 2	folder 6
Nomination committee records, 1987-1996	box 3	folder 33
Diaconate meeting records, 1990-1997	box 2	folder 5
Vision team meeting minutes, 1992-1995	box 2	folder 14
Vision team plans and notes, 1997-2001	box 2	folder 15
Service team records, 1998-2000	box 3	folder 34
Vision team meeting minutes, 1998-2001	box 2	folder 16

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