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Rev. John Mack papers, 1921-2019. MS5555

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Congregational Library & Archives

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Summary Information

Repository:	Congregational Library & Archives
Creator:	Mack, John (1942-2008)
Creator:	Gerlach, Barbara
Title:	Rev. John Mack papers, 1921-2019.
ID:	MS5555
Date [inclusive]:	1921-2019
Physical Description:	4.06 Cubic Feet (5 boxes)
Language of the Material:	English .
Abstract:	<p>John Mack was born on March 7th, 1942, in New York City to Grace and Lewis Mack. He was the middle of three children and was raised in New Canaan, Connecticut. John attended Union Theological Seminary and received his Master of Divinity degree in 1971. While there, he met his future wife, Barbara Gerlach. In 1971, they would serve as co-pastors of Trinity Congregational UCC in Scranton, Pennsylvania. In 1984, John started to serve as the pastor of First Congregational Church in Washington, DC, and would spend the next 23 years there. While visiting the Himalayas in 2007, John fell ill and spent several weeks in the hospital. He died in his home, surrounded by his family, on January 15th, 2008. This collection contains materials both personal and profession from across John's life. Included are sermons, columns in Gabriel's Horn titled "A View from Here", other collected writings on numerous subjects, and personal files related to his friends and family.</p>

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], in the Rev. John Mack papers, 1921-2019, MS5555. The Congregational Library & Archives, Boston, MA.

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Biographical Information

John Mack was born on March 7th, 1942, in New York City to Grace and Lewis Mack. He was the middle of three children and was raised in New Canaan, Connecticut. He attended Phillips Exeter Academy, Princeton University, and then served in Vietnam as an infantry officer in the Marine Corps from 1964-1967.

After returning home, John attended Union Theological Seminary and received his Master of Divinity degree in 1971. While there, he met his future wife, Barbara Gerlach. In 1971, they would serve as co-pastors of Trinity Congregational UCC in Scranton, Pennsylvania. They would move to Boston in 1973 when John was executive and clinical director of Together, Inc., a community outreach program that worked with at-risk teenagers and their families.

In 1984, John started to serve as the pastor of First Congregational Church in Washington, DC, and would spend the next 23 years there. During that time, the church became a just peace, open and affirming, multiracial and multicultural church, and in general a place for all walks of life in downtown Washington. Near the end of his tenure, John helped lead a process for developing the church's site into a mixed-use structure that houses the church and its social service programs, financed by eight floors of offices. John was also a member of the board of directors of the Downtown Cluster of Congregations from 1985-2007, which worked to develop a "lived-in" downtown during the 80s and 90s.

John's family included his wife Barbara, their two children Jessica Prentice and Peter Gerlach-Mack, several grandchildren, his sister Lucy Mack and brother Talbot Mack. While visiting the Himalayas in 2007, John fell ill and spent several weeks in the hospital. He died in his home, surrounded by his family, on January 15th, 2008.

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Scope and Contents

This collection contains materials both personal and professional from across John's life. Included are sermons, columns in Gabriel's Horn titled "A View from Here", other collected writings on numerous subjects, and personal files related to his friends and family.

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Arrangement

This collection was originally arranged and housed in three-ring binders by John's wife Barbara Gerlach. The material in those binders were removed into folders and kept in the same order. The collection is now arranged into 3 series and further arranged chronologically.

Series 1: Personal files, 1921-2019

Series 2: Sermons, 1971-2007

Series 3: Writings, 1983-2008

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Administrative Information

Publication Statement

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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 & Archives by Barbara Gerlach in June 2025; 2025-18.

Processing Information

Processed by Billy McCarthy, September 2025, using DACS.

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Controlled Access Headings

- Christianity and politics.
- Church group work.
- Clergy -- Correspondence.
- Human rights -- Religious aspects -- Congregational churches.
- Letters.
- Sermons, American.
- Religious articles.
- First Congregational Church (Washington, D.C.)
- Gerlach, Barbara
- Mack, John (1942-2008)
- Trinity Congregational Church (Scranton, N.J.)
- Church of the Covenant (Boston, Mass.)

Technical Requirements

Contents of CD can be shared by asking an archivist while the files on the floppy drive are inaccessible.

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Bibliography

Catalogue and biography, undated, in the Rev. John Mack papers, 1921-2019, MS5555. The Congregational Library & Archives, Boston, MA.

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Collection Inventory

Personal files, 1921-2019

Physical Description: 12 Folders

Scope and Contents

This series contains personal files from John Mack and include vital records, material related to his family, his career, and his philanthropy. Also included are remembrances from his celebration of life by friends and family.

Title/Description	Instances	
Personal files (1 of 2), 1921-1972	box 2	folder 9
Personal files (2 of 2), 1921-1972	box 2	folder 10
Personal files (1 of 2), 1971-1984	box 2	folder 11
Personal files (2 of 2), 1971-1984	box 2	folder 12
Personal files (1 of 2), 1984-1995	box 2	folder 13
Personal files (2 of 2), 1984-1995	box 2	folder 14
Personal files (1 of 2), 1984-2007	box 2	folder 15
Personal files (2 of 2), 1984-2007	box 2	folder 16
Personal files and remembrances (1 of 2), 2007-2012	box 2	folder 17
Personal files and remembrances (2 of 2), 2007-2012	box 2	folder 18
Celebration of the Life of John Hayward Mack, January 28, 2008	box 4	folder 1
150th Anniversary of First Congregational Church of Washington DC, 2019	box 2	folder 21

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Sermons, 1971-2007Physical Description: 55 Folders**Scope and Contents**

This series contains sermons from across John's life, a majority of which come from the First Congregational Church of Washington DC but also includes sermons from his time at Trinity Congregational UCC in Scranton, Pennsylvania and the Church of the Covenant in Boston, Massachusetts.

Title/Description	Instances	
Trinity Congregational Church UCC of Scranton, PA Sermons (1 of 2), 1971-1973	box 2	folder 1
Trinity Congregational Church UCC of Scranton, PA Sermons (2 of 2), 1971-1973	box 2	folder 2
Church of the Covenant in Boston, Mass, sermons, 1978-1982	box 2	folder 3
Sermons (1 of 2), 1984-1985	box 2	folder 4
Sermons (2 of 2), 1984-1985	box 2	folder 5
Sermons (1 of 2), 1986	box 2	folder 6
Sermons (2 of 2), 1986	box 2	folder 7
Sermons (1 of 2), 1987	box 1	folder 1
Sermons (2 of 2), 1987	box 1	folder 2
Sermons (1 of 2), 1988	box 1	folder 3
Sermons (2 of 2), 1988	box 1	folder 4
Sermons (1 of 2), 1989	box 1	folder 5
Sermons (2 of 2), 1989	box 1	folder 6
Sermons (1 of 2), 1990	box 1	folder 7
Sermons (2 of 2), 1990	box 1	folder 8
Sermons (1 of 2), 1991	box 1	folder 9
Sermons (2 of 2), 1991	box 1	folder 10
Sermons (1 of 3), 1992	box 1	folder 11
Sermons (2 of 3), 1992	box 1	folder 12
Sermons (3 of 3), 1992	box 1	folder 13
Sermons (1 of 2), 1993	box 1	folder 14
Sermons (2 of 2), 1993	box 1	folder 15
Sermons (1 of 2), 1994	box 1	folder 16
Sermons (2 of 2), 1994	box 1	folder 17

Sermons (1 of 2), 1995	box 1	folder 18
Sermons (2 of 2), 1995	box 1	folder 19
Sermons (1 of 2), 1996	box 1	folder 20
Sermons (2 of 2), 1996	box 3	folder 1
Sermons (1 of 2), 1997	box 3	folder 2
Sermons (2 of 2), 1997	box 3	folder 3
Sermons (1 of 2), 1998	box 3	folder 4
Sermons (2 of 2), 1998	box 3	folder 5
Sermons (1 of 2), 1999	box 3	folder 6
Sermons (2 of 2), 1999	box 3	folder 7
Sermons (1 of 2), 2000	box 3	folder 8
Sermons (2 of 2), 2000	box 3	folder 9
Sermons (1 of 2), 2001	box 3	folder 10
Sermons (2 of 2), 2001	box 3	folder 11
Sermons (1 of 2), 2002	box 3	folder 12
Sermons (2 of 2), 2002	box 3	folder 13
Sermons (1 of 3), 2003	box 3	folder 14
Sermons (2 of 3), 2003	box 3	folder 15
Sermons (3 of 3), 2003	box 3	folder 16
Sermons (1 of 3), 2004	box 3	folder 17
Sermons (2 of 3), 2004	box 3	folder 18
Sermons (3 of 3), 2004	box 3	folder 19
Sermons (1 of 3), 2005	box 3	folder 20
Sermons (2 of 3), 2005	box 3	folder 21
Sermons (3 of 3), 2005	box 3	folder 22
Sermons (1 of 3), 2006	box 5	folder 1
Sermons (2 of 3), 2006	box 5	folder 2
Sermons (3 of 3), 2006	box 5	folder 3
Sermons, 2007	box 3	folder 23
Sermons, undated	box 2	folder 8

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Writings, 1983-2008

Physical Description: 10 Folders

Scope and Contents

This series contains various writings by John Mack, including articles he wrote in "Gabriel's Horn" titled "A View from Here", an unfinished novel, a catalogue and biography by his wife Barbara Gerlach, Christmas letters to friends and family, and other writings on various topics.

Title/Description	Instances	
Gabriel's Horn, 1983-1993	box 4	folder 2
Gabriel's Horn, 1994-1995	box 4	folder 3
Gabriel's Horn, 1996-2000	box 2	folder 19
Gabriel's Horn, 2000-2001	box 4	folder 4
Gabriel's Horn, 2001-2004	box 4	folder 5
Gabriel's Horn, 2005-2007	box 4	folder 6
Collected writings of John Mack, 1984-2008	box 2	folder 22
Novel, 2001	box 5	folder 4
Unfinished novel with outline and research, 2001	box 2	folder 20
Catalogue and biography, undated	box 2	folder 23

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