



Westwood, Massachusetts. Islington Community Church

Records, 1875-2004

5.5 linear feet – 15 boxes, 1 oversize folder

RG 4825

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History of the Church

According to a note written in 1926, the forerunner of the Islington Church was the Balch Society, which was organized in 1875 until the church formally came together in 1878 and the Balch Society dissolved its religious services. In 1885, the Society ceased having business meetings. At that time, it called itself Springvale, and then transitioned to the Orthodox Congregational Church. The congregation built a dedicated space in 1881 after the realization that the town hall was not sufficient for their needs. Due to slow growth, the Home Mission Society bolstered the organization from 1895 until the town and therefore the church grew more quickly. By 1916, the membership warranted a larger space, and they build accordingly. In 1918, church member Philo Noon recommended that the congregation follow the Community Church plan, which offered membership to any “follower of Christ without denominational affiliation.” This structure suited the organization and remained in place until the church closed, although in 1996, Islington did join the United Church of Christ.

Of the ministers called to Islington, Edwin P. Booth was most notable with 26 years of service. Dr. Booth joined the church as its minister in 1922 while still a student. Because Booth was still teaching while overseeing Islington, he inaugurated the plan of calling student ministers from Boston University to act as his assistants. These young men served for a few years and then moved on to other callings around the country.

This system was abandoned in 1948 when a continually growing membership required a full time minister. Douglas Brayton was the first minister to fulfill the revised ministerial role. In 1967, the church dedicated a new house of worship. Unfortunately, shortly after the dedication, the membership began a slow decline. The Women’s Fellowship and Mother’s Morning Out, the nursery school run at the church, remained the more dynamic activities. In 2001 and 2002, the congregation consolidated in an effort to survive. However, this effort was not enough to revive the organization, and the church closed in 2004 under the leadership of interim minister, Kathryn Titus.

For a more complete review of the church’s history up to 1970, review folders 4 and 5 of Series 7.

List of Ministers-

C.B. Smith	1878-1891
W. F. Bickford	1891
A.H. Johnson	1904
E.A. Rudd- Home Mission supply minister	
Lewis A. Eaton- Home Mission supply minister	
J.H. Gould- Home Mission supply minister	
F.D. George- Home Mission supply minister	
Harry S. Lowd	1912-1918
N.T. Whittaker	1918-1920
Pierce	1921
Edwin Prince Booth	1922-
<i>Student Ministers Associated with Dr. Booth</i>	
- Fred Bratton	1924-1926

- Douglas Milligan	1926-1928
- Fred Bratton	1928-1929
- Ione Sikes	1929-1930
- Donald Rowlingson	1930-1932
- Gerald Eusley, Willis Ford, and Mr. Larrabee	1932-1933
- Donald Rowlingson	1933-1938
- Harold Jayne	1938-1940
- Vaughn Shedd	1940-1941
- John B. Magee	1942-1943
- John Olson	1943-1944
- John Phillips	1945-1947
- John Olson	1947-1948
Douglas P. Brayton	1949-1954
Edwin P. Booth, Interim	1954, June-October
Edwin P. Booth, Minister Emeritus	1949-1969
Richard G. Smith	1956-1964
W. S. Sahakian, Interim	1965
Ernest Bodenweber, Jr.	1966-1969
John Samuelson, Interim	Dec. 1969-April 1970
W. Allan Knight	1971-1974
John A. Samuelson	1975-1983 (Served as Interim Sept. 1974- April 1975)
John A. Fassett, Interim	1984
Earle Bergman	1985-1989
Mathew D. Arnett	1990-1992
John Fassett	1993-1994
Carol Atwood-Lyon	1995-2000
Colin Leitch, Interim	2000-2003
Kathryn Titus, Interim	2003-2004

Scope and Content

Series 1: Church Records 1875-2004

Sub-series A- Annual Reports, 1875-2004. The earliest records includes all meetings and vital statistics that should also be referred to as well as those minutes and statistics kept in separate sections of the collection.

Subseries B: Committee Minutes and Correspondence, 1941-2004. Be aware that while most years have some minutes represented, some do not have correspondence. The final box of this sub-series includes all the documentation related to the church closing.

Series 2: Ministers 1960s-2004. There is no information that pre-dates Dr. Booth. Rev. Titus's contributions take up the majority of this series and mostly cover administrative issues dealing with closing the church. The file on "Calls and Dismissals" are made up of the correspondence welcoming a new minister and the letters the minister wrote after it was decided for them to leave the community, usually resignations. The file on installations have programs and clippings describing the event of the new minister joining the church.

Series 3: Membership, Vital Statistics 1878-2004. Earlier records from 1875-1920s are also in Series 1's ledgers. Unusually, there are marriage records included here for several decades. The first ledger in this series has a very comprehensive list of the leadership of the church: deacons, deaconesses, committee members, and so on, and appears to cover almost the entire life of the church. The 19th century correspondence is almost exclusively admission/dismissal-related. The final file includes mostly confirmations from 2002-2003 with Rev. Colin Leitch, plus confirmations from 1980, and finally a list of high school graduates from 1961.

Series 4: Financial 1880s-2004. There are 2 ledgers from the early 20th century. This series does not provide a day-to-day view of the finances of the church. Please see the early ledgers, annual reports, and committee records for more detail.

Series 5: Building 1960s-2004. The first half of this series focuses on the new building erected in 1967 and the second half involves the sale of the building. There is a large amount of correspondence between Kathryn Titus and the lawyers handling the sale. Financial activities related to closing the church and allocating the remaining funds to charities is also included. For day-to-day information about the physical plant, refer to the annual reports or committee minutes.

Series 6: Auxiliary Groups, Activities 1941-2004. There is only spotty record keeping for social or charitable groups within the church for everything save the Women's Association. Included in this series are letters to World War II service people, the street fair, a couple's club, and Men's Club. Like in the previous series described, more information on auxiliaries and activities available in reports and minutes.

Series 7: Publications and History, -2004. Includes monthly newsletters, a sample of Sunday programs, and programs from activities. There are several histories, although none that date past 1970. The most recent images are often identified, and grouped by decade. Most loose clippings found throughout the collection were gathered together.

Folder List

Series 1: Church Records, 1875-2004

Sub-series A: Annual Reports

Box 1

1	By Laws	
2	Balch Society	1875-1885
3	Ledger: Meetings, Statement of Faith, Membership, Baptisms	1878-1894; 1906-1946
4	Ledger: Meetings, Membership, Baptisms	1895-1925
5-6	Board and Annual Meetings	1923-1939
7-9	Annual Reports	1941-1949

Box 2		
1-6	Annual Reports	1950-1989
Box 3		
1-3	Annual Reports	1990-2004
Sub-series B: Committee Meeting Minutes and Correspondence		
4-9	Committee Meetings and Correspondence	1941-1965
Box 4		
1	Minutes	1966-1968
2	Trustee Correspondence	1962-1968
3-5	Minutes, Correspondence	1969-1975
Box 5		
1-9	Minutes, Correspondence	1976-1989
10	Name Change (Orthodox to Community)	1989
Box 6		
1-7	Minutes Correspondence	1990-1996
8	Joining the UCC	1996
Box 7		
1-5, 8	Minutes, Correspondence	1997-2001, 2002
6	Church Incorporation Verficiation	2001
7	Consolidation Ad Hoc Committee	2001-2002
Box 8		
1-2	Minutes, Correspondence	2003-2004
3	Trustees	2003-2004
4	Membership, Committees	2003-2004
5	Personnel- Islington, Mother's Morning Out (MMO)	
6	Mother's Morning Out (MMO)	2004
 Series 2: Ministers, 1960s-2004		
7	Booth, Edwin P	1960s
8	Installations	1970s-1990s
9	Correspondence: Calls and Dismissals (Resignations)	1960s-2000
10	Lists, homecoming, memorial program, sermons	1970s-1990s
11	Supply Ministers	1960s-1990s
12	Baptisms, Pastoral Correspondence	1980s-2004
13	Titus, Kathryn. Sermons	2003-2004
14	Titus, Kathryn. Pastoral Work	2003-2004
15	Titus, Kathryn. Correspondence	2003-2004

Series 3: Membership, Vital Statistics

Box 9

1	Correspondence	1870s-1880s
2	Ledger-	
	- Leadership	1878-1990
	- Membership	1918-1998
	- Baptisms, Marriages	1923-1990
	- Deaths	1922-1990
3	Ledger	
	- Baptisms	1923-1967
	- Marriages, Funerals	1923-1969
4	Membership, Directories, Manual	1895, 1950s-2004

Series 4: Financial

5	Correspondence	1880s-1890s
6	Ledger	1911-1918

Box 10

1	Ledger	1919-1942
2	Treasurer's Correspondence	1947-1953
3	Bequests, Memorials	
4	Canvas	1968-1970s
5	Declaration of Trust- Allan Knight, Property	1977-1978
6	McFarlane Scholarship Fund	
7	Statements, Letter	1978, 2000, 2002-2003

Series 5: Building

8-9	Building Committee	1960s
10	New Church, incl. pictures and clippings	1967
11	New Church Dedication, images	1967

Box 11

1	Insurance	2001
2-3	Purchase and sale	2004
4	Financial- Final Allocation, Charties	2003-2004
5	Letter of Intent	2004
6-7	Herwitt and Associates (Lawyers)	2003-2004
8	Westwood Planning and Profiles	2003-2004
9	Recognition Sunday (Final Service)	June 20 2004

Series 7: Publications and History, -2004.

Box 12

1-9 Open Door Newsletter 1960s-1970s, 1987-2004

Box 13

1 Sunday Programs (sample) 1980s-2004

2 Programs and Bulletins

3 Clippings

4-5 History, essays

6 Images

Box 14

Images

15- Folder: Oversize

Ledger: weekly offerings 1953-1956

Photostat negative – certification of name, Orthodox Church 1911

Guest Books 1958-2004