

C First Christian Church, Columbia, Missouri, Records, 1824-1997
3991 16.75 linear feet, 18 audio cassettes

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INTRODUCTION

The church records include minutes of administrative boards and committees, ministers' and administrators' papers, papers of the Christian Student Congregation, publications, the Bear Creek Church record book, the record book of the Construction Committee, and papers of several affiliated clubs and committees. Documents especially cover the period from the 1920s to 1964. In addition, this collection contains drafts and notes by Mary K. Dains for her history of the First Christian Church published in 1996. Her research includes interview recordings with church members.

DONOR INFORMATION

The First Christian Church, Records were donated to the State Historical Society of Missouri by Mary K. Dains on behalf of the First Christian Church on May 15, 1978 (Accession No. 2152). Additions to the records were made on August 8, 1978 (Accession No. 2188) June, 22, 1983 (Accession No. 2479), February 13, 1984 (Accession No. 2514), June 29, 1984 (Accession No. 2530), September 26, 1984 (Accession No. 2539), January 29, 1985 (Accession No. 2552), November 2, 1987 (Accession No. 2676), March 1, 1989 (Accession No. 2737), September 26, 1989 (Accession No. 2758), May 9, 1990 (Accession No. 2783), February 20, 1991 (Accession No. 2822), July 30, 1991 (Accession No. 2845), September 16, 1991 (Accession No. 2855), and December 10, 1996 (Accession No. 3126).

ORGANIZATIONAL SKETCH

The First Christian Church was founded in Columbia, Missouri in 1832. The congregation had its roots in the Bear Creek Church north of Columbia and was composed of some of the city's most prominent citizens including Stephen and Elizabeth Bedford, Asa Stone, and Elizabeth Ramsey. Meetings were held at the Boone County Courthouse until 1838, when a brick church was built on North Seventh Street. The church moved to the corner of 10th and Walnut Streets in 1868. In 1892, the building was replaced with the present sanctuary. In 1929, the facilities were expanded to include the education building.

The church played a major role in the growing town of Columbia, helping to establish Christian College in 1851, the Bible College of Missouri in 1893, and the Lenoir Memorial Home in 1950. With an active youth group program, ministers were an important part of Christian student activities in Columbia throughout the twentieth century. In addition to local services, the church sponsored missionaries in India and Japan. The First Christian Church is affiliated with the Disciples of Christ International and the Missouri Association of Christian Churches, as well as numerous local organizations of churches and ministers.

In 1956, the church purchased land on West Broadway for the formation of Broadway Christian Church, which opened in 1957. It was incorporated in 1958, and the property was deeded to Broadway Christian Church from First Christian Church in 1959.

Several administrative bodies cooperate to manage the church: the Board of Elders, the Board of Deacons and Deaconesses, the Church Cabinet, the congregation as a whole, and several committees.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The records document church activities since the establishment of the Bear Creek Church in 1824. Documentation of administrative boards and finances is fairly complete throughout the entire period until 1997. Documentation of youth group activities is most extensive from 1941 through 1964. In addition to office records, the collection includes yearbooks, congregational directories, publications, and booklets from the Disciples of Christ International Convention and annual meetings of the Missouri Association of Christian Churches. The records are divided into the following series:

Histories
Administrative
Ministers and Administrators
Publications
Financial
Clubs and Associations
Photographs
Affiliates

The **Histories** series contains historical research notes, interview records, and written histories about the First Christian Church. These records include manuscripts and notes written by Mary K. Dains, interview records collected as research and as part of an oral history project, manuscript histories of the First Christian Church, and various notes. These files are arranged by Dains' original folder headings. Histories by the church's financial officer, A.C. Ragsdale, concern the history of the Laymen's League and Men's Work in Missouri. A list of audio cassettes from this series appears at the end of the inventory.

The **Administrative** series contains operating records, subdivided by format and subject. Documents come mainly from the files of Ragsdale and ministers Edward Coffman and Eldon Drennan. Papers of Reverend Clarence E. Lemmon (1888-1963) are also included, as well as miscellaneous materials with an unclear office of origin. The series is arranged alphabetically by format or subject. Minutes frequently include attachments such as financial statements and reports on club activities. The minute book of the Bear Creek Church and the record book of the Construction Committee are located in this series.

The **Ministers and Administrators** series contains subject files of church administrators and ministers, arranged alphabetically by last name, then alphabetically by subject. Ed Coffman and Eldon Drennan were both primarily involved with youth activities such as the Christian Student Congregation, so most of their papers deal with this subject. Drennan's papers also include personal papers and records of his work in Marshalltown, Iowa and Hannibal, Missouri. Papers of Reverend Sam Langley include correspondence and an Easter Day sermon. The papers of C.E. Lemmon, perhaps the most notable minister in the church's recent history, contain essays, sermons, and subject files on various special issues and short term projects. For more

information, consult the C.E. Lemmon Papers (C3472). A.C. Ragsdale's papers concern his work on various matters unrelated to his management of the church's finances.

The **Publications** series contains yearbooks, directories, programs, and periodicals which were mostly prepared by the First Christian Church. Newspaper clippings and literature from other affiliated organizations are also included in this series. This series is arranged alphabetically by title and format, then chronologically.

The **Financial** series contains financial reports, budgets, account books, and other materials related to the finances of the church. These records include records of estates donated to the church. Arrangement is alphabetical by format.

The **Clubs and Associations** series is arranged alphabetically by the name of the club or organization. Records dealing with student activities, women's activities, and men's activities are the most voluminous, but the records of other clubs and organizations are also included. Records of the Christian Student Congregation document social events, camping trips, and other activities of this vibrant student organization. Records of the Christian Women's Fellowship and Women's Council document the sponsorship of missionaries and other activities of church women. Records of Men's Work document the formation of the Laymen's League and other activities of men in the church.

The **Photographs** series includes all photographs, lantern slides, and negatives not tied to a specific records series elsewhere in this collection. These photographs include images of the church, congregation, and ministers. Lantern slides contain images of Christian College, the University of Missouri, Culver-Stockton College in Canton, Missouri, and William Woods College in Fulton, Missouri during the 1920s.

The **Affiliates** series contains records of organizations affiliated with the First Christian Church and are arranged alphabetically. These include programs from the Disciples of Christ International Conference and various records of the Missouri Association of Christian Churches. Records of Student Religious Council and University Religious Council document Christian youth activities held in Columbia. Records of the United Campus Christian Fellowship contain information on this organization's activities for Christian youth in Missouri and nationwide.

FOLDER LIST

Histories Series

- f. 1-43 Dains, Mary K., 1972-1996, n.d.
 - f. 1-4 Correspondence, 1972-1994
 - f. 5 Interviews, 1980
 - f. 6-13 Manuscripts, 1996
 - f. 14-40 Notes, n.d.
 - f. 14 Already Written Up
 - f. 15 Biographical Sketches
 - f. 16 Early Ministers Already Written Up
 - f. 17 To Be Added
 - f. 18 1820s
 - f. 19 1830s
 - f. 20 1840s
 - f. 21 1850s
 - f. 22 1860s
 - f. 23 1870s
 - f. 24-25 1880s
 - f. 26-27 1890s
 - f. 28-29 1900s
 - f. 30 1910s
 - f. 31-32 1920s
 - f. 33-34 1930s
 - f. 35 1940s
 - f. 36 1950s-1960s
 - f. 37 1970s
 - f. 38 1980s-1990s
 - f. 39-40 Other
 - f. 41 Oral History, 1994-1997
 - f. 42 Questionnaires, 1994-1997
 - f. 43 Miscellaneous, c. 1995
- f. 44 Langley Cassette, 1991
- f. 45 Published Histories, 1882-1945
- f. 46 Ragsdale, A.C., 1958-1964, n.d.
- f. 47 Women's Christian Missionary Council, 1928-1934
- f. 48 Miscellaneous Histories, 1949-1964

Administrative Series

- f. 49-66 Administrative Assignments, 1923-1995
 - f. 49 1923-1927
 - f. 50 1928-1936
 - f. 51 1938-1945
 - f. 52 1946-1951

Administrative Series (con'd)

- f. 53 1952-1953
- f. 54 1955-1957
- f. 55 1958-1960
- f. 56 1961-1963
- f. 57 1965-1969
- f. 58 1970-1971
- f. 59 1976-1977
- f. 60 1977-1978
- f. 61 1980-1982
- f. 62 1985-1986
- f. 63 1986-1987
- f. 64 1987-1988
- f. 65 1989-1991
- f. 66 1994-1995
- f. 67-68 Articles of Incorporation, 1891-1942
- f. 69-77 Broadway Christian Church, 1951-1978, n.d.
 - f. 69 1951-1956
 - f. 70 1957
 - f. 71-75 1958
 - f. 76 1959
 - f. 77 1978, n.d.
- f. 78-82 Building and Grounds, 1891-1980, n.d.
 - f. 78 Record Book of the Building Committee, 1891-1937
 - f. 79-82 Records, 1944-1980, n.d.
- f. 83-86 Bylaws and Constitutions, 1923-1982, n.d.
- f. 87-99 Christian Education Department, 1943-1991
 - f. 87 1943
 - f. 88 1944
 - f. 89 1945
 - f. 90 1946
 - f. 91 1947
 - f. 92 1948
 - f. 93 1949-1950
 - f. 94 1957-1960
 - f. 95 1962-1963
 - f. 96 1970-1988
 - f. 97 1989
 - f. 98 1989-1990
 - f. 99 1990-1991
- f. 100-105 Committee for Honoring Dr. and Mrs. Lemmon, 1940-1963, n.d.
- f. 106-175 Correspondence, 1922-1991
 - f. 106-107 Coffman, Edward, 1947-1958
 - f. 108-157 Drennan, Eldon, 1952-1965
 - f. 108 1952-1953

Administrative Series (con'd)

- f. 109-110 1954
- f. 111-113 1955
- f. 114-115 1956
- f. 116-118 1957
- f. 119-124 1958
- f. 125-134 1959
- f. 135-139 1960
- f. 140-144 1961
- f. 145-148 1962
- f. 149-154 1963
- f. 155-156 1964
- f. 157 1965
- f. 158-164 General, 1922-1991
 - f. 158 1922-1928
 - f. 159 1936-1955
 - f. 160 1957-1958
 - f. 161 1961-1963
 - f. 162 1972-1979
 - f. 163 1981-1988
 - f. 164 1989-1991
- f. 165-168 Lemmon, Clarence E., 1937-1963
 - f. 165 1937-1950
 - f. 166 1954-1958
 - f. 167 1959-1961
 - f. 168 1962-1963
- f. 169-175 Ragsdale, A.C., 1930-1969
 - f. 169 1930-1938
 - f. 170 1943
 - f. 171 1952-1957
 - f. 172 1958-1959
 - f. 173 1961-1964
 - f. 174 1966-1967
 - f. 175 1968-1969
- f. 176-177 Job Descriptions, 1953-1982
- f. 178-184 Membership, 1933-1990, n.d.
 - f. 178-181 Baptism Records, 1933-1962
 - f. 182 Honor Roll, 1943
 - f. 183 Shepherding Plan, 1966-1968
 - f. 184 Miscellaneous, 1945-1990, n.d.
- f. 185-334 Minutes, 1824-1991
 - f. 185 Bear Creek Church Minute Book, 1824-1877
 - f. 186 Board of Elders Minute Book, 1905-1922
 - f. 187 Deacons and Joint Board Minute Book, 1912-1918
 - f. 188-334 Minutes, 1919-1991

Administrative Series (con'd)

f. 188	1919
f. 189	1920
f. 190	1921
f. 191	1922
f. 192	1923
f. 193	1924
f. 194	1925
f. 195	1926
f. 196-197	1927
f. 198-199	1928
f. 200-203	1929
f. 204-206	1930
f. 207-209	1931
f. 210-212	1932
f. 213-215	1933
f. 216-217	1934
f. 218-220	1935
f. 221-223	1936
f. 224-225	1937
f. 226-227	1938
f. 228-229	1939
f. 230-231	1940
f. 232-234	1941
f. 235-237	1942
f. 238-239	1943
f. 240-241	1944
f. 242-244	1945
f. 245-247	1946
f. 248-251	1947
f. 252-254	1948
f. 255-257	1949
f. 258-260	1950
f. 261-264	1951
f. 265-268	1952
f. 269-272	1953
f. 273-276	1954
f. 277-280	1955
f. 281-284	1956
f. 285-288	1957
f. 289-292	1958
f. 293-295	1959
f. 296-298	1960
f. 299-301	1961
f. 302	1962

Administrative Series (con'd)

- f. 303-307 1963
- f. 308 1964
- f. 309 1965
- f. 310-311 1966
- f. 312-316 1967
- f. 317-319 1968
- f. 320-321 1969
- f. 322 1974
- f. 323 1978
- f. 324 1979
- f. 325 1980
- f. 326 1981
- f. 327 1982
- f. 328 1983
- f. 329 1984-1985
- f. 330 1986
- f. 331 1987-1988
- f. 332 1989
- f. 333 1990
- f. 334 1991
- f. 335 Organizational Charts, 1942-1968
- f. 336 Pulpit Committee, F. Glynn Burke, 1963
- f. 337-350 Reports, 1910-1991, n.d.
 - f. 337 1910-1913
 - f. 338 1914-1915
 - f. 339 1916
 - f. 340 1917
 - f. 341 1918-1919
 - f. 342 1920-1921
 - f. 343 1922-1923
 - f. 344 1938
 - f. 345 1939
 - f. 346 1940
 - f. 347 1941
 - f. 348 1942
 - f. 349 1963-1991
 - f. 350 Undated
- f. 351 Student Work, 1953-1959
- f. 352 Miscellaneous, 1910-1981, n.d.

Ministers and Administrators Series

- f. 353-357 Coffman, Edward, 1939-1948
 - f. 353 Ministerial Association, 1947-1948

Ministers and Administrators Series (con'd)

- f. 354 Parent Plan, 1948-1951
- f. 355 Scouting, 1947
- f. 356 Services, 1939-1942
- f. 357 Social Action, 1947-1948
- f. 358-420 Drennan, Eldon, 1948-1964
 - f. 358-359 Central Christian Church, 1957-1958
 - f. 360-361 Christian Leaders Advancement School, 1963-1965
 - f. 362-372 Christian Youth Fellowship, 1951-1964
 - f. 362 Kirksville, Missouri, 1953-1954
 - f. 363-365 Photographs, 1951-1958
 - f. 366 Sixth District, 1962-1964
 - f. 367 State Meetings, 1962-1964
 - f. 368-371 Third District Conferences, 1953-1958
 - f. 372 Third District Publications, 1954-1957
 - f. 373-375 Columbia Ministerial Alliance, 1959-1963
 - f. 376 Conference Programs, 1951-1964
 - f. 377-378 Culver-Stockton Conference, 1951-1958
 - f. 379 Director's Training Institute, 1963-1966
 - f. 380-383 Discussion Topics, c. 1960
 - f. 384 Memo Book, 1957
 - f. 385 National Coaching Conference, 1956
 - f. 386 Personal, Education, 1948-1963
 - f. 387 Personal, Land Records, 1952-1958
 - f. 388-390 Scripts, 1952-1963
 - f. 388 *JB on Campus*, 1963
 - f. 389 *Feed My Lambs*, c. 1960
 - f. 390 Radio, 1952-1954
 - f. 391-393 Sermons and Services, 1955-1961
 - f. 394 Social Welfare, 1959-1960
 - f. 395-400 Sports, 1952-1964
 - f. 395-396 American Legion Baseball, 1961-1964
 - f. 397 Columbia Church League Baseball, 1958-1964
 - f. 398 Jaycees Softball, 1959-1963
 - f. 399 Kirksville, 1952-1956
 - f. 400 YMCA, 1961
 - f. 401-403 Staff Association of Religious Workers, 1959-1963
 - f. 404 State Laboratory Training School, 1962
 - f. 405 State Youth Commission Conference, 1964
 - f. 406-408 Student Work Committee, 1959-1961
 - f. 409 Twilight Optimist Club, Columbia, Missouri, 1963
 - f. 410-413 Young Men's Christian Association, 1959-1963
 - f. 414-419 Youth Committee, 1949-1958
 - f. 414-415 Central Christian Church, 1949-1958
 - f. 416 Kirksville, c. 1955

Ministers and Administrators Series (con'd)

- f. 417-419 Missouri Third District, 1950-1956
- f. 420 Miscellaneous, 1956-1957
- f. 421 Langley, Samuel C., 1973-1993
- f. 422-429 Lemmon, Clarence E., 1946-1960
 - f. 422 Crusade for a Christian World, 1947-1950
 - f. 423-424 DP Family, Ricardo, 1954-1959
 - f. 425 Driskill Campaign, 1956
 - f. 426 Essays and Sermons, 1951-1963
 - f. 427-428 Evangelism, 1958-1960
 - f. 429 Men's Work, 1946-1952
- f. 430-436 Ragsdale, A.C., 1942-1968
 - f. 430 Essays, 1943-1964
 - f. 431 History Committee, 1963-1964
 - f. 432 Missouri School of Religion, 1965-1968
 - f. 433 Rotary Club, 1967
 - f. 434-435 Vietnam, 1967
 - f. 436 Miscellaneous, 1942-1962

Publications Series

- f. 437-441 Calendars, 1940-1970
 - f. 437 1940-1949
 - f. 438 1950-1952
 - f. 439 1953-1955
 - f. 440 1956-1959
 - f. 441 1968-1970
- f. 442 Certificates, 1909-1933
- f. 443-449 *Christian Church Visitor*, 1943-1994
 - f. 443 1943-1946
 - f. 444 1947-1949
 - f. 445 1950-1954
 - f. 446 1955-1956
 - f. 447 1958-1959
 - f. 448 1960-1964
 - f. 449 1965-1994
- f. 450-471 Church Bulletins and Programs, 1907-1978
 - f. 450 1907-1909
 - f. 451 1920-1921 June
 - f. 452 1921 August-1922 May
 - f. 453 1922 September-1923 June
 - f. 454 1923 September-1924 June
 - f. 455 1924 September-December
 - f. 456 1925 January-May
 - f. 457 1925 September-December

Publications Series (con'd)

- f. 458 1926 January-May
- f. 459 1926 September-December
- f. 460 1927 January-May
- f. 461 1927 September-December
- f. 462 1928 January-May
- f. 463 1929
- f. 464 1935-1938
- f. 465 1940-1941
- f. 466 1946-1948
- f. 467 1949-1954
- f. 468 1955-1959
- f. 469 1960-1964
- f. 470 1967-1978
- f. 471 Maundy Thursday Communion, 1957-1963
- f. 472 *Church Education Memo*, 1989-1991
- f. 473-490 Directories and Yearbooks, 1896-1990
 - f. 473 1896
 - f. 474 1904-1905
 - f. 475 1907-1908
 - f. 476 1909-1910
 - f. 477 1913-1915
 - f. 478 1916-1928
 - f. 479 c. 1949
 - f. 480 c. 1960
 - f. 481 1965
 - f. 482 1966-1967
 - f. 483 1968-1970
 - f. 484 1976-1977
 - f. 485 1981
 - f. 486 1985
 - f. 487 1986
 - f. 488 1987
 - f. 489 1989
 - f. 490 1990
- f. 491-497 Newspaper Clippings, 1874-1991
 - f. 491 1874-1917
 - f. 492 1921-1929
 - f. 493 1930-1939
 - f. 494 1940-1949
 - f. 495 1950-1959
 - f. 496 1961-1969
 - f. 497 1974-1991
- f. 498-501 Miscellaneous, 1908-1992, n.d.
 - f. 498 1908-1962

Publications Series (con'd)

- f. 499 1966
- f. 500 1976-1978
- f. 501 1991-1992, n.d.

Financial Series

- f. 502-513 Accounts, 1917-1980
 - f. 502 Bonds, 1941
 - f. 503 Building Fund, 1925-1941
 - f. 504 Building Fund, 1967-1969
 - f. 505 Current Expenses and Receipts, 1980-1981
 - f. 506 Lemmon Fund, 1963-1969
 - f. 507 Mortgage, 1935-1941
 - f. 508-512 Permanent and Trust Funds, 1917-1982
 - f. 508-510 Reports, 1939-1969
 - f. 511-512 Ledgers, 1917-1982
 - f. 513 Pledge Book, 1925-1926
- f. 514-516 Audits, 1937-1976
 - f. 514 1937-1938
 - f. 515 1956-1964
 - f. 516 1975-1976
- f. 517-539 Estate Files, 1913-1967, n.d.
 - f. 517 Clinkscapes, 1959-1964
 - f. 518 Dulaney, 1948
 - f. 519 Evans, 1948-1950
 - f. 520 Heath, 1965-1967
 - f. 521-524 Higbee, 1916-1956, n.d.
 - f. 525 Hulen, 1942-1946
 - f. 526 Lhamon, 1941
 - f. 527 Lowery, 1913-1952
 - f. 528 Nance, 1964
 - f. 529-534 Phillips, 1887-1953, n.d.
 - f. 535 Scott, 1952-1953, n.d.
 - f. 536 Slaughter, 1947
 - f. 537 Turner, 1966
 - f. 538 Withers, 1950-1957
 - f. 539 Miscellaneous, 1940-1967
- f. 540-544 Fundraising, 1925-1968
 - f. 540 Christian Students, 1925
 - f. 541-542 Hageman, 1935-1936
 - f. 543-544 Renovation Fund, 1968
- f. 545-546 Parsonage, 1954-1969
- f. 547 Property, 1929-1966, n.d.
- f. 548-549 Miscellaneous, 1929-1986

Clubs and Associations Series

- f. 550-552 Chi Rho Fellowship, 1958-1963
- f. 553-556 Christian Leadership Council, 1940-1969
- f. 557-670 Christian Student Congregation, 1937-1963
 - f. 557-558 Activity Calendars, 1937-1961
 - f. 559-564 Alumni Reunion, 1951-1962
 - f. 565-570 Announcements, 1937-1960, n.d.
 - f. 571 Budgets, 1948-1961
 - f. 572-573 Corona Powers Memorial, 1956-1957
 - f. 574-575 Form Letters, 1938-1961
 - f. 576 Home Church Plan, 1955-1958
 - f. 577 Housing Annex, 1960-1964
 - f. 578 Library, 1962-1963
 - f. 579-580 Meetings, 1951-1962
 - f. 581-586 Membership, 1951-1963
 - f. 581-582 New Students, 1951-1963
 - f. 583 Officers, 1939-1963
 - f. 584-586 Rosters, 1948-1963
 - f. 587 Palm Sunday Vesper Service, 1942
 - f. 588-591 Photographs, 1947-1955, n.d.
 - f. 592-628 Publications, 1937-1963
 - f. 592-594 Alumni Newsletter, 1942-1957
 - f. 595 *Brickbats and Bouquets*, 1941-1942
 - f. 596-597 *CSC Tabloid*, 1937, 1938
 - f. 598-615 *CSC-er*, 1937-1963
 - f. 598 1937
 - f. 599 1938
 - f. 600 1940
 - f. 601 1941
 - f. 602 1942
 - f. 603 1946 February-March
 - f. 604 1946 August-1948 May
 - f. 605 1948 September-1950 May
 - f. 606 1950 September-1952 May
 - f. 607 1952 September-1954 May
 - f. 608 1954 September-December
 - f. 609 1955 January-May
 - f. 610 1955 September-December
 - f. 611 1956 January-May
 - f. 612 1957 November-1959 April
 - f. 613 1959 August-1960 May
 - f. 614 1961 August-1963 May
 - f. 615 1963 September-1964 May
 - f. 616 *The Goodies*, 1955, n.d.
 - f. 617-619 Handbook, 1951-1958

Clubs and Associations Series (con'd)

- f. 620-621 Programs, 1933-1959
- f. 622 *Summer CSC-er*, 1961-1963
- f. 623-626 Yearbooks, 1948-1958
- f. 627-628 Miscellaneous, 1940-1962, n.d.
- f. 629-637 Reports to the Board, 1946-1954
- f. 638-661 Retreats, 1942-1962
 - f. 638 1942
 - f. 639 1946
 - f. 640 1949
 - f. 641 1950-1951
 - f. 642 Spring 1952
 - f. 643 Fall 1952
 - f. 644 Spring 1953
 - f. 645 Spring 1954
 - f. 646 Fall 1954
 - f. 647 Spring 1955
 - f. 648 Fall 1955
 - f. 649 Spring 1956
 - f. 650 Spring 1957
 - f. 651 Fall 1957
 - f. 652 Spring 1958
 - f. 653 Fall 1958
 - f. 654 Spring 1959
 - f. 655 Fall 1959
 - f. 656 Spring 1960
 - f. 657 Fall 1960
 - f. 658 Spring 1961
 - f. 659 Fall 1961
 - f. 660 Spring 1962
 - f. 661 Fall 1962
- f. 662 Skits, 1940, n.d.
- f. 663 Song Sheets, 1937-1940
- f. 664-666 Student Center Reports, 1947-1959
- f. 667-668 Student Work Reports, 1952-1957
- f. 669 World War II Letters, 1940-1943
- f. 670 Miscellaneous, 1950-1962
- f. 671-753 Christian Women's Fellowship, 1950-1991
 - f. 671 Account Book, Harrah-Fleming Circle, 1976-1990
 - f. 672 Bazaar, 1965-1977
 - f. 673-675 Budgets, 1967-1988
 - f. 676 Calendars and Schedules, 1972-1977
 - f. 677 Christian Women United, c. 1977
 - f. 678-679 Conferences, 1973-1978
 - f. 680-687 Correspondence, 1950-1991, n.d.

Clubs and Associations Series (con'd)

- f. 680 1950
- f. 681 1966-1968
- f. 682 1969-1970
- f. 683 1971-1973
- f. 684 1974-1975
- f. 685 1976
- f. 686 1977-1978
- f. 687 1986-1991, n.d.
- f. 688 District Six, 1977-1978
- f. 689-693 Financial Reports, 1972-1987
 - f. 689 1972-1973
 - f. 690 1974
 - f. 691 1975
 - f. 692 1976-1978
 - f. 693 1985-1987
- f. 694 Fun City, 1973-1976
- f. 695 Literature, 1960-1970
- f. 696-721 Minutes, 1951-1987
 - f. 696-701 Brummett Group, 1966-1982
 - f. 696 1966-1968
 - f. 697 1969-1971
 - f. 698 1972-1974
 - f. 699 1975-1977
 - f. 700 1978-1980
 - f. 701 1981-1982
 - f. 702-718 Executive Board, 1951-1987
 - f. 702-703 1951
 - f. 704-705 1952
 - f. 706 1953
 - f. 707 1954
 - f. 708 1955
 - f. 709 1956
 - f. 710 1957
 - f. 711 1958
 - f. 712 1968
 - f. 713-714 1969
 - f. 715 1970
 - f. 716 1973
 - f. 717 1976-1977
 - f. 718 1985-1987
- f. 719 General Meeting, 1985-1987
- f. 720-721 Vern Rossman Circle, 1954-1962
- f. 722 Newspaper Clippings, 1973-1975
- f. 723-724 Organization, 1961-1985

Clubs and Associations Series (con'd)

- f. 723 Constitution Bylaws and Rules, 1964-1985
- f. 724 Officers, 1961-1973, n.d.
- f. 725-729 Questionnaires, 1974
 - f. 725 A-E
 - f. 726 F-J
 - f. 727 K-M
 - f. 728 N-R
 - f. 729 S-W
- f. 730-739 Reports, 1956-1978
 - f. 730-736 Activities, 1969-1978
 - f. 737 Program Planning Council, c. 1956
 - f. 738 Semi-annual, 1966-1970
 - f. 739 Miscellaneous, 1972-1982
- f. 740 Rossman Circle, 1958-1961
- f. 741 Service, 1973-1976
- f. 742 Woman's Day, 1963-1968
- f. 743-752 Yearbooks, 1951-1991
 - f. 743 1951-1952
 - f. 744 1958-1960
 - f. 745 1974-1975
 - f. 746 1976-1977
 - f. 747 1979-1981
 - f. 748 1981-1983
 - f. 749 1983-1985
 - f. 750 1985-1987
 - f. 751 1987-1989
 - f. 752 1989-1991
- f. 753 Miscellaneous, 1967-1987, n.d.
- f. 754-755 Collegiate Interchurch League, 1949-1952
- f. 756-786 Disciples of Christ Student Fellowship, 1947-1961
 - f. 756-771 Conferences, 1947-1960
 - f. 756 1947-1948
 - f. 757 1951
 - f. 758 1952
 - f. 759-760 1953
 - f. 761 1953-1954
 - f. 762 1954
 - f. 763 1955
 - f. 764 1956
 - f. 765 1957
 - f. 766-767 1958
 - f. 768-769 1959
 - f. 770-771 1960
 - f. 772-775 Correspondence, 1952-1961

Clubs and Associations Series (con'd)

- f. 776-777 Meeting Records, 1951-1961
- f. 778-779 Photographs, 1948-1956, n.d.
- f. 780-782 Photographs, State District Convention, c. 1955
- f. 783-785 Publications, 1954-1960, n.d.
- f. 786 Miscellaneous, 1952-1960, n.d.
- f. 787-824 Men's Work, 1938-1969
 - f. 787-797 Advisory Commission, 1943-1968
 - f. 787 1943-1945
 - f. 788 1946
 - f. 789 1946-1947
 - f. 790 1948-1950
 - f. 791 1957-1959
 - f. 792 1961-1963
 - f. 793 1964
 - f. 794 1965
 - f. 795 1966-1967
 - f. 796 1967
 - f. 797 1968
 - f. 798 Horace N. Moore, 1950-1957
 - f. 799 Keystone Class, 1954-1965
 - f. 800-805 Laymen's League, 1938-1958
 - f. 800 1938-1939
 - f. 801 1940-1941
 - f. 802 1942-1943
 - f. 803 1944-1948
 - f. 804 1950-1956
 - f. 805 1957-1958
 - f. 806 Literature, 1944-1967, n.d.
 - f. 807-812 Men's Bible Class, 1933-1962
 - f. 807 1933-1935
 - f. 808 1936-1942
 - f. 809 1943-1947
 - f. 810 1948-1950
 - f. 811 1951-1953
 - f. 812 1954-1962
 - f. 813 Newspaper and Magazine Clippings, 1946-1968
 - f. 814 Photographs, 1951-1962, n.d.
 - f. 815-822 Visitation Schedules, 1950-1969
 - f. 815 1950-1951
 - f. 816 1952-1953
 - f. 817 1954-1955
 - f. 818 1956-1957
 - f. 819 1958-1959
 - f. 820 1960-1961

Clubs and Associations Series (con'd)

- f. 821 1962-1963
- f. 822 1968-1969
- f. 823 Windermere Conference, 1965-1967
- f. 824 Miscellaneous, 1957-1960, n.d.
- f. 825-848 Women's Council, 1921-1951
 - f. 825-829 Contribution Records, 1921-1925
 - f. 830 Kit, c. 1951
 - f. 831-845 Minutes, 1929-1950
 - f. 831 1929
 - f. 832 1930
 - f. 833 1931
 - f. 834 1932
 - f. 835 1933
 - f. 836 1934
 - f. 837 1935
 - f. 838 1936
 - f. 839 1937
 - f. 840 1938
 - f. 841 1939
 - f. 842 1947
 - f. 843 1948
 - f. 844 1949
 - f. 845 1950
 - f. 846-847 Reports, 1935-1950
- f. 848 Yearbooks and Booklets, 1914-1950, n.d.

Photographs Series

- f. 849-857 Photographs
 - f. 849 1920-1929
 - f. 850 1930-1947
 - f. 851 1953-1958
 - f. 852 1960-1969
 - f. 853 1960-1969
 - f. 854 1960-1969
 - f. 855 1963
 - f. 856 1970-1979
 - f. 857 Undated
- f. 858 Photographs, Nelle Kitchen, 1899-1976
- f. 859-861 Slides, 1920-1929
 - f. 859 Identified University Scenes and Portraits, 1920-1928
 - f. 860 Unidentified College and University Scenes, c. 1920-1929
 - f. 861 Unidentified Portraits and Miscellaneous, c. 1920-1929

Affiliates Series

- f. 862-863 Association of Religious Staff Workers, 1959-1965, n.d.
- f. 864-866 Boone County Convention of Christian Churches, 1937-1961
- f. 867-869 Christian College, 1951-1967
- f. 870-871 Christian Women's Board of Missions, 1918-1919
- f. 872 City of Columbia, 1947-1965
- f. 873-889 Disciples of Christ, 1917-1969, n.d.
 - f. 873-884 International Conference, 1917-1969
 - f. 873 1917-1928
 - f. 874 1929-1930
 - f. 875 1950-1952
 - f. 876 1953
 - f. 877 1954
 - f. 878 1956
 - f. 879 1958
 - f. 880 1961
 - f. 881 1963
 - f. 882 1967
 - f. 883 1968
 - f. 884 1969
 - f. 885-889 Miscellaneous, 1925-1969, n.d.
 - f. 885 1925-1943
 - f. 886 1953-1958
 - f. 887 1963-1965
 - f. 888 1966-1969
 - f. 889 Undated
- f. 890-948 Missouri Association of Christian Churches, 1900-1974
 - f. 890-892 Budget Committee, 1966-1968
 - f. 893-895 Calendars and Schedules, 1959-1965
 - f. 896-900 Correspondence, 1959-1969
 - f. 896 1959-1961
 - f. 897 1962
 - f. 898 1963
 - f. 899 1964
 - f. 900 1969
 - f. 901 District Six, 1957-1962
 - f. 902-903 Financial, 1962-1973
 - f. 904 Line of Credit Plan, 1964-1966
 - f. 905-907 Meetings, 1956-1964
 - f. 908 Membership, 1962-1969
 - f. 909-910 Program Planning Council, 1962-1966
 - f. 911-915 Publications, 1900-1974
 - f. 911 1900-1960
 - f. 912 1961-1962
 - f. 913 1963

Affiliates Series (con'd)

- f. 914 1964
- f. 915 1965-1974
- f. 916-936 State Convention, 1933-1979
 - f. 916 1933-1937
 - f. 917-921 1937
 - f. 922 1941-1947
 - f. 923 1948-1950
 - f. 924 1951-1952
 - f. 925 1953
 - f. 926 1954
 - f. 927 1955
 - f. 928 1956
 - f. 929 1957
 - f. 930 1959
 - f. 931 1960-1967
 - f. 932 1968
 - f. 933 1969
 - f. 934 1970-1971
 - f. 935 1974
 - f. 936 1978-1979
- f. 937-945 Yearbooks, 1964-1978
 - f. 937 1964
 - f. 938 1965
 - f. 939 1966
 - f. 940 1967
 - f. 941 1968
 - f. 942 1969
 - f. 943 1970
 - f. 944 1974
 - f. 945 1978
- f. 946-948 Miscellaneous, 1957-1964, n.d.
- f. 949-950 Missouri Council of Churches, 1957-1976
- f. 951-966 Missouri United Campus Christian Fellowship, 1960-1975, n.d.
 - f. 951 Conferences and Retreats, 1960-1963
 - f. 952-954 Correspondence, 1960-1964
 - f. 955-958 Meetings, 1960-1964
 - f. 959 Publications, Local, 1960-1963, n.d.
 - f. 960-962 Publications, National, 1949-1965, n.d.
 - f. 963-964 Reports, 1961-1964, n.d.
 - f. 965-966 Miscellaneous, 1960-1975, n.d.
- f. 967 Presbyterian Student Association, 1949-1962
- f. 968-993 Student Religious Council, 1948-1960
 - f. 968 Financial, 1948-1957
 - f. 969 Membership, 1952-1956

Affiliates Series (con'd)

- f. 970-975 Minutes, 1948-1960
 - f. 970 1948-1949
 - f. 971 1950
 - f. 972 1951
 - f. 973 1953-1954
 - f. 974 1955-1957
 - f. 975 1958-1960
- f. 976 Photographs, 1955, n.d.
- f. 977-980 Publications, 1949-1956, n.d.
 - f. 977 1949-1952
 - f. 978 1953-1954
 - f. 979 1955
 - f. 980 1956, n.d.
- f. 981-990 Religion in Life Week, 1936-1959
 - f. 981 1936-1948
 - f. 982 1951
 - f. 983 1952-1953
 - f. 984-987 1954
 - f. 988 1955
 - f. 989 1956
 - f. 990 1959
- f. 991-992 Miscellaneous, 1948-1956, n.d.
- f. 993-999 United Christian Missionary Society, 1921-1973, n.d.
 - f. 993 1921-1924
 - f. 994 1937-1960
 - f. 995 1961-1963
 - f. 996 1964-1965
 - f. 997 1966-1967
 - f. 998 1968-1973
 - f. 999 Undated
- f. 1000-1002 United Christian Youth Movement, 1947-1954, n.d.
- f. 1003-1004 University Religious Council, 1958-1962
- f. 1005 Young Men's Christian Association, 1948-1955
- f. 1006-1009 Miscellaneous Organizations, 1937-1964, n.d.

AUDIO CASSETTE LIST

- a.c. 1-3 Dains Interviews
- a.c. 1 Nelle Kitchen and Hannah Jones, 1980
 - a.c. 2 Roscoe A. Miller and Mr. and Mrs. Wallace Whitaker, 1980
 - a.c. 3 Mr. and Mrs. Wallace Whitaker, 1980
- a.c. 4-16 Dains Oral Histories
- a.c. 4 Nelson and Lorene Trickey, George Peak, Ken Watson, Marie White, and Moray Loring, 1997
 - a.c. 5 Norene Henderson, Lovina Scott Ebbe, Connie Guy, and Neil Lise, 1994
 - a.c. 6 Donald B. and Thelma Brooker and Norene Henderson, 1994
 - a.c. 7 Thomas R. and Mildred Shrout, John Faloon, Betty Mai, and Donald B. and Thelma Brooker, 1994
 - a.c. 8 Moray Loring, Paul Keithley, and James E. Smith, 1994
 - a.c. 9 Jean Rossman, Mary Omer, and Sue Shaw, 1994
 - a.c. 10 Robert and Muriel Leach and Jean Rossman, 1994
 - a.c. 11-12 Sam and Ima Lou Langley, 1994
 - a.c. 13 Neil Lise, 1994
 - a.c. 14 Jim Smith and Thomas R. and Mildred Shrout, 1994
 - a.c. 15 Sue Shaw, Hazel Moreau, Lillian Keene, and Mary McMinn, 1994
 - a.c. 16 John Yonker and Nelson and Lorene Trickey, 1994
- a.c. 17 Sam S. Langley Cassette, 1991
- a.c. 18 "Greetings to First Christian Church," Teegarden, n.d.

INDEX TERMS

Subject	Folders	Image
4-H clubs--Camping	363-365, 370	y
American Legion--Baseball	395, 396	
Balance Rock, Boone County, Missouri	861	y
Bear Creek Church, Boone County, Missouri	185, 917	
Bear Creek Church, Boone County, Missouri--Cemetery	917	
Bear Creek Church, Boone County, Missouri--Site	920	y
Bishop's Company, Los Angeles, California	976	y
Bishop's Company, Los Angeles, California	976	
Boone County Convention of Christian Churches, Rocheport, Missouri	864-866	
Boy Scouts--Missouri, Columbia	355, 1008	
Broadway Christian Church, Columbia, Missouri	70, 77	y
Broadway Christian Church, Columbia, Missouri	69-77	

Subject	Folders	Image
Burke, F. Glynn	336, 435, 496	
Burke, F. Glynn	855	y
Central Christian Church, Marshalltown, Iowa	122, 123, 358, 359, 414, 550-555	
Christian College, Columbia, Missouri	859, 860, 867-869	y
Christian College, Columbia, Missouri	426, 867-869	
Christian College, Columbia, Missouri-- Presidents	857, 859-861	y
Christian College, Columbia, Missouri-- Student life	867-869	
Christian College, Columbia, Missouri-- Student life	859, 860, 867-869	y
Christian drama	388, 389, 588, 920	
Christian drama	588, 626, 852, 859, 920, 955, 976	y
Christian education	87-99, 356-361, 442, 472, 867-869	
Christian ministry	106-177, 336, 353-429, 443-471, 862-866, 873-889, 911-936, 949, 950, 1006-1009	
Christian missionaries	870, 871, 994-1000, 1007, 1010	
Christian Student Congregation, Columbia, Missouri	562, 588-591, 595-616, 623-628, 853, 854, 857	y
Christian Student Congregation, Columbia, Missouri	107, 108, 118-155, 160, 199, 354, 356, 393, 397, 557-670	
Christian Woman's Missionary Society, Missouri	47, 846, 870, 871	
Christian Youth Fellowship, Marshalltown, Iowa	359, 363-365, 368-370, 414, 415	
Christian Youth Fellowship, Missouri	363, 366, 367, 416-419	
Church Women United in Missouri, Jefferson City, Missouri	677	
Coffman, Edward	588, 589, 754, 755, 976	y
Coffman, Edward	106, 107, 353-357, 559, 560, 572-575, 581, 582, 644-651, 667, 668, 754, 758-764, 970-974	
Collegiate Interchurch League, Columbia, Missouri	754, 755	
Columbia Ministerial Alliance, Columbia, Missouri	373-375	
Commission on Adolescent Behavior, Columbia, Missouri	161	
Commission on Friendly Relations Among Foreign Students, Jefferson City, Missouri	949	
Culver-Stockton College, Canton, Missouri	859	y

Subject	Folders	Image
Dains, Mary K.	1-43	
Disciples of Christ	43, 120, 494, 789, 790, 798, 873-889, 904	
Disciples of Christ--Christian Men's Fellowship Advisory Council	791-798	
Disciples of Christ--Missouri	366-372, 380, 890-948	
Disciples of Christ--Missouri--History	48	
Disciples of Christ--National Laymen's Advisory Commission	789, 790, 798	
Disciples Student Fellowship, Missouri	607, 613, 756-786	
Drennan, Eldon	363, 364, 415, 420, 575, 588, 589, 853, 855	y
Drennan, Eldon	108-157, 358-420, 550-552, 581, 582, 652-661, 766-773, 862, 863, 893-899	
Evangelistic work	183, 422, 425, 427, 428	
First Christian Church, Columbia, Missouri	1-107, 118-184, 186-352, 354-357, 360-362, 437-549	
First Christian Church, Columbia, Missouri	479, 849-857, 859	y
First Christian Church, Columbia, Missouri--Buildings and architecture	78-82, 507, 543-546, 577	
First Christian Church, Columbia, Missouri--Chi Rho	550-552	
First Christian Church, Columbia, Missouri--Christian Leaders Class	553-556	
First Christian Church, Columbia, Missouri--Christian Leadership Class	43	
First Christian Church, Columbia, Missouri--Christian Leadership Council	553-556	
First Christian Church, Columbia, Missouri--Christian Women's Federation	120	
First Christian Church, Columbia, Missouri--Congregation	5, 41, 42, 178-184, 473-490, 503, 517-539	
First Christian Church, Columbia, Missouri--Congregation	849, 850, 852-857	y
First Christian Church, Columbia, Missouri--History	1-48, 349, 350, 431, 479, 917-920	
First Christian Church, Columbia, Missouri--Men	46, 429, 430, 787-824	
First Christian Church, Columbia, Missouri--Ministers	44, 106-175, 336, 353-429, 859	y
First Christian Church, Columbia, Missouri--Missionaries	849, 850, 857	y
First Christian Church, Columbia, Missouri--	43, 47, 498, 846, 848, 849, 871	

Subject	Folders	Image
Missionary work		
First Christian Church, Columbia, Missouri--Women	858	y
First Christian Church, Columbia, Missouri--Women	47, 671-753, 825-848, 858	
First Christian Church, Hannibal, Missouri	110, 113-115, 415	
First Christian Church, Kirksville, Missouri	108, 110, 113	
Football--High school	390, 399	
Fun City, Columbia, Missouri	694	
German Americans--Missouri, 1950s	423, 424	
Halloween costumes	859, 860	y
Iowa High School Athletic Association	116	
Japanese Americans--Evacuation and relocation, 1942-1945	669	
Koinonia Farm, Americus, Georgia	118	
Langley, Sam Spence (1926-)	44, 421, 501	
Lemmon, C.E. (1888-1963)	77, 850, 851, 855	y
Lemmon, C.E. (1888-1963)	43, 100-105, 165-168, 422-429, 479, 496, 574, 575, 864, 865, 867	
Lhamon, J.D.	857	y
Ministerial Association, Columbia, Missouri	353	
Missouri Christian Missionary Society, Jefferson City, Missouri	113-116	
Missouri Council of Churches, Jefferson City, Missouri	357, 949, 950	
Missouri Farmers Association--Radio scripts	390	
Missouri School of Religion	432	
Missouri United Campus Christian Fellowship, Columbia, Missouri	863, 951-966	
Missouri, Canton	859	y
Missouri, Columbia	161, 859, 860, 872, 917-921	y
Missouri, Kirksville--High school--Football	399	
Missouri, Kirksville--High school--Football	399	y
Missouri, Teachers Colleges--Football	399	y
Missouri, Teachers Colleges--Football	399	
Palmer, Jewell	849, 858	y
Phillips, Richard (1825-)--Biography	529	
Presbyterian Student Association, Columbia, Missouri	967	

Subject	Folders	Image
Ragsdale, A.C. (1890-1969)	787, 790	y
Ragsdale, A.C. (1890-1969)	46, 69, 169-175, 336, 430-436, 502-539, 587, 787-824, 890-892, 900, 902, 903	
Religion-in-Life Week, Columbia, Missouri	981-990	
Rotary Club, Columbia, Missouri	433	
Steamboat--Capitol	861	y
Student Religious Council, Columbia, Missouri	106, 356, 968-992	
Twilight Optimist Club, Columbia, Missouri	409	
United Campus Christian Fellowship, Missouri	951-966	
United Campus Christian Fellowship, Missouri	951-966	
United Christian Missionary Society	435, 993-999	
United Christian Missionary Society	435, 993-999	
United Christian Youth Movement	1000-1002	
United Christian Youth Movement	1000-1002	
United States. Army, 2nd Armored Division--Newsletter	560	
University of Missouri	859, 860	y
University of Missouri, Campus Ecumenical Center	401	
University of Missouri, Elmer Ellis Library	383	
University of Missouri, Presbyterian Student Center	967	
University of Missouri, Presbyterian Student Center--Floorplans	967	y
University of Missouri, Religious Staff Workers Association	401-404, 862, 863	
University of Missouri--Football	861	y
University of Missouri--Football	861	y
University of Missouri--Student housing	577	
University Religious Council, Columbia, Missouri	1003, 1004	
Vietnam War, 1961-1975	434, 435	
William Woods College, Fulton, Missouri	859, 860	y
William Woods College, Fulton, Missouri	859, 860	y
World War, 1939-1945--Japanese Americans	669	
World War, 1939-1945--Missouri, Columbia	669	

Subject	Folders	Image
Young Men's Christian Association, Columbia, Missouri	410-413, 1005	
Young Men's Christian Association--Basketball	358, 400	
Young Men's Christian Association--Basketball	358, 400	
Youth--Religious life	106-157, 174, 354-357, 362-372, 376-384, 388, 389, 399, 400, 405-408, 410-419, 540, 550-670, 754-786, 951-1009	
Youth--Religious life	588-591, 595-616, 623-628, 778-782, 852-854	y
Youth--Religious Life	106-157, 174, 354-357, 362-372, 376-384, 388, 389, 399, 400, 405-408, 410-419, 540, 550-670, 754-786, 951-1009	