July 2012


Western Theological Seminary

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July 30, 2012.

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Abstract

The records of the German Reformed Church/Christ Community Church of Peoria, Illinois, include the original cornerstone box and its contents from 1904, records of the consistory, elders meetings, Ladies Aid, Sunday School, Euodia Club, Fidelis Club, Women's Guild, Mission Band, Young Peoples Club, among others. It covers the time period from 1871, at the start of the church, to 1994, which marks the end. Several documents from the earlier years are in German and/or Dutch. Pastors include Claus Wieland, John Muller, Helmer Smidt, G. Zindler, G. Schnucker, Reeverts, A. Wubben, G. Mennenga, I. Lubbers, Richard G. Elzinga, Arend TePaske, Warren Hietbrink, Murray Stienkamp, Percy Kinkema, Richard Huizinga, Stanley Hagemeyer, Craig Wagner, Gil Visser and Michael Wiersema.

Accession No: W94-1188
Provenance: German Reformed Church/Christ Community Church
Donor: Classis of Illinois, Rev. Ralph Cordes
Photographs: 13 images (Box 7)
Processed by: Elizabeth Seramur, November 1997

History

The congregation was formed in 1869, upon the immigration of many Europeans to Peoria, Illinois. It met informally, with much discouragement, as they had no regular pulpit supply or a house of worship. In 1871, they called Rev. Claus Wieland to the pastorate and a definite membership list was made up. In 1872, under John Muller, a Sunday School was set up, as well as a parochial school. In 1902, the old brick building in which they had been meeting was sold, in turn a new church was built. At this point, there were several clubs in existence, including the Dorcas Society, Ladies Aid, and the Men’s League. In 1942, a housing project was built for low income families in the neighborhood adjoining the church. Although this seemed to be an exciting prospect for the church in terms of ministry opportunities, the result was less promising than expected. The church building was purchased by an African-American congregation in 1945, but due to the increase in building costs following WW II, First Reformed met in the local G.A.R. hall. In 1950, under Rev. Warren Hietbrink, a new church building was erected. In 1977, with Rev. Stanley Hagemeyer as the pastor, the church was renamed Christ Community Church. A noticeable decline in membership occurred, partially caused by the downsizing of Caterpillar Corporation, a local employer. In 1993, several families that provided leadership relocated to other cities due to job transfers. The culmination of this, along with the diminished congregation, led to the unanimous decision in 1994 to disband the church. The first church in the town of the Reformed faith, this church had its origins in several European backgrounds, predominately German and Dutch. It did, despite its end, remain faithful to the proclamation of the Good News for Jesus Christ for 125 years. (From “First Reformed Church” by Richard G. Elzinga and John Haverhals).

Scope and Content
This collection ranges in date from 1871 through 1994. There are several different components, including the original cornerstone box and its contents from 1904, brochures of different churches and organizations and correspondences both personal and professional, concerning the building of the church in 1950, baptisms, transfers, dismissals, the hiring of new pastors, as well as other topics. There are documents including bills, receipts, and real estate maps. Also, there are records of attendance and disbursement for church, Sunday School, and various clubs. Financial records in monthly and yearly form are also in the collection. The photographs in the collection are mostly undated from the late 19th and early 20th century, and are of youth groups and other clubs. The more modern images are of the dedication of the church building in 1950.

The collection is organized alphabetically, with chronological order within the boxes. The photographs, as well as books and documents that are too large, are in separate boxes. Additionally, there are two large baptismal certificates and the contents of the 1904 cornerstone box in the Box 7.

**Container List**

**Box 1**

- Attendance Records (blank)
- Baptism Records: Minnie Kook, Nellie Gallagher, Michelle Smith
- Book, *First Reformed Church, Orange City, Iowa*
- Building Committee Minutes, 1947
- Building Records, 1950-1951
- Bulletins/Pamphlets, 1909-1978
- Choral Buch No.2, n.d.
- Choral Psalm Book, 1913
- Church Directories, 1986, 1990, 1992
- Church Furniture, Windows, etc., 1950-1951
- Church Growth, 1976-1979
- Church Membership Record Cards, 1939
- Church Profile, 1977
- Church Records, 1983-1986
- Classis of Illinois, 1948-1968
- Composition Book, Mrs. H. B. Johnson, Mrs. John Bloom, n.d.
- Congregational Meetings, 1964-1994 (3 folders)
- Consistory Meetings, 1963-1994 (11 folders)

**Box 2**

- Consistory Meetings, 1963-1994 (cont.)
- Correspondences, 1956-1958
- Correspondences regarding Transfers, Dismissals and Baptisms, 1950-1974
- Couples Club Minutes, 1957-1960
- Dedication, October 14-15, 1951
Denominational and Synod Info (Reformed Church in America), 1909-1981
Dorcas Society
    Minutes, 1902-1968 (6 folders)
    Misc., n.d.

Box 3

Elders Minutes, 1967-1994 (3 folders)
Euodia Club
    Minutes, 1926-1949 (3 folders)
    Treasurers Book, 1961-1969
Fidelis Class Minutes, 1953-1961
Financial Controls, 1989
    Information, 1949-19??
    Records, 1990-1992
    Reports, 1938-1992 (14 folders)
Guest Book, 1958-1994 (4 folders)
History, 1942, 1978-1979

Box 4

Kitchen Fund Savings/Receipts, 1953-1979
Ladies Aid Society, 1927-1947
Membership Record
    1937-1976
    1908-1919, 1938-1973
Mission Band
    Minutes, 1921-1925
    Report, 1912-1921
    Secretary’s Book, 1903-1912 (2 folders)
    Treasurers Book, 1904-1915
Newspaper Clippings, n.d., 1927, 1947
Old Testament Bible Stories For Juniors, 1920
Neue Chor-Liedler, 1905
Paid Bills, 1949-1960
Pastors’ Salary, 1965, 1969 (RESTRICTED)
Pastoral Reports, 1979
Programs and Bulletins, 1921-1994
Property Transfer, 1946-1955
Record Book: Baptisms, Confessions, Marriages and Funerals, 1934-1963
Register of Deaths, Marriages, Membership, Baptisms, etc., 1934-1976
Selling of Parsonage, 1960
Spiritual Gifts, 1979
Subdivision Contracts, 1955, 1960
Sub-Committees
  Administration and Financial, 1968-1979
  Education, 1965-1980
  Missions, 1966-1979
  Property and Grounds, 1966-1977
  Worship, 1968-1979
Sunday School
  Attendance, 1957
  Collection and Attendance, 1950-1953
  Treasurers Book, 1952-1969
Sunshine Club, Attendance, 1916-1918
Survey, 1968
Synod of Chicago 125 Year Book, 1981

Box 5

Transfer/Dismission Records, 1952-1976
Treasurers Book, 1952-1961 (2 folders)
Treasurers Book, (unidentified Club), 1928-1960
Women’s Guild, 1957-1971
Yearbook, 1922
Young Peoples Club
  Attendance, 1905-1923
  History, n.d.
  Minutes, 1915-1922

Box 6

Church Book, 1912, 1940 (German or Dutch)
Consistory Minutes, 1950-1963
Record Book, 1936-1950
Sunday School Records, 1903-1913(14?)
Sunday School Records, 1908-1922
Young People’s Society, ?-1909 (German or Dutch)
Your Message, 1974-1982 (2 folders)
Books in German or Dutch (unidentified, financial records?), 1874, 1904-1945
Newsletter (Dutch or German), 1935

Box 7

Cornerstone Box Contents for the German Reformed Church which include: Peroria, Illinois area German language publications De Mitarbeiter (1904), Peoria Sonntags-Post (1904), Peoria Sonntags-Glocke (1904); English language
publications *The Sunday Herald-Transport* (1904) and *The Peoria Journal* (1904); church membership list (1904) and other German language documents; business envelope of John Voss, contractor, builder from Peoria, Illinois; and two photographs of cornerstone laying and completed church.

Photographs, 1902-1951, n.d. (13 images)

Box 8

Cornerstone Box