

FINDING AID

Administrative Records of the Conference of Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario Fonds

Series 512/1 Church in Society Committee

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United Church of Canada Archives

Winnipeg

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500 Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario Conference fonds. -- 1917 - 2004; predominant 1954-1993. -- 43m of textual records and other material.

The Conference of Manitoba came into existence in June of 1925 with the creation of The United Church of Canada through the union of the Methodist, Presbyterian, Congregational and Local Union Churches of Canada. The name was changed in 1980 to the Conference of Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario as a result of a successful petition to the General Council of the United Church by Cambrian Presbytery. The Conference encompasses the entire province of Manitoba and the area of Northwestern Ontario drained by the Rainy River and Winnipeg River systems as far east as Marathon, Ontario and south to the United States border.

The Conference has an administrative as well as a geographic meaning. The thirteen conferences within The United Church of Canada function as a governing body or court of the church. Very simply, they are composed of members of the Order of Ministry on the roll of Presbyteries within the geographical bounds of the Conference and lay persons under appointment to administrative or staff positions within the Conference by a court of the church or the United Church General Council. These are matched by an equal number of lay representatives elected from the Pastoral Charges within the Conference. Chairpersons of Conference Committees and the President of the Conference United Church Women are also members of Conference. In addition to the obligation to meet annually and to appoint a Conference Executive, the Conference was charged with appointing Standing and Special Committees to carry out the day to day work of the Conference. In 1925 these were Education and Students, Evangelism and Social Service, Foreign Missions, Home Missions, Pensions, Publications, Religious Education, Missionary and Maintenance Fund, Church Property, Settlement, Statistics, Historical and Obituaries.

With a few exceptions, the structure of Conference remained essentially the same until 1972 when a major realignment of the administrative structure of the United Church at the General Council (National) and Conference levels took place. In 1972, the Boards of Home Missions, Evangelism and Social Service and Christian Education had ceased to exist along with the staff positions associated with that work. New paid staff positions which made their first appearance around this time were Regional Director of Broadcasting in 1971 (lasting only until 1972), the positions of Conference Personnel and Conference Administrative Support in 1972 and the positions of Leadership Development and Program Resource in 1973. In 1975 and 1976, and again from 1989 to 1993, a staff position for Communications was added. In 1983, the Conference staff position of Christian Development and Outreach was created and, in 1986, an Evangelism and Social Action staff person as well as a full time Conference Archivist was hired.

The changes in National and Conference administrative structure, which resulted from a move towards more regional and local control of church programs, were reflected in the evolution of Conference Committees. The powerful Conference Home Missions Committee and its sub-committees, responsible for overseeing the mission initiatives of Conference and the administration of mission grants according to Board of Home Missions directives, had been replaced by the Administrative Support Committee (briefly called the Congregational Support Committee) by 1973. Another major reorganisation of the Conference committee structure took place in 1983 when a system for the division of the work of Conference committees among four Councils (Stewardship, Worship and Education, Ministry and Personnel, Evangelism and Social Action) was devised. Committee chairs reported to their respective Councils that in turn were represented on the Conference Executive.

Another major reorganisation of Conference Structure took place in 1993. At that time, the pressure of meeting current demands with dwindling resources resulted in a move to reduce the number of Presbyteries from eight to six. The work previously allocated among four Conference Councils was then divided between three Program Units (Education and Justice, Ministry and Personnel, and Stewardship and Mission). The number of Committees reporting to the Program Units, and through them to the Conference Executive was reduced. Salaried staff were also decreased and reorganised to include the positions of Executive Secretary, Education and Justice staff person, Stewardship and Mission staff

person, Personnel staff person and Conference Archivist. Further changes to the Conference Structure were made in 2005.

Many of the materials which make up this Conference fonds had been stored in the basement of the Conference administrative offices at 120 Maryland Street in Winnipeg in an ad hoc manner for varying lengths of time over a period of approximately forty years before coming into the Archives. Generally, the records of Conference executive, staff and committee chairs were transferred to the basement at the end of their term of office. Renovations to and rearrangement of the basement area resulted in the movement of the materials around the storage area on more than one occasion. It is probable that space constraints resulted in the unrecorded disposal of an undetermined number of documents and other materials throughout the storage period. Administrative records in storage at 120 Maryland were formally transferred to the Archives in 1989. The movement of the Conference administrative offices to a new address in the fall of 1996 precipitated an inventory and the relocation of those records in 1995 prior to the move. The balance of the fonds consists of record series that had been accessioned by the Archives at various periods prior to 1995. The provenance of records accessioned prior to 1976 is often obscure.

The fonds consists of textual and other materials generated by the Conference, the Conference Executive, Conference Staff Associates and Conference Committee members in the fulfilment of their mandate as outlined in *The Manual of The United Church of Canada* from 1925 to 1994. Throughout the life of the fonds, several Conference staff members have served in more than one church or community administration simultaneously while keeping unified files. This has resulted in materials from other administrative jurisdictions being interspersed among the fonds.

Fonds are composed of the following series: Conference Annual Meetings, 1925-1993; Conference Executive, 1925-2002; Conference Offices, 1958-1989; Committees, Task Forces and Working Groups Answering to the Executive and Sub-Executive, 1968-1993; Manitoba Conference Branch of The United Church Woman's Missionary Society, 1918-1962; Manitoba Conference Branch Woman's Missionary Society Archives Collection, [ca.1885-ca.1960]; Manitoba Conference Lay Association, [ca.1910]-1962; District Council AOTS, 1964-1977; Conference Committee on Christian Education, 1927-1992; Conference Home Missions Committee, 1926-1973; Superintendents of Home Missions, 1926-1973; records of the Administration of Norway House Residential School, 1954-1967; Conference Hospitals, 1923-1982; Home Missions Inter-Conference and Ecumenical Groups, 1956-1969; Conference Evangelism and Social Service Committee, 1933-1976; Conference Congregational Life and Work, 1952-1979; Church in Society Committee, 1976-1983; Evangelsim and Social Action Council, 1983-1993; Inter-Conference and Ecumenical Groups reporting to the Evangelsim and Social Action Council, 1972-1999; Conference Communications, 1964-1992; Worship and Education Council, 1981-1994; Worship and Education Council Women's Groups, 1982-1992; Education and Justice Unit, 1987 - 2004 (predominately 1993 - 1998); Committee on Education, Students and Church Vocations, 1975-1978; Conference Education Committee, 1972-1983; [Interim] Placement Committee, 1970-1972; Conference Settlement Committee, 1971-1980; Conference Staff Committee, 1966-1992; Ministry and Personnel Council, 1982-1993; Conference Personnel Officer, 1972-1993; Conference Personnel Records, 1957-1993; records of the Conference Finance Committee, 1964-1974; records of Conference Administrative Support, 1973-1983; records of Administrative Support Staff, 1972-1993; Conference Stewardship, 1967-1993; Church Camps, 1918-1975; Church Home for Girls, 1945-1976; Women's Union, 1926-1958; Manitoba Conference Woman's Association, 1946-1962; Conference United Church Women, 1963-2002; Fellowship of Professional Women, 1949-1980; Manitoba Canadian Girls in Training, 1918-1990; and the Manitoba Student Christian Movement, 1923-1981.

Title based on contents of fonds.

The fonds also includes ephemera, photographs, slides, audio tape recordings, video tape recordings and 50 sets of blueprints, plans and architects' drawings.

Original order of many of the series of the fonds was substantially obscured during the storage period and many materials were in an extremely disorganised state with no original order or access points apparent; where necessary, order based on administrative function has been reconstructed by the arranging archivist.

Some restrictions on access; see series descriptions.

Finding Aids consist of series descriptions and box lists; some sub-series and file level description available.

Further accruals are expected.

512/1 Church in Society Committee. – 1976-1983. – 10cm textual records.

On the creation of the national Division of Mission in 1972, it was decided that one of the administrative departments of the Division would be Church in Society. The role and activities of the Department of Church in Society related to such areas of concern as proclamation and evangelism; social, political and moral issues; family life and relationships; lay involvement; human rights; institutions and projects ministries (to be known as Outreach Ministries); ministry to people with special needs; and youth and resources. The Manitoba Conference, however, did not strike a Church in Society Committee to co-ordinate education and training for social action within the Conference structure until 1977. Prior to this, responsibility over programming for outreach initiatives had been devolved to the presbyteries and congregations following the dissolution of the Congregational Life and Work Committee in 1973. John Nesbitt and Barry Morris initially convened Church in Society as an ad hoc committee in 1977 after a request to the Conference Executive for a Conference wide mechanism for training and education on social issues. This request grew out of sessions held in 1976 for the purpose of exploring how a Conference Church in Society Committee might be constructed. After one year, the recommendation to establish Church in Society as a Standing Committee of Manitoba Conference was approved (Record of Proceedings, 1978, p.104).

Initially, the mandate of this committee was to raise awareness and concern around three major groups of issues and to speak for the Conference to government and other institutions on these topics. Initially these included native concerns (especially the effects of resource development on the social fabric of native communities and on traditional life styles); rural life (including land use, food production and foreign ownership); and poverty (such as housing, redistribution of income, unemployment and government policies directed at low-income people). Specific issues addressed in the first year included northern flooding, the proposed Polar Gas pipeline, the housing crisis in Winnipeg, the Reed Paper cutting issue and Mennonite Central Committee grains banking (Annual Report of the Church in Society Committee, 1978). One major activity of the Church in Society Committee involved researching and preparing annual briefs to the provincial government outlining the church's position on social justice issues. The responsibilities of the Church in Society Committee were absorbed by the Conference Evangelism and Social Action Council following Conference reorganisation in 1983. Committee Convenors were John Nesbitt, 1977-1981; and Ron Fletcher, 1982-1983.

Records described as part of this series consist of the records of the Church in Society Committee including minutes and reports, and correspondence dating from 1976 to 1983 as well as items pertaining to briefs researched and presented by the committee to provincial and municipal governments between 1978 and 1983.

Title based on contents.

Draft copies of correspondence, minutes and reports were retained when no other copy appeared to be present; some minutes appear to exist only in hand-written form. Duplicates, media contact lists, agendas, material originating with other Conferences, expense sheets, bank statements, Division of Mission newsletters, mailings and minutes of the Division's working unit on Social Issues and copies of briefs from other organisations were culled when this material was arranged and described.

File level description; box list available.

Some restrictions on access; see file descriptions.

Accession: 96-21.

Location: Box 512/1-1.

File Description

1. Records of the Church in Society Committee. – 1976-1983. – 1 folder.

Items found here include documents pertaining to the proposal for the creation of the Conference Church in Society Committee. Also found here are minutes of meetings of the Ad Hoc and Standing Church in Society Committees, reports received by and produced for the Committee, and proposals for committee projects. Agendas have been included here as, in some cases, they are the only remaining record. Items also include copies of notes of meetings between Church in Society representatives and provincial government and opposition representatives. A copy of the All Candidates Questionnaire produced by the Church in Society Committee for distribution during the 1981 provincial election is also included here.

Reverse chronological order.

Title based on contents.

2. Committee Budget. – 1977-1980. – 1 folder.

Items include correspondence pertaining to the process of budgeting for the work of the Conference Church in Society Committee.

Title based on contents.

Reverse chronological order.

3. Committee Correspondence. – 1976-1983. – 2 folders.

Items found here include correspondence generated and received by the officers of the Church in Society Committee and pertaining to the work of the committee. This includes correspondence dating from 1976 pertaining to the proposal to form the committee. Items also include correspondence dating from 1980 and 1981 pertaining to Robert Urban, his efforts to have his German citizenship reinstated and his request for the support of the United Church community in this regard.

Title based on contents.

Several documents are written in German.

Access to items containing identifying information about individuals is restricted.

Reverse chronological order.

4. Conference Briefs. – 1978-1983. – 5 folders.

Items found here include copies of briefs presented to the Government of Manitoba and Caucuses of the Manitoba Legislature in 1978, 1980, 1981 and 1983. Drafts, meeting notes and evaluations and included for 1978, 1980 and 1981.

Title based on contents.

5. Committee Brief to Winnipeg City Council. -- 1979. -- 1 folder.

This folder contains a copy of Dr. Carl Ridd's brief "The Fivesquare City: Winnipeg as a Human Place" (including appendices) presented to Winnipeg City Council on 29 October 1979.

Title based on contents.

Box Lists

Box 512/1-1 (former Box S-7-0/CA0081)

Records of Church in Society Committee

- Records of the Church and Society Committee. -- 1976-1983. -- 1 folder.
- Committee Budget. -- 1977-1980. -- 1 folder.
- Committee Correspondence. -- 1976-1983. -- 2 folders.
- Conference Briefs. -- 1978-1983. -- 4 folders.
- Committee Brief to Winnipeg City Council. -- 1979. -- 1 folder.