

Yale University Library
Yale Divinity Library

Guide to the Wider City Parish Records

RG 87



Compiled by Martha Lund Smalley and Carl L. Beckwith

1998

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New Haven, CT 06511
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<http://web.library.yale.edu/divinity/special-collections>

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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Yale Divinity Library
409 Prospect Street
New Haven, CT 06511
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divinity.library@yale.edu
<http://web.library.yale.edu/divinity/special-collections>

CALL NUMBER: RG 87

CREATOR: Wider City Parish

TITLE: Wider City Parish Records

DATES: 1950-1987

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 5 linear feet (11 boxes)

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: These archives document the work of a nondenominational Christian social ministry agency during three decades of rapid urban change and upheaval in New Haven. The Wider City Parish was an inner-city Christian social ministry organization in New Haven, Connecticut, which existed from the early 1950s to the mid 1980s. Its executive director was Robert Forsberg, a graduate of the Yale Divinity School.

ONLINE FINDING AID: To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/divinity.087>

Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use on site, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/divinity.087>.

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b. box
f. folder

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Gift of the Wider City Parish

Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

Preferred Citation

Wider City Parish Records (RG 87), Special Collections, Yale Divinity Library.

Biographical / Historical

The Wider City Parish began in 1952 as the Oak Street Christian Parish, located in the Oak Street area of New Haven. When urban renewal brought a highway through this area, the Parish relocated to Ashmun Street, changed its name, and refocused its activities on projects and projects in various areas of New Haven, including the Rockview-Brookside housing project, the Elm Haven and other downtown housing projects, the Howard Avenue and Grand Avenue areas, as well as the margins of the Oak Street area. Supported by the New Haven Council of Churches, the Wider City Parish sought to inform the congregations of New Haven about inner city problems, and to coordinate support for a variety of programs. The staff of the Parish was always small, and usually included a number of part-time Yale Divinity School students. Programs and projects included summer programs for children, family counseling, work among Puerto Rican immigrants, and advocate work in the areas of housing, young offenders in court, adult education, etc.

Scope and Contents

The records provide valuable documentation of a locally operated and supported nondenominational Christian social service agency during a period of rapid urban change and upheaval in New Haven. Urban problems of housing, education, crime, racism, and immigration were addressed by the Parish, led by Yale Divinity School graduate Robert Forsberg.

Series I, Legal Documents, traces the formation of the Oak Street Christian Parish and its change of name to the Wider City Parish. The reports and minutes of Series II, provide documentation of the development of the organization, its operations, and its changing program emphases. The Files of Robert Forsberg, Executive Director, in Series III complement the more systematic records of Series II, and illustrate the processes of networking and support-gathering that sustained the Wider City Parish.

The Programs and Projects of Series IV are those sponsored by the Wider City Parish, or in which they were partners with other organizations. Most substantial of these programs were summer programs for children, including the Friendly Town program that paired inner-city children with suburban families, and community support programs, including a library, at the Elm Haven housing project. Documentation of the organization in New Haven for the 1963 March on Washington, and interactions with the New Haven grassroots group, the Union of Indigent People, provide vivid illustration of the role of a Christian service agency in the struggle to improve urban conditions.

The Publications of Series V include Wider City Parish newsletters dating from 1952 to 1987, which provide an excellent overview of the program emphases of the Parish and its efforts to garner support from city and suburban congregations in the New Haven area. Many of the photographs in Series VI were used in its publications. Series VII, Collected Material and Related Organizations, documents the Wider City Parish's place in the wider network of social service agencies and programs. There is some overlap between this series and Series III and IV, but, in general, the documentation of Series VII is of programs in which the Wider City Parish was not a direct participant. The Financial Records of Series VIII, include financial records of the Wider City Parish's three decades of service in New Haven.

Arrangement

- I. Legal Documents, 1952-1975
- II. Committees and Reports, 1952-1986, undated
- III. Files of Robert Forsberg, Executive Director, 1964-1980
- IV. Programs and Projects, 1951-1980, undated
- V. Publications, 1952-1987

VI. Photographs, undated

VII. Collected Material and Related Organizations, 1959-1986, undated

VIII. Financial Records, 1954-1985, undated

Collection Contents

Series I: Legal Documents, 1952-1975

b. 1, f. 1	Articles of Association and By-Laws	1952-1974
b. 1, f. 2	Dixwell Legal Rights	1966
b. 1, f. 3	IRS Documents	1953-1958
b. 1, f. 4	Miscellaneous Legal Material	1955-1975

Series II: Committees and Reports, 1952-1986, undated

b. 1, f. 5-24	Annual Meeting Reports	1957-1982, undated
b. 2, f. 25-43	Board of Directors: Minutes	1957-1981
b. 2, f. 44-58	Board of Directors: Reports	1952-1966
b. 3, f. 59-74	Board of Directors: Reports	1967-1986
b. 3, f. 75	Executive Committee: Minutes	1972, 1981
b. 3, f. 76	Miscellaneous Committees	undated
b. 3, f. 77	Steering Committee	1961
b. 3, f. 78	Steering Committee	1962-1963

Series III: Files of Robert Forsberg, Executive Director, 1964-1980

b. 4, f. 79-94 Correspondence and program material

1964-1980

Series IV: Programs and Projects, 1951-1980, undated

b. 4, f. 95	After School Christian Education	1962
b. 4, f. 96	Black Community Enabler	1968
b. 4, f. 97	Bonding Program	1973-1977
b. 5, f. 98	Board for Urban Ministry	1966
b. 5, f. 99	Christmas Toy Sales	1979
b. 5, f. 100	Church and Public Education	1970-1972
b. 5, f. 101	Citizens' Commission	1969
b. 5, f. 102	Citizens for Safety	1965-1966
b. 5, f. 103	City Missionary Alliance	1970-1983
b. 5, f. 107	Committee Renewal Team	1966
b. 5, f. 109	Dixwell Neighborhood Council	1965-1972
b. 5, f. 110	Dixwell pre-school training	1967-1969
b. 5, f. 111	East Haven Protestant Parish	1954-1955
b. 6, f. 112	Elm Haven Community Council	1957-1978
b. 6, f. 113	Elm Haven Enlightenment Workshop	1961-1968
b. 6, f. 114-115	Elm Haven Library Project	1965-1977
b. 6, f. 116	Elm Haven Parish Council	1966-1968
b. 6, f. 117-118	Friendly Town Program	1967-1968
b. 6, f. 119	Friends of the Wider City Parish	1960-1963
b. 6, f. 120	Group Ministry	1960-1968
b. 7, f. 121	Inter-Parish Staff Conference	1952-1960
b. 7, f. 122	Job Descriptions	1968-1974
b. 7, f. 123	Layman's Conference	1965
b. 7, f. 124	LEAP	1964-1967
b. 7, f. 125	LINK	1963-1967
b. 7, f. 126	March on Washington	1963
b. 8, f. 127	Ministry of Laity	1961-1963
b. 8, f. 129	Model Cities Project	undated
b. 8, f. 130	Narcotics Program	1964-1968

b. 8, f. 131	National Commission on Technology	1966
b. 8, f. 132	New Haven Situation	undated
b. 8, f. 133	Oak Street Parish: Historical essays	1951, 1953
b. 8, f. 134-135	Oak Street Parish: Documents	1950-1960
b. 9, f. 136	Oak Street Community House	1954
b. 9, f. 137	Office Correspondence	1966-1968
b. 8, f. 128	Office Correspondence	1973-1979
b. 9, f. 138	Peace Education	1980
b. 9, f. 139	Prison Program	1965-1966
b. 9, f. 140	Public Education Ministry Proposals	1974
b. 9, f. 141	Puerto Rican Community Project	1957-1958
b. 9, f. 142	Requests for Work	1965
b. 9, f. 143	Rockview-Brookside Advisory Committee	1962-1965
b. 9, f. 144	Senior Citizens' Association	1962-1964
b. 9, f. 145	Student Jobs	1961-1962
b. 9, f. 147	Summer Program	1958
b. 9, f. 148	Summer Program	1971
b. 9, f. 149	Summer Program	1972
b. 9, f. 150	Summer Program	1973
b. 9, f. 151	Summer Program	1974
b. 9, f. 152	Summer Program	1975
b. 9, f. 153	Teenage Outing Clubs	1964-1967
b. 9, f. 154	Union of Indigent People	1965-1972
b. 9, f. 155	Wider City Parish Goals and Objectives	undated
b. 9, f. 156	Wider City Parish Mid-Winter Retreat	1961
b. 9, f. 157	Wider City Parish Miscellaneous	undated
b. 10, f. 158	Wider City Parish Third Birthday Party	1960
b. 10, f. 159	Yale-New Haven Hospital Connector Parking	1969
b. 10, f. 160	Youth March for Integrated Schools	1959

Series V: Publications, 1952-1987

b. 10, f. 169	Request for Publications	undated
b. 10, f. 170-174	Wider City Parish News Letter	1952-1987

Series VI: Photographs, undated

b. 11, f. 179

Photographs

undated

Series VII: Collected Material and Related Organizations, 1959-1986, undated

b. 10, f. 161	Black People in American Life: Bibliography	1968
b. 10, f. 162	Board of National Missions	1971
b. 5, f. 104-106	Cleveland Inner City Protestant Parish	1959-1962
b. 5, f. 108	Connecticut Valley Presbytery	1978-1980
b. 10, f. 163	Dwight Area Human Service Agencies	undated
b. 10, f. 164	Dwight Hall Personnel	1960-1961
b. 10, f. 165	Hope and Summerfield Methodist Churches	1965
b. 10, f. 166	Leadership of New Haven	1986
b. 10, f. 167	J.P. Steven's Boycott	1977-1978
b. 10, f. 168	Yale Hope Mission	undated

Series VIII: Financial Records, 1954-1985, undated

b. 10, f. 175	Audit Reports	1969-1977
b. 10, f. 176	Cooperative Parish Sharing	undated
b. 10, f. 177	Financial Budgets	1954-1985
b. 10, f. 178	Financial Contributions	undated

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

Subjects

City missions -- United States -- History -- 20th
Century

Corporate Body

Wider City Parish