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William Adams Brown Ecumenical Archives Group

Finding Aid for

## Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America Records, 1905 – 1971



Logo source [National Council of Churches](#) ©

Finding Aid prepared by: BreeAnn Midavaine, November 2012  
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### Summary Information

Creator: Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, 1905 – 1950  
Title: Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America Records  
Inclusive dates: 1905 – 1971  
Bulk dates: 1905 – 1959  
Abstract: The Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America (FCC), officially founded in 1908, differentiated from other Christian Unity movements, due to its basis on cooperation between denominations through service rather than an attempt to unite upon definitions of theology and polity. In 1950 the FCC was integrated into the National Council of Churches. This collection contains newspaper and magazine articles, journals, pamphlets, booklets, correspondence, minutes, reports, and position papers.  
Size: 3 boxes, 1.50 linear feet  
Storage: Onsite storage  
Repository: The Burke Library  
Union Theological Seminary  
3041 Broadway  
New York, NY 10027  
Email: [burkearchives@library.columbia.edu](mailto:burkearchives@library.columbia.edu)

### Administrative Information

- Provenance:** The collection is part of the William Adams Brown Ecumenical Library, which was established in 1945 within Union Theological Seminary's main library to hold ecumenical materials.
- Access:** Archival papers are available to registered readers for consultation by appointment only. Please contact archives staff by email to [burkearchives@library.columbia.edu](mailto:burkearchives@library.columbia.edu), or by postal mail to The Burke Library address on page 1, as far in advance as possible. Burke Library staff is available for inquiries or to request a consultation on archival or special collections research.
- Access Restrictions:** The collection is unrestricted to readers. Please note that certain materials are in a fragile condition, and this may necessitate restriction in handling and copying.
- Preferred Citation:** Item description, William Adams Brown Ecumenical Archives: Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America Records, Series #, box #, folder #, The Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary, Columbia University in the City of New York.

### History

At the Interchurch Conference on Federation held at Carnegie Hall, New York City, in 1905, thirty Protestant denominations met and adopted the Constitution of the Federal Council. By 1908 the Constitution was approved and ratified thus forming the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America. According to the constitution the FCC was formed to express fellowship and catholic unity, bring Christian bodies of America into united service, encourage devotional fellowship and mutual counsel concerning spiritual life and religious activities of the churches, secure a larger influence in matters affecting the moral and social condition of the people, and assist in the organization of local branches of the FCC. As summarized in the pamphlet, *A Statement of Its Plan, Purpose and Work*,

“The difference between the Federal Council and the previous movements is that it is not an individual or voluntary agency...but is an officially and ecclesiastically constituted body...[established for] the co-operation of the various denominations for service...”

Important members of the FCC associated with this collection include: National Secretary Rev. Charles S. Macfarland, Chairman of the Administrative Committee Rev. William I. Haven, and Commission on Church and Social Service Chairman Dr. Josiah Strong.

Rev. Charles Macfarland served as the unofficial secretary of the FCC until 1914 when he was officially appointed as the General Secretary of the Executive Committee. He was appointed as secretary to the Social Services Commission, which was formed by the FCC to survey the labor issues and economic causes of the Bethlehem Steel Strike of 1910. This Commission was unique in that its mission was the first investigation of its kind ever undertaken by a church body. As secretary of the Social Services Commission he spent his time visiting other national and state denominational assemblies “arousing the churches as to their duty toward the great social,

industrial and national wrongs.” He authored the “Social Creed of the Churches” used by the FCC to define the mission of the Commission on Church and Social Service, as well as numerous books and articles on other religious topics. During his long service in the FCC he was not only the member of many committees, but accepted other responsibilities as well, such as his appointment as secretary of the Commission on Relations with Religious bodies in Europe in 1920.

Rev. William Haven was the Chairman of the Administrative Committee, which until it was abolished in 1932 served as the policy making body of the FCC. He was an active and fully involved member of the FCC and was appointed to serve on many different commissions and committees, including the Commission on Relations with the Orient, Committee on the Panama Exposition, and various committees for European Relief. He was also active in other religious organizations like the American Bible Society, where he served as secretary.

Dr. Josiah Strong was a Congregational minister and social reformer. He authored eleven books and published numerous sermons, articles and speeches, including his well-known books *Our Country* and *The New Era* and the monthly periodical entitled *The Gospel of the Kingdom*. He was an early proponent of the social gospel (Christian Socialism) and endorsed institutional churches, social settlement houses, and civic reform legislation. His work in the American Evangelical Alliance and the League for Social Service, led him to eventually help in the founding of the FCC. He was the Chairman of the Social Services Commission and worked with Macfarland on the survey of the Bethlehem Steel Strike. He was “one of the first American church leaders concerned with the problems of the cities. He was a pioneer in analyzing social problems and in articulating ways the churches could solve them.”

Upon its official creation in 1908 “the Federal Council focused much of its efforts on labor rights,” with the formation of its first department, the Commission on Church and Social Service. “The Commission did not engage in social work itself but coordinated the social service departments of various denominations, made contacts for the churches with national social agencies and movements, organized relations of the churches with labor and industry, assisted local councils of churches in their social work, and conducted social and industrial conferences.” This is evident from the pronounced effort of the Commission during the 1910 Bethlehem Steel Strike in encouraging all Christian denominations to advocate for a higher living wage, passage of Sunday labor laws, reduction of the hours of labor, safe working conditions, an end to child labor, and provision for the old age of workers and those incapacitated by injury.

The FCC not only attempted to “create goodwill among the various racial groups in America,” through its Department of Race Relations it “also worked in the international arena” using the Commission on International Justice and Goodwill to promote peaceful relations among the nations of the world. “Whenever possible the FCC lobbied for peaceful negotiations to end international disputes and worked for arms reduction to check the expanding war machines of the world powers. In the midst of World War II, the FCC formed the Commission on a Just and Durable Peace – a group of Christian clergy and laymen who were one of the first organizations to call for the creation of a body like the United Nations.”

In response to the increasing threat of war the FCC recognized the need for greater unity among the churches and religious organizations of America, which lead to conferences such as the Greenwich Conference for Church Union (1946-1959) and eventually to working with several interdenominational councils such as the United Stewardship Council to create the National Council of Churches. "The Federal Council ceased operations on December 31, 1950, when it officially became part of the National council."

### Sources

"Christian Unity: Aim of New Foundation." New York Times 18 July 1910.

<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=F50C13FD355D16738DDDA10994DF405B808DF1D3>. Accessed 19 November 2012.

Conference on Church Union, and Greenwich Conference on Church Union. *A Plan for a United Church in the United States; Proposed for Study by the Greenwich Conference on Church Union*. 1953.

Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America. *Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America: A Statement of Its Plan, Purpose and Work*. New York: Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, undated. Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America. Bulletin 6. Print. This is in the MRL pamphlet collection and this particular file is filled with FCC pamphlets. [Call Number](#): 0936

[Finding Aid](#) for the National Council of Churches USA Collected Records (CDG-A), Swarthmore College Peace Collection.

[Finding Aid](#) for the Rhoda Elizabeth McCulloch Papers, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

Lynch, Frederick. "The Churches United" *The Independent*. New York City. 4 December 1916, pp. 387-388. WAB: Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America Records, Box 1, folder 1, The Burke Library Archives, Columbia University Libraries, at Union Theological Seminary, New York.

National Council of Churches. <http://www.nccusa.org/>. Accessed 19 November 2012

Olson, Janet C. "Josiah Strong," *Encyclopedia of American Urban History*. Ed. David Goldfield. Vol. 2. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Reference, 2007. p773.

Presbyterian Historical Society. "Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America Records, 1894-1952." <http://www.history.pcusa.org/collections/findingaids/inventory/ncc18.pdf>.

Accessed 22 Oct. 2012. For more information about the specifics regarding commissions, committees, departments, persons related to the organization as well as a broader history please see the finding aid for this collection.

Queen, Edward L., Stephen R. Prothero, Gardiner H. Shattuck."Josiah Strong," *Encyclopedia of American Religious History* (3rd Edition). Facts on File, NY, 2009. pp. 956-57.

### Collection Scope and Content Note

This collection is arranged into three main sections: Member's Papers; Commissions, Committees and Departments; and Conferences and Meetings. The majority of the Member's Papers contain newspaper and magazine clippings regarding church unity, FCC organizational history, and other topics of interest, as well as correspondence. Some of these papers originally belonged to Rev. Rockland T. Homans, former student of Union Theological Seminary, rector of

Grace Church in Queens, Canon of the Cathedral of Incarnation, founder of the Christian Unity Foundation and chairman of the board of Christian Social Service.

Of particular interest within the Commissions, Committees, and Department section is the folder that contains information on the Bethlehem Steel Strike (1910). Included are correspondence between Rev. Francis S. Hort and other local church leaders with men such as John A. Fitch author of *The Steel Workers* as well as, Josiah Strong chairman of the Social Services Commission. The main conferences of note in this collection are the Greenwich Conference on Church Union and the National Conference on the Christian Way of Life, commonly referred to as "The Inquiry," which sought to foster discussion on "industrial, racial, and international problems in the hope of discovering whether there is a modern Christian way of living...." The majority of the papers in these sections are comprised of minutes, reports and position papers. The collection is organized alphabetically and then chronologically within those divisions.

### Processing

Metal pins and clips were removed from materials and folded items were flattened. Materials were placed in new acid-free folders and boxes. Acidic items were separated from one another by interleaving with acid-free paper as needed. Any items in an advanced state of deterioration were placed in Mylar envelopes.

### Further Sources

Burke Library Archives Collection:

[National Council of Churches of Christ USA Records, 1950 - 1973](#)

There is a small folder in an unprocessed collection of American Bible Society material that includes Churchill Cutter's documents relating to the Commission on International Justice and Goodwill and the Commission on Relations with the Orient, which is related to Box 2, Folder 5 of the FCC collection. [Churchill Cutter](#) was the American Bible Society President from 1919-1924. For more information contact the [Burke Library Archives](#).

There is an unprocessed collection on Josiah Strong which is related to Box 3, Folder 3 of the FCC collection. The Burke Library collection of his papers are within the [Union Theological Seminary Archives](#). For more information contact The Burke Library.

Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America. *Constitution and By-laws of the Inter-church Federation of County or City*. [New York: s.n., 1911]. Print

Fitch, John Andrews, and Russell Sage Foundation Charities Publication Committee. *The Steel Workers*. Charities Publication Committee, 1911. [Web](#). 23 Oct. 2012. In the fall of 1907 Fitch began work on a sociological study known as the Pittsburgh Survey. He spent more than a year interviewing and observing steel workers on the job. He examined the health problems and accidents which resulted from the pressure of long hours, hazardous machinery, and increasing production. He also analyzed early experiments in accident prevention and compensation and pensions. This book is the culmination of those interviews and observations.

- Fitch, John A. Labor in the Steel Industry-The Human Side of Large Outputs. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* , Vol. 33, No. 2, Labor and Wages (Mar., 1909), pp. 83-91
- Hooft, Willem Adolph Visser't. *No Man Is Alien: Essays on the Unity of Mankind*. Brill Archive, 1971. [Web](#). 23 Oct. 2012.
- "Obituary Rev. R. T. Homans" *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*. Brooklyn, New York. 1954. [Web](#). 19 November 2012
- Presbyterian Historical Society Collections. [Web](#). 19 November 2012. The PHS is the oldest denominational archive in the United States and holds archival records, books and serials, and artifacts that document the history of the Presbyterian and Reformed tradition in America. Collection emphases include, but is not limited to: Civil Rights and other race issues; social justice issues; and ecumenical movements. The Society is the main repository of archival records for the Federal and National Council of Churches. To supplement the official record they also collect personal papers of Presbyterians and ecumenists who are significant for their service to the church, with an emphasis on mission work.
- Sanford, Elias B. *Origin and History of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America*. Hartford, Conn: S.S. Scranton Company, 1916. Print.
- United States. Bureau of Labor, and Charles Patrick Neill. *Report on strike at Bethlehem steel works, South Bethlehem, Pennsylvania*. Washington, Govt. print. off., 1910. [Web](#). 23 Oct. 2012. There is also a copy of the report in Box 2, Folder 3.

**Contents list**

Box	Folder	Contents
1	1	Organizational Papers, 1905–1917
		<b>Member's Papers, [1905?] – 1959</b>
1	2	American Council of the World Alliance for International Friendship Through the Churches, 1920
1	3	Christian Unity Foundation, 1910–1917
1	4	Church and Society, 1918–1919
1	5	Greenwich Conference on Church Union, 1949–1959
1	6	Interchurch World Movement, 1919–1920
1	7	Rev. Rockland T. Homans: Brick Church Lectures: Christian Unity Foundation, 1920–1922
1	8	Rev. Rockland T. Homans: Christian Unity Foundation, 1912–1920
1	9	Rev. Rockland T. Homans: The Federation of Churches and Christian Organizations in New York City, 1905–1911
1	10	Rev. Rockland T. Homans: Federal Council of Churches and Church Unity, [1905?]-1921
		<b>Commissions, Committees and Departments, 1910 – 1971</b>
1	11-12	Administrative Committee, 1924–1928
2	1	Church and State Committee, 1932–1934
2	2	Commission on a Just and Durable Peace, 1941 – 1948
2	3	Commission on Church and Social Service: Bethlehem Steel Strike, 1910–1971
2	4	Commission on Evangelism and Life Service, 1925–1927
2	5	Commission on International Justice and Goodwill, 1922–1927
2	6	Commission on the Ministry, 1947
2	7	Commission on Relations with Religious Bodies in Europe, 1926
2	8	Commission on Worship: “How May Protestant Worship Become Ecumenical” by Roger Hazelton, 1947
2	9	Committee on Direction, 1922–1927
2	10	Committee on Education for Peace, 1926
2	11	Committee on Mexico, 1922–1923
2	12	Committee on Relations with Eastern Churches, 1927
2	13	Committee on Relations with the Orient, 1925–1927
2	14	Committee on Slavery and Labor Conditions in Africa and Elsewhere, [1920?]-1927
2	15	Committee on Women's Work, 1925
2	16	Denominational Peace Committees/Agencies, 1924–1925
2	17	Department of Race Relations, 1943–1945
2	18	Executive Committee, 1923–1937
2	19	United Stewardship Council, 1949
2	20-21	Religious Liberty: Joint Committee on Religious Liberty, 1930–1943

Box	Folder	Contents
		<b>Conferences and Meetings, 1941 – 1961</b>
3	1	Conference of Continental and American Christians, 1942
3	2	Conference on Religious Research, 1945
3	3-4	Greenwich Conference on Church Union, 1949–1961
3	5-8	Unbound Greenwich Conference on Church Union, 1946–1959
3	9	Meeting on “Peace Aims”, 1942
3	10-11	National Conference on the Christian Way of Life: “The Inquiry”, 1923– 1924
3	12	National Study Conference on the Churches and World Peace [19??]
3	13	North American Ecumenical Conference, 1941
3	14	Information Service, General Missions, 1947