

**The Burke Library Archives, Columbia University Libraries,  
Union Theological Seminary, New York**

William Adams Brown Ecumenical Archives Group

Finding Aid for

**State Council of Churches Records, 1943 – 1974**



New Jersey State Council of Churches ©

WAB: State Council of Churches Records, Box 4, Folder 6. The Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary, Columbia University in the City of New York.

Finding Aid prepared by: BreeAnn Midavaine, December 2012  
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**Summary Information**

Creator: Union Theological Seminary  
Title: State Council of Churches Records  
Inclusive dates: 1943 – 1974  
Abstract: Regional ecumenical and interfaith organizations come together under the umbrella of their respective state council of churches. Rooted in local communities, able to respond to needs specific to that region. Councils are agencies of cooperation focused on service and Christian unity. Collection contains bulletins, magazines, newspapers, pamphlets, correspondence, annual meeting minutes and reports.  
Size: 10 boxes, 5.00 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 papers are part of the William Adams Brown Ecumenical Library Collection, which was founded in 1945 by the Union Theological Seminary Board of Directors. The materials in this collection document the modern Ecumenical movement on the state level.
- 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: State Council of Churches Records, Box #, folder #, The Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary, Columbia University in the City of New York.

### History

The ecumenical movement and the formation of the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America in the early twentieth century influenced church federation movements on the state level. State councils were founded to serve primarily as instruments of cooperation between denominations which had little direct contact with each other. They did not deal with theological or ecclesiological questions, but rather their objective was to manifest the common purpose of the churches, to express unity within the church and to recognize that there are things that are done more effectively together state-wide.

The state councils function on a level between local councils and national councils with coverage determined by the geographical boundaries of the state in which it functions. The role of state councils was clarified in a pamphlet written by the Association of Council Secretaries in 1957. It states,

“The functions of a state council are determined first of all by its constituent membership...in contrast to the functions of local councils that bring local congregations into a cooperative relationship...a state council relate[s] the churches of a given state to state-wide agencies and endeavors. A state council is also an agency by which the churches carry on programs that need supervision and coordination beyond the boundaries of local councils.”

These functions can include research studies, encouraging cooperative work of the churches, extending Christian fellowship on a state-wide basis, and representing “Protestant – Orthodox Christians of a given state in legislative matters emerging at the state capital and in similar concerns in the national Congress and the United Nations.”

The basic role of the state councils is to enable its members to “manifest their oneness in Christ in the geographical community.” However, a state council also plays a role within the world-wide ecumenical movement, which is “to enable each part of the church to work properly with every other part, to the end that the Body of Christ—the Church—may be upbuilt in love.” Kessler and Kinnamon’s book Councils of Churches and the Ecumenical Vision asserts state councils contribute to the dialogue of the ecumenical movement by providing a “place where trust can grow, where divisive issues can be discussed, [and] where reception of the results of [those] dialogues can be encouraged.” According to the National Council of Churches website the tone of these dialogues are “different when [they are] grounded in a particular community with shared needs and concerns. “Issues like poverty, immigration, racial justice, environmental justice, healthcare reform, and gun violence...are no longer abstract policy ideas,” but they affect each person within those communities. State councils are rooted in their regional communities therefore, they are “uniquely positioned” to respond to these shared issues. This sharing of experience, personnel, resources and support through the state council of churches point individual church bodies “beyond themselves to the eschatological vision of shalom.” (Kessler & Kinnamon)

### Sources

Association of Council Secretaries. *The Role of Local, State and National Councils of Churches in the Ecumenical Movement*. Lake Geneva, Wisconsin: The Association, 1957. Print.

[Catalog Record](#).

Burgess, Joseph A., and Gros, Jeffrey, eds. *Growing Consensus: Church Dialogues in the United States, 1962-1991*. New York: Paulist Press, 1995. Print. Ecumenical Documents

5. [Catalog Record](#).

Kessler, Diane Cooksey, and Michael Kinnamon. *Councils of Churches and the Ecumenical Vision*. Geneva: WCC Publications, 2000. Print. Risk Book Series no. 90. [Catalog](#)

[Record](#).

National Council of Churches. “About Local and Regional Ecumenism.” Web. Accessed on 4 December 2012. <http://www.ncccusa.org/lre/aboutre.html>

### **Collection Scope and Content Note**

The majority of the collection is comprised of state council bulletins or newsletters and annual state council meetings. New York, Ohio, Massachusetts and New Jersey form the bulk of the collection. Of note within the New York collection is a smaller collection pertaining to the New York City Protestant council, which was a large regional council serving the local needs of the city. The Ohio collection is a large run of the *Ohio Christian News* dating from 1946 to 1971. The Massachusetts collection also contains a large run of the state council’s newsletter *Christian Outlook* and copies of annual reports. The New Jersey collection contains reports of its annual meetings from 1958 to 1974. Michigan is contained in block parenthesis because the state was inferred from locale information contained in the annual meeting report.

The collection is arranged alphabetically according to state. Within the state divisions, state councils are organized first with county, regional and city councils following. Each folder is arranged alphabetically and the materials within those folders are arranged chronologically.

Other state councils in the collection include Alabama, California – Nevada, Colorado, Illinois, Indiana, Maine, Minnesota, Oregon, Texas, Vermont, Virginia and Washington.

### **Processing**

Metal clips were removed from materials, folded items were flattened, and bound materials were removed from their original housing. 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.

### **Further Sources**

Burke Library Archives Collection:

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

[Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America Records, 1905-1971](#)

[City Council of Churches Records, 1909 – 1970](#)

National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. *The Ecclesiological Significance of Councils of Churches; a Working Paper*. [New York]: National Council of Churches, 1963. Print. This paper published by the NCC is included here because state councils fall under the umbrella of the National Council. This paper and the following manual, also by the NCC, contain information regarding the general roles and purpose of church councils, which regardless of their local, state or national status are similar.

National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. *Growing Together; a Manual for Councils of Churches*. [New York: s.n, 1955]. Print.

Sanderson, Ross W. *Church Cooperation in the United States; the Nation-wide Backgrounds and Ecumenical Significance of State and Local Councils of Churches in Their Historical Perspective*. [New York]: The Association of Council Secretaries, 1960. Print.

**Contents list**

<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>	<b>Contents</b>
1	1	Alabama, Mobile, Bulletins and Meetings, [1949] – 1956
1	2	California – Nevada, 1953 – 1967
1	3-6	Colorado, 1960 – 1967
1	7-8	Illinois, Bulletin, 1943 – 1970
2	1-3	Illinois, Meetings, 1946 - 1958
2	4	Illinois, Evanston, 1957
2	5	Indiana, 1955 – 1970
2	6	Maine, Greater Portland, 1945 – 1950
2	7-8	Massachusetts, Meetings, 1945 – 1951
3	1-8	Massachusetts, Meetings, Bulletin and Pamphlets, 1946 – 1967
4	1	[Michigan], Washtenaw, 1969
4	2	Minnesota, 1953 – 1971
4	3-7	New Jersey, 1953 – 1954, 1966 – 1974
5	1-8	New York, 1944 – 1971
6	1	New York, Young Adult Meetings and Pamphlets, 1944 – 1948
6	2	New York, Otsego County, [19??] – 1954
6	3-5	New York, Protestant Council of the City of New York, 1946 – 1969
6	6	New York, Protestant Council of the City of New York, Brooklyn Division Papers, 1945 – 1950
6	7	New York, Protestant Council of the City of New York, Queens Federation Papers, 1947 – 1950
6	8	New York, Syracuse and Onondaga County: 1955, 1957
7	1-6	Ohio, 1946 – 1955
8	1-6	Ohio, 1955 – 1966
9	1-3	Ohio, 1967 – 1971
9	4-6	Oregon, 1954 – 1966
9	7	Texas, 1965 – 1970
9	8	Vermont, 1972 – 1973
10	1-3	Virginia, 1944 – 1953
10	4	Washington, 1943 -1949
10	5	Correspondence, General Call for Papers from WAB Library, 1951-1954