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Salem, Mass. Tabernacle Church records, 1743-1858. RG5122

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English

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Congregational Library & Archives

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Summary Information

Repository:	Congregational Library & Archives
Creator:	Tabernacle Church (Salem, Mass.)
Creator:	Third Church (Salem, Mass.)
Title:	Salem, Mass. Tabernacle Church records, 1743-1858.
ID:	RG5122
Date [inclusive]:	1743-1858
Physical Description:	0.44 Cubic Feet (1 box, 1 folder)
Language of the Material:	English
Abstract:	Tabernacle Church of Salem, originally known as Third Church of Salem, was formed after a split from First Church in 1735. This collection contains the early records of the church, including meeting minutes, pew taxes and apportionments, and financial records. Of particular note are records pertaining to ecclesiastical council proceedings.

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], in the Salem, Mass. Tabernacle Church records, 1743-1858, RG5122. The Congregational Library & Archives, Boston, MA.

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Historical Note

Tabernacle Church in Salem, Massachusetts, traces its historical roots back to 1629 with the founding of First Church of Salem. In 1735, the First Church Pastor Samuel Fisk was dismissed from his position by ecclesiastical council. A group of parishioners followed Fisk from First Church, built a new meeting house, and met also under the name First Church until 1762 when they were compelled by the colonial legislature to change their name to "Third Church of Christ in Salem." In 1774 the great fire of Salem burned the Third Church meetinghouse to the ground. A replacement meetinghouse was built in 1777 and was copied from the Tabernacle in Moorfields (London) made famous by its association with George Whitefield, leading to the nickname "Tabernacle Church."

It was during the building of this meetinghouse that strife drove a portion of the Third Church congregation to split and form South Church of Salem in 1775. Originally also referring to themselves as "Third Church," the South Church later rejoined Tabernacle Church in 1924.

In 1781 the proprietors of Third Church were reincorporated as "The proprietors of the meetinghouse and Land where the Reverend Doctor Nathaniel Whitaker now preaches." Reverend Whitaker was removed from office in 1784 by ecclesiastical council. Another split occurred in 1802 when a portion of Tabernacle Church left to form a Presbyterian church.

In 1812, the Tabernacle Church came to the fore-front of Congregational consciousness when it became the church from which the first six Congregational missionaries of the American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions were commissioned.

In 1834 the proprietor of the church were once again reincorporated, this time as "The Proprietors of the Tabernacle Church."

The Tabernacle Congregational Church, UCC, continues to serve the Salem community today.

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Scope and Contents

This collection contains the early records of Tabernacle Church of Salem, Massachusetts. Records include financial accountings, church meeting minutes and votes, and pew apportionments. Of particular note are records of ecclesiastical proceedings, particularly those relating to the turbulent tenure of Reverend Nathaniel Whitaker.

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Arrangement

This collection has been arranged chronologically.

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Administrative Information

Publication Statement

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Restrictions on Access

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Acquisition Information

Materials gifted to the Congregational Library & Archives, November 2013, by the Tabernacle Church in Salem Massachusetts; Accession 2013-19.

Accruals

Additional accruals are expected for this collection in the form of full-text transcription. There is no anticipated date for this accrual.

Processing Information

Originally processed by Sari Mauro, December 2013. Additional processing and description by Zachary Bodnar, August 2018, using DACS Second Edition.

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Related Materials

Related Materials

Additional archival materials related to the Salem, Mass. Tabernacle Church are held by the [Phillips Library at the Peabody Essex Museum](#). For more information, view the collection's [finding aid](#). Some of these materials were digitized as part of the New England's Hidden Histories project and may be viewed [online](#).

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Controlled Access Headings

- Church controversies.
- Church finance.
- Church records and registers.
- New England's Hidden Histories.
- Pews and pew rights.
- First Church (Salem, Mass.)
- Salem (Mass.) -- Church history.
- South Church (Salem, Mass.)
- Tabernacle Church (Salem, Mass.)
- Whitaker, Nathaniel, 1732-1795

Technical Requirements

To access digital user's copies via online-interface, a java-enabled web browser is required. Internet Explorer 8.x and later, Firefox 5.x and later, Opera 12 and later, Safari 5.x and later, or any version of Google Chrome are recommended.

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Collection Inventory

Title/Description	Instances	
Book of records, 1743-1833 <u>Digital Copies:</u> Digital Copies These church records were digitized as part of the New England's Hidden Histories project. Digital reproductions are available to view online .	box 1	volume 1
Scope and Contents		
This record book contains records of membership, church meeting minutes, church discipline and baptisms. Of particular note are a series of charts documenting pastoral visits to parishioners. These charts contain census-like data on the household, including number and age of people living there. This volume also contains historical accounts pertaining to the church's difficulty with Dr. Nathaniel Whitaker. Additionally, the volume contains transcribed copies produced in 1833 of records dating from 1783-1805.		
Financial and pew records, 1760-1782 <u>Physical Description:</u> 3 Items	folder 5	
Scope and Contents		
This folder contains oversized financial records including a pew chart, an expense report, and a balance report.		
Whitaker controversy records, 1772-1785 <u>Digital Copies:</u> Digital Copies These church records were digitized as part of the New England's Hidden Histories project. Digital reproductions are available to view online .	box 1	folder 1
Scope and Contents		
There was a lengthy dispute between the church's first pastor and its proprietors regarding Rev. Whitaker's conduct and salary, as well as the decision of the congregation to end their affiliation with the local Presbytery and return to Congregationalism. These records document that dispute.		
Financial and land records, 1773-1796, 1858, (1773-1796)	box 1	folder 2
A plan or scheme for erecting a Tabernacle or house of divine worship..., 1774	box 1	folder 3

Church records, 1775-1789

box 1

folder 4

Church records, 1778-1796

box 1

volume 2

Digital Copies:

Digital Copies

These church records were digitized as part of the New England's Hidden Histories project. Digital reproductions are [available to view online](#).

Scope and Contents

These records contain meeting minutes, pew valuations, membership lists, calls to church meetings, and records pertaining to Dr. Nathaniel Whitaker, then-pastor of Tabernacle Church, discussing ministerial salary.

Proprietor's records, 1795-1849

box 1

volume 3

Digital Copies:

Digital Copies

These church records were digitized as part of the New England's Hidden Histories project. Digital reproductions are [available to view online](#).

Scope and Contents

This record book contains records of meeting minutes and votes, standing committee minutes, lists of donations, copies of warrants, pew valuations and taxes, and records pertaining to the sexton's and minister's salary.

Covenants, 1795, undated

box 1

folder 5

Digital Copies:

Digital Copies

This church covenant was digitized as part of the New England's Hidden Histories project. Digital reproductions are [available to view online](#).

Scope and Contents

A covenant lays out doctrines agreed upon by the congregation, usually at its founding. This document is a copy of the covenant made in August 1795.