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PINE ST. CHURCH

Records, 1827-1907

3 oversize boxes
1 manuscript box

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INTRODUCTION

The church and society records of the Pine St. Church from its beginnings in 1827 through its merger with Union Church in 1907 is the subject of this inventory. At various times during its history, the Pine St. Church has carried the name Pine St. Church, Berkeley St. Church and Berkeley Temple. The original name of the church has been retained as the formal title of the collection.

The surviving records of Pine St. Church and of Union Church have been placed on deposit at the Congregational Library.

The records of the Pine St. Church include the records of the Pine St. Church (Subgroup I) which deal with church and ecclesiastical business as well as the records of the Pine St. and Berkeley St. Congregational Societies (Subgroup II) which deal with the prudential affairs of the church.

The separation of the nineteenth century church into "church" and "society" came in response to a state law prohibiting churches from incorporating because they counted among their members "non-persons at law", that is, women and children. Churches established societies composed of males over the age of twenty-one to manage their legal and financial affairs. In 1875 a state law was passed allowing the church to incorporate and the society began surrendering its responsibilities to the restructured church.

These records consist mainly of record books and some loose papers in folders. For the sake of ease, both volumes and loose papers have been referred to as "folders" and have been consecutively numbered.

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HISTORICAL SKETCH

In 1827 members from the five orthodox Congregational churches in Boston, Old South, Park Street, Green Street, Union Church and Hanover Street met in the vestibule of the Hanover Street church to consider an ambitious proposal for the furtherance of the gospel ministry in the city. Here they heard Lyman Beecher speak on the need for two more Congregational churches in Boston, one in the northern part of the city and another in the southern part. Persuasive in his argument, a subscription of \$30,000 was accordingly raised.

Land was bought at the corner of Pine St. and Washington St. in the south end from Olive Guild, and a Trust Deed was drawn up in the names of William Ropes, John Tappan and Samuel Hubbard. Union Church sent sixteen of its members to join the new church, the cornerstone of which was laid in 1828.

Unfortunately, since most of the money raised for the two churches went to the church at Salem St. in the north end, the very foundations of Pine St. Church were laid in financial weakness. For the first three years of its existence the five orthodox churches agreed to pay one-half of its expenses. In 1831 the Pine St. Congregational Society was established, which assumed the debt of \$20,000, \$10,000 of which had been secured by mortgage.

In 1849 two individuals who loomed large in the history of Pine St. Church took on important positions in the church. One was Henry Martyn Dexter, who served as pastor from 1849 until 1867. The other was Charles C. Barry, who served as Treasurer of the Society from 1849 to 1864. Charles C. Barry held the distinction of being the last surviving member of the original members of the church.

In 1850 and 1851 the Giant Despair, as the debt was called, precipitated a crisis in the church. There was a bitter division among those who wished to sell the meeting-house and disband or relocate and those who protested such a sale as contrary to the original mission of the church. The church was not sold at this time. Instead, the roof was raised and the basement outfitted with stores which could be rented to provide the church with a steady source of income.

Its finances further deteriorating, in 1858 the Pine St. Church consulted its sister churches on the viability of its future at an ecclesiastical council. The council advised the sale of the meeting-house and a new church was erected in 1860 at the corner of Berkeley St. and the-then Third Avenue (now Warren Avenue). In 1861 the name of the church was changed to the Berkeley St. Church, which Henry Martyn Dexter hoped would become "the genial home of a missionary church." ¹ To finance the new church, a mortgage was secured in 1862 with the Lowell Five Cent Savings Bank.

Discouraged by the debt, Reverend William Wright tendered his resignation in 1876, as had the five pastors before him. This provoked such a reaction in the church that the necessary pledges were raised in a frantic 11½ hours, although it was not until 1878 that the last traces of the debt were erased.

At this time immigrants were moving into the South End, forcing the wealth out of this part of the city and leaving behind a wilderness of boarding houses. Pastor Wright, in again tendering his resignation in 1886, advised the church to adopt new methods of extending its mission to "a less firmly-rooted constituency." ²

In 1888 Charles A Dickinson accepted the pastorate under the condition that the pews be made free and a program of aggressive Christian activity be adopted. In 1890 the name of the church was changed to Berkeley Temple and in 1892 the name was again changed to Berkeley Temple Congregational Church.

In 1894 the church incorporated as a legal body.

Though church membership rose as high as nine hundred members, Berkeley Temple had increasing difficulty discharging the financial responsibilities of its extensive religious, social and health care activities. In 1906 a meeting presided over by the Old South Church proposed a merger of Berkeley Temple with Union Church. In 1907 this union was effected when 340 members of Berkeley Temple united with Union Church and Allen A. Stockdale was installed as pastor of the restructured church.

FOOTNOTES

1. Threescore Years and Ten, 1827-1897. Boston: Press of Samuel Usher, 1897. p. 25
2. Berkeley St. Church Records, 1861-1887. p.446

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The bulk years of coverage in this collection are 1827 to 1887; there are gaps throughout. Church running records are complete from 1827-1887 in two volumes. A third volume covering the years 1888-1907 is in the Rare Book and Manuscript Room at the Boston Public Library.

One volume of vital statistics containing marriage and funeral records dates from 1888-1895. Records of the Examining Committee and Sabbath School, as well as pew and financial records, are fragmented. Unfortunately, it appears that no running record volumes of the Pine St. Congregational Society or of the Berkeley St. Congregational Society have survived. The appropriate documents and correspondence relating to society affairs have been chronologically arranged in nine folders.

Items of particular interest in the collection are the original Trust Deed and land plat of Olive Guild, many pew plans and a scrapbook compiled by Deacon S. Brainard Pratt.

The history of Pine St. Church, Berkeley St. Church and Berkeley Temple may be divided into two slightly overlapping periods. For the first fifty years the church's existence was imperiled by a debt that was the primary preoccupation of society, and to a lesser extent, church records.

Even as the last traces of the debt were erased in 1878, developments in the South End forced upon the church a redefinition of its mission in the world and a modification of its methods. As an "institutional church" Berkeley Temple began adopting social, educational and health care activities that over-extended its financial means. What emerges out of the later history of this church is an account of a city church struggling to cope with changes in the demography of its neighborhood that diminished and changed its membership, finally causing it to lose its autonomy in 1907.

SERIES LISTING

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SERIES DESCRIPTIONS

SUBGROUP I CHURCH RECORDS SERIES I CHURCH RUNNING RECORDS.
1827-1887. Volumes arranged chronologically by date.

Record books.

Two bound volumes; the first volume contains the records of the Pine St. Church, the second volume contains the records of the Berkeley St. Church. Church business is covered exhaustively in these volumes; some material is selectively included in other series. Material includes the minutes of annual meetings, articles of faith and revisions of standing rules, names of members received and dismissed, baptisms and deaths, accounts of and calls for ecclesiastical councils and letters of resignation and acceptance of pastors and deacons.

SUBGROUP I CHURCH RECORDS SERIES II ADMISSIONS AND VITALS.
1827-1905, large gaps. Arranged by type of record.

Record books, loose papers.

Membership books of various sizes and overlapping dates include the name and address of the member, date of admission, the name of the church the member has transferred from and the reason for dismissal. Volume marked "Articles of Faith" contains the names of the original members and includes baptisms from 1829-1839. One book apparently belonging to the Society contains the names of both church and Society members (arranged as Folder 13, Series III, Subgroup II). Letters of transfer have been arranged alphabetically by name in two folders, one containing letters of recommendation and the other containing requests for dismissal. The Pastor's Ledger contains marriages (names of parents are included), funerals and a directory of members. Most of the pages devoted to marriage records have been pasted into this book from another source.

SUBGROUP I CHURCH RECORDS SERIES III COMMITTEE RECORDS.
1852-1867, some gaps. Arranged by type of record.

Record books, loose papers.

This series brings together the record books and some loose annual reports of the Examining Committee as well as miscellaneous loose reports of various special committees. Members

were admitted to the church on profession of faith or by letter of transfer. These volumes record the names of those being considered for membership and the decisions made by Examining Committee in each case.

SUBGROUP I CHURCH RECORDS SERIES IV LETTER MISSIVES. 1845-1906, some gaps. Arranged chronologically by date.

Correspondence.

Formal invitations received by Pine St. or Berkeley St. Church to join an ecclesiastical council. Most concern the settlement of a pastor at other churches. When a pastor accepted a call at another church, an examination and final approval of his candidacy was given by an ecclesiastical council composed of members of that church as well as delegates from other churches. Gap from 1858 to 1866; some other years missing.

SUBGROUP I CHURCH RECORDS SERIES V SABBATH SCHOOL RECORDS. 1836-1877, with gaps. Arranged by type of record.

Record books, loose papers.

Records for the period 1836-1847 were kept somewhat informally in standardized printed "Minute Books" published by the American Sunday School Union. These contain ruled space for statistics on male/female teachers and male/female scholars. In the "Remarks" section are written interesting comments on problems or events of the day, and a page on annual expenses and receipts is included. Class records for 1848-1863 contain similar information in free-text form in blank books. The volume for 1852-1863 contain the minutes of the monthly and annual Teacher's Meeting. Receiving books provide a record of admissions to the School. They provide the name and address of the scholar as well as the name and occupation of the parent.

SUBGROUP I CHURCH RECORDS SERIES VI ANCILLARY ORGANIZATION RECORDS. 1857-1897. Volumes arranged chronologically by date.

Record books.

Of all the church records, the records of the ancillary organizations are the most fragmented. All that survives is a single record book of the Pine St. Association (called in 1861 the Berkeley Literary Association) and one cash book of the Berkeley Temple Institute.

Temple Institute. The apparent successor to the Pine St. Young Men's Social Union, no records of which survive, members of the Pine St. Association conducted frequent debates on philosophical questions as well as social issues of the day. The Berkeley Temple Institute volume contains a membership list and a record of dues payment. It contains also a record of expenditures out of the general account as well as the expenditures of specific accounts such as the Entertainment Committee and the Industrial Department.

SUBGROUP II SOCIETY RECORDS SERIES I GENERAL SOCIETY RECORDS. 1827-1862. Papers arranged chronologically by date.

Legal deeds, mortgage deeds, legal documents, subscription papers, letters sent and received, notes, some extracts and extrapolations from Society records.

No Society record books of corporate meetings survive. The appropriate papers and documents relating to the financial and legal management of church property have been arranged in folders. These papers are concerned with the erection of Pine St. Church in 1827, the proposed sale of the Meeting-House in 1850-1851, the eventual sale of the church in 1858 and the building of the Berkeley St. Church in 1860. The chronic indebtedness of the Society in financing these ventures appears to be the major business confronting the Society. The original Trust Deed of 1827 and land plat of Olive Guild have been removed and stored elsewhere. (See Container List.)

SUBGROUP II SOCIETY RECORDS SERIES II PRUDENTIAL COMMITTEE RECORDS. 1848-1864.

Record book.

The money-raising activities of the Prudential Committee were two-fold. In addition to the raising of monies for regular church expenses and the maintenance of church property, money had also to be raised for the payment of large Society debts. This slim, single volume of Committee records deals primarily with the more mundane financial matters of the Society. The various bills submitted to the Committee for approval are listed, and the amount of the appropriations made for the Pastor's salary and for music for the church are recorded.

SUBGROUP II SOCIETY RECORDS SERIES III PEW RECORDS.

1833-1883, large gaps. Material arranged by type of record.

Record books, loose papers, pew plans, receipts.

Since the levying of taxes on pews was the primary means of raising money to cover church expenses, pew records and accounts are extensive and have therefore been separated from the general Society accounts. Pew records are of two types: those that relate to pew ownership and transfer, and those that relate to the valuation and assessment of pews and the payment of pew taxes. The folder of oversized pew plans has been removed and stored elsewhere. (See Container List).

SUBGROUP II SOCIETY RECORDS SERIES IV FINANCIAL RECORDS.
1830-1907, large gaps. Volumes arranged chronologically by date.

Record books.

These cash books are arranged by a financial year cycle rather than a calendar year cycle. Entries record the amounts and sources of income received as well as the reason for and amounts of expenditures made. Entries for cash receipts consist primarily of the names of those who have paid pew taxes. Monthly totals of pew taxes, weekly offerings and open-box collections are given. A complete yearly financial statement which includes comparative statistics for the previous year is given. The volume for 1906-1907 was kept by the church Treasurer; all other volumes were the property of the Society Treasurer.

SUBGROUP III SUPPLEMENTARY RECORDS SERIES I CORRESPONDENCE
AND PAPERS. 1849-1887, large gaps. No arrangement.

Correspondence, loose papers.

Pastor's letters sent and received, especially including the papers and correspondence concerning Reverend Wright's resignation in 1887. A printed program, seating arrangement and correspondence concerning the Semi-centennial celebration of church and Sabbath School in 1877 is included. An interesting booklet of handwritten necrologies by Reverend Wright composed for an unknown purpose is illustrative of the religiosity of the period.

SUBGROUP III SUPPLEMENTARY RECORDS SERIES II PRINTED

MATERIAL. 1842-1906, large gaps. No arrangement.

Scrapbook, manual, church bulletins, printed material.

Miscellaneous items, various dates. A scrapbook kept by S. Brainard Pratt preserves some church memorabilia. The 1842 edition of the church manual as well as sample church bulletins for the year 1906 is included.

CONTAINER LIST

CHURCH RUNNING RECORDS

BOX	CONTAINER	FOLDER	
1		1	Records, March 1827-Jan. 1861, 1 vol.
		2	Records, Jan. 1861-Dec. 1887, 1 vol.
		3	Annual reports, committee reports..., 1901-1907, some gaps; folder

ADMISSIONS AND VITALS

		4	Records, 1827-1843, 1 vol.
		5	Records, 1827-1853, 1 vol.
		6	Miscellaneous lists of members, absent members..., with gaps; folder
		7	Letters of admission, 1845-1877, with gaps, folder
		8	Letters of dismission, 1846-1867, with gaps, folder
		9	Applications for membership, 1905, folder
		10	Pastor's ledger, 1888-1895, 1 vol.

CHURCH COMMITTEE RECORDS

	1	11	Examining Committee records, Jan. 1852- Apr. 1858, 1 vol.
		12	Examining Committee records, May 1858- Jan. 1867, 1 vol.
		13	Examining Committee loose reports, 1853- 1857, 1870; folder
		14	Special committee loose reports, 1849, 1850, 1852, 1855, 1867; folder

LETTER MISSIVE

2	1	1	1845-1849, folder
		2	1850, folder
		3	1851, folder
		4	1852-1853, folder
		5	1854-1855, folder
		6	1856, folder
		7	1857, folder
		8	1867, folder
		9	1869-1871, folder

BOX	CONTAINER	FOLDER	
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		10	1873-1876, folder
		11	1878-1906, folder

SABBATH SCHOOL RECORDS

		12	Records, 1836-1837, 1 vol.
		13	Records, 1838-1839, 1 vol.
		14	Records, 1840-1841, 1 vol.
		15	Records, 1846-1847, 1 vol.
		16	Records, 1848-1852, 1 vol.
		17	Records, 1852-1863, 1 vol.
		18	Receiving book, 1836-1838, 1 vol.
		19	Receiving book, 1839, 1 vol.
		20	Roll book, 1857, 1 vol.
		21	Roll book, 1858, 1 vol.
		22	Roll book, 1859, 1 vol.
		23	Roll book, 1860, 1 vol.
		24	Roll book, 1861, 1 vol.
		25	Loose annual reports, 1839, 1853, 1855, 1906; folder

ANCILLARY ORGANIZATION RECORDS

		26	Pine Street Association records, 1857- 1865, 1 vol.
		27	Berkeley Temple Institute cash book, 1891-1897, 1 vol.

GENERAL SOCIETY RECORDS

3		1	1827-1830, folder *some items have been removed and are stored in Ms. Drawer 17, RBR
		2	1831, folder
		3	1832-1844, folder
		4	1850, folder
		5	1851, folder
		6	1852-1853, folder
		7	1858-1859, folder
		8	1860, folder
		9	1861-1862, folder

PRUDENTIAL COMMITTEE RECORDS

		10	Records, 1848-1864, 1 vol.
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PEW RECORDS

BOX	CONTAINER	FOLDER	
		11	Pew deeds, 1833-1858, 1 vol.
		12	Pew occupants, 1845-1851, 1 vol.
		13	Members of church and society, 1851-1859, 1 vol.
		14	Miscellaneous lists of absent members, pew transfers..., 1850s; folder
		15	"Parts-of-pew" taxes, 1833-1839, 1 vol.
		16	Pew rents, 1882-1883, 1 vol.
		17	Pew plans, 10 pieces, folder *this folder has been removed and stored in Ms. Drawer 17, RBR
		18	Pew stock receipts, 1850s, folder

FINANCIAL RECORDS

		19	Cash book, 1830-1848, 1 vol.
		20	Cash book, April 1879-March 1882, 1 vol.
		21	Cash book, April 1882-March 1885, 1 vol.
		22	Cash book, June 1885-March 1888, 1 vol.
		23	Cash book, Jan. 1906-June 1907, 1 vol.

CORRESPONDENCE AND PAPERS

4		1	Letters of pastors, 1849-1850, 1852, 1876- 1877, 1901; folder
		2	Church and Sabbath School anniversary programs and correspondence, 1860, 1876, 1877 Semi-centennial; folder
		3	Necrologies written by Rev. Wright, n.d., folder
		4	Correspondence relating to sale of slave John Hensen, 1858, folder

PRINTED MATERIAL

		5	Church manual, 1842
		6	Scrapbook of S. Brainard Pratt
		7	Church bulletins, 1906, folder
		8	Miscellaneous material, ca. 1876, 7 pieces, folder

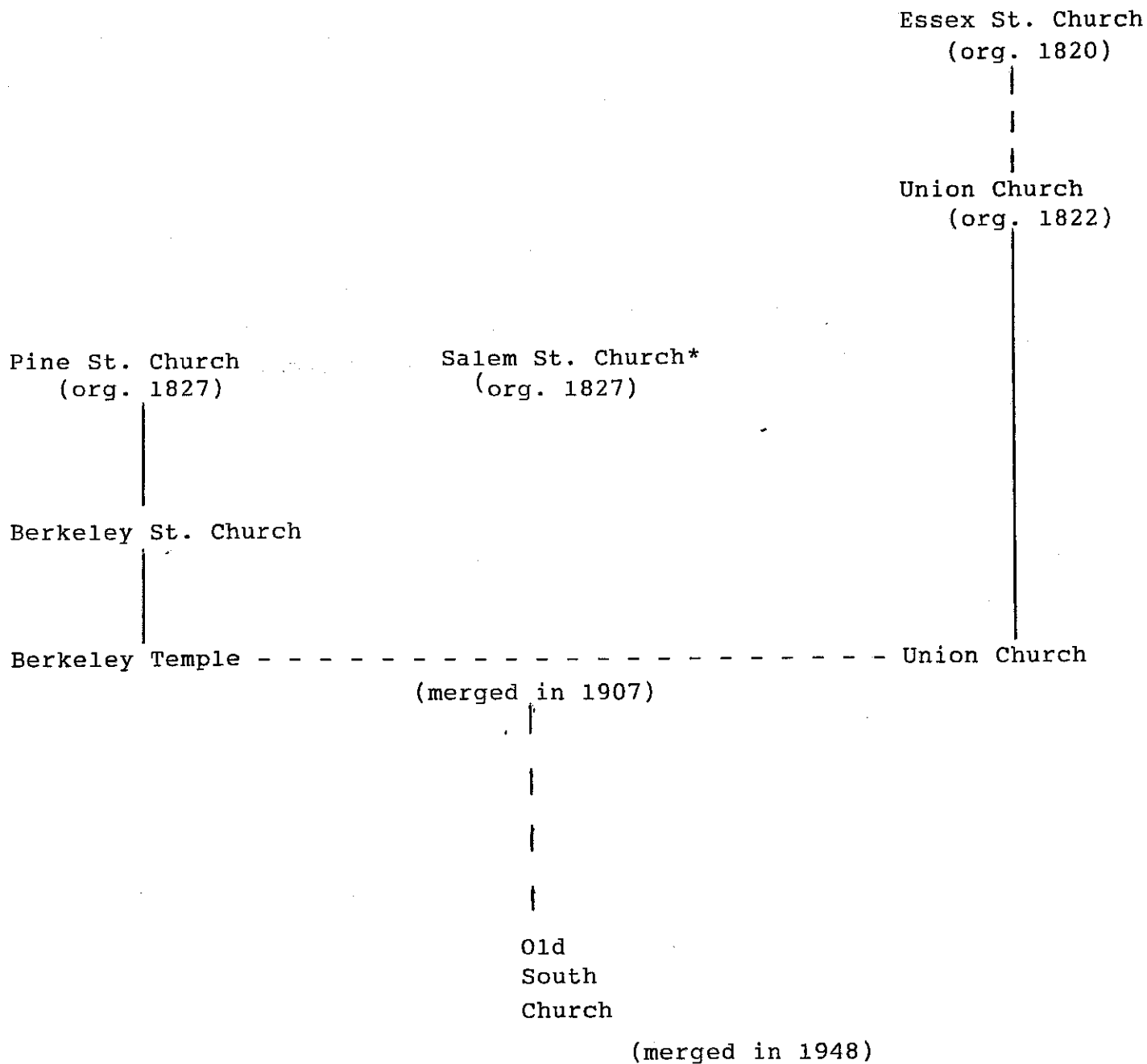
APPENDIX I

LIST OF PASTORS AND THEIR TERMS OF SERVICE

Thomas Harvey Skinner	1828-1829
John Brown	1829-1831
Amos Augustus Phelps	1832-1834
Artemas Boies	1834-1840
Austin Phelps	1842-1848
Henry Martin Dexter	1849-1867
William Burnet Wright	1867-1886
Charles A. Dickinson	1888-1901
Edward Anderson (Acting Minister)	1901-1902
William A. Knight	1902-1903
Allen A. Stockdale	1904-1907

APPENDIX II

CHART ILLUSTRATING THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF PINE ST. CHURCH



*Both Pine St. Church and Salem St. Church were organized under the influence of Lyman Beecher

NOTE ON ADDITIONAL MATERIAL

There is some supplementary printed material on the Church and its pastors in the regular library collection. Consult the Catalogue for more information.