

# **Tindley Temple United Methodist Church records**

**01**

**Finding aid prepared by Celia Caust-Ellenbogen and Sarah  
Leu through the Historical Society of Pennsylvania's Hidden  
Collections Initiative for Pennsylvania Small Archival Repositories.**

---

Last updated on February 20, 2014.

Charles Albert Tindley Institute

## Table of Contents

---

Summary Information.....	3
Biography/History.....	4
Scope and Contents.....	5
Administrative Information.....	6
Controlled Access Headings.....	7

## Summary Information

---

<b>Repository</b>	Charles Albert Tindley Institute
<b>Creator</b>	Tindley Temple United Methodist Church (Philadelphia, Pa.)
<b>Title</b>	Tindley Temple United Methodist Church records
<b>Call number</b>	01
<b>Date</b>	circa 1900-2014
<b>Extent</b>	100 linear feet
<b>Language</b>	English
<b>Abstract</b>	<p>Tindley Temple United Methodist Church was founded in 1837 as the John Wesley Methodist Episcopal Church, and was later known as the Bainbridge Street Methodist Church and East Calvary Methodist Church before it was renamed after its influential pastor Charles A. Tindley in 1927. Charles Albert Tindley (1851-1933) became a pastor of the church in 1902 and vastly increased the size of the congregation during his ministry. He is nationally significant for his important role in the development of the African American gospel tradition. The Tindley Temple United Methodist Church records, circa 1900-2014, consist of membership records, church Trustee records, property and building-related documents, administrative papers, financial records, programs from church services and other events, recordings, photographs, and papers of and research on church reverends. Of note are a small amount of materials from Charles A. Tindley, including photographs of him and sermon outlines.</p>

## Biography/History

---

"The congregation that would become the Tindley Temple United Methodist Church was founded by members of "Mother" Zoar Methodist Episcopal Church in the late 1830s...and began as a group worshipping in private houses. In 1837, the John Wesley Methodist Episcopal Church was established by this group. After occupying another property...as the Bainbridge Street Methodist Church, the congregation purchased the former Westminster Presbyterian Church Building on the west side of South Broad Street south of Fitzwater Street about 1905." (Page 5)

"[Pastor Charles Albert Tindley was born in Berlin, Maryland in 1851 to a father who was a slave and mother who was a free woman of color. He was raised in a slave community and first came to Philadelphia before 1888. He found work at Bainbridge Street Methodist Church]. After preparing for the ministry (mostly through correspondence courses) and being admitted to the Delaware Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church (an African-American organization that had been founded in the Wesley Methodist Church) on trial in 1885, Tindley served congregations in New Jersey, Delaware, and Maryland before being named Presiding Elder of the conference in 1896. In 1902, Tindley returned as pastor to his former Philadelphia congregation, which changed its name in 1907 to the Calvary Methodist Episcopal Church. Its name was changed again to the East Calvary Methodist Church in 1914 as a result of a claim by another Philadelphia congregation with the same name. In the first quarter of the twentieth century, Reverend Tindley composed the ground-breaking gospel hymns for which he has become known and which remain gospel standards, including "What are they doing in Heaven" (1901), "The Storm is Passing Over" (1905), and "Stand by Me" (1905)."" (Section 8, Page 2)

"Commentators and scholars on the history of gospel music situate Reverend Tindley, whose first published music appeared in 1901, in a central and crucial role in the development of the African American gospel tradition... Tindley's, "I'll Overcome Someday," published in 1901, has been credited by numerous commentators as the [conceptual] basis for the civil rights anthem, "We Shall Overcome (Some Day)."" (Section 8, Page 4)

"His charismatic leadership of the Philadelphia African-American community and of his congregation resulted in the growth of its size from a purported 130 members at the beginning of his pastorate to [approximately] 10,000 by the 1920s. This figure was reported as one of the largest Methodist congregations in the United States, black or white. Because of this strength, the East Calvary congregation took the unusual step of commissioning its own building. The firm of Ballinger & Company was contracted in 1923 to design a new church and a building permit was issued in the fall of that year. The name of the congregation was legally changed in 1927 to Tindley Temple, and the new house of worship was dedicated in 1928. Charles A. Tindley died in Philadelphia as a result of gangrene following a foot injury in 1933." (Section 8, Page 2)

"Since Tindley's death, the main change to the church property occurred with the construction of a 1962-1963 addition on the south side of the original church designed by architect A. Hensel Fink, with John S. McQuade Company serving as contractors." (Section 8, Page 2)

Tindley Temple United Methodist Church is still an active congregation at its Broad Street location as of 2014. The church's soup kitchen, started by C. A. Tindley during the Great Depression, is still in operation. Tindley Temple maintains a reputation for its musical emphasis, notably over 50 years of performing a Messiah concert every December.

### **Bibliography:**

Quoted text from: Cooperman, Emily T. National Register of Historic Places Registration Form: Tindley Temple United Methodist Church. April 18, 2010. Accessed February 6, 2014. <http://www.preservationalliance.com/files/TindleyTempleNRHP.pdf>

---

## **Scope and Contents**

---

This collection consists of various records of the Tindley Temple United Methodist Church: membership records, church Trustee records, property and building-related documents, administrative papers, financial records, programs from church services and other events, recordings, photographs, and papers of and research on church reverends. Of note are a small amount of materials from Charles A. Tindley, including photographs of him and sermon outlines.

The membership records in this collection include membership applications, member lists, and vital records (birth, marriage, and death). There are vital records books with alphabetical listings of member names with addresses and sometimes more information about transfers, marriages, births, and deaths, 1941-1981 and 1961-2001; membership profiles and attendance records from the 1990s-2000s; and a record of church members and probationers from 1912; and other records. There are also oversize pages tracking members' donations over time, which used to hang in public view in the church in the 20th century.

A significant portion of the available church Trustees records were collected by Frances Francis, the first woman Trustee of the church. She collected meeting minutes, financial reports, investment prospectuses for the trust fund, and other documents from the 1970s to the 1990s. Trustees correspondence from circa 1935-1945 and other Trustee records, chiefly finance-related, are also part of the collection.

The property and building-related documents in the collection include deeds for property owned by the church, blueprints for church buildings, building fund records, and related documents. Of interest are "Steward Board" minutes from the group that decided to purchase the Westminster Presbyterian Church building at Broad and Fitzwater streets (the present location), 1903-1907 and 1920-1926; and mortgages from congregation members who took out second mortgages on their homes to loan money for the construction of the new church (most of these loans were never repaid).

There is a large quantity of administrative records in this collection. Minutes date from the time of the church's former location, when the congregation was known as Bainbridge Street Methodist Episcopal Church (1903-1913), and the current location and name (1941-1965); there are also scattered minutes from various church committees, most from the mid-late 20th century, although there is a Wesleyan

Service Guild minute book dating from 1945 to 1963. There are also charge conference materials from the 1970s to 1990s. (The charge conference is the basic governing body of each United Methodist local church, composed of local church council members who meet at least once per year to review and direct the work of the church.) Other administrative materials include correspondence, personnel files, grant applications, program files, scholarship applications, tax records, insurance policies and documents (circa 1910-1960s), religious education materials (1940s-1960s), and other records. There are records from the church choir, especially regarding its Annual Festival of Church Music, the Messiah Festival, 1962-1990. Of note are several "Permanent Record Books for Quarterly Conferences" filled out with attendance, committees, spiritual activities, and other member statistics, 1920s.

Financial records form another large segment of this collection, including ledgers, cancelled checks, and bank statements, spanning the 20th century. There are Bainbridge Street Methodist Episcopal Church financial records (circa 1900-1915), account books (circa 1910-1952), several pew fund ledgers (1932), promissory notes (1928-1929), check carbons (1950s), invoices and receipts (1970s-1980s), donation records, reimbursement requests, and various other financial materials, mostly from the 1980s-1990s.

The programs in the collection consist of church bulletins given out at weekly church services, dating from 1935 to the present (with some gaps), as well as programs from other church activities such as musical performances, funerals, and usher meetings. Of special interest are souvenir booklets from church anniversaries.

One of the largest groupings in this collection is the "Tape Ministry." The "Tape Ministry" consists of recordings of sermons as well as other church events, dating from 1988 to the present. The recordings are on reel-to-reel tapes, audiocassettes, and CDs, organized roughly in chronological order, and labeled with date and program. There are approximately 1,000 audiocassette tapes, about 50 reel-to-reel tapes, and numerous CDs.

The collection includes a small quantity of photographs of the congregation, church building, and events. Most date from the mid to late 20th century, but there are several original photographs of Charles A. Tindley.

Lastly, there are a small amount of records created by, as well as research on, church reverends. Of note is a volume with sermon outlines by Charles A. Tindley; there is also a book of draft sermons by a later reverend (circa 1959) and sermon drafts from the 1980s-2000s. There are also newspaper clippings and photocopied secondary source materials about Reverend Tindley and about the church, especially materials gathered for a Tindley Colloquium in the 1980s.

---

## Administrative Information

---

Charles Albert Tindley Institute

Finding aid prepared by Celia Caust-Ellenbogen and Sarah Leu through the Historical Society of Pennsylvania's Hidden Collections Initiative for Pennsylvania Small Archival Repositories.

## **Sponsor**

This preliminary finding aid was created as part of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania's Hidden Collections Initiative for Pennsylvania Small Archival Repositories. The HCI-PSAR project was made possible by a grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

## **Access Restrictions**

Some files may be restricted for privacy reasons. Contact Charles Albert Tindley Institute for information about accessing this collection.

## **Immediate Source of Acquisition Note**

Records created by Tindley Temple United Methodist Church.

## **Processing Information Note**

Summary descriptive information on this collection was compiled in 2012-2014 as part of a project conducted by the Historical Society of Pennsylvania to make better known and more accessible the largely hidden collections of small, primarily volunteer run repositories in the Philadelphia area. The Hidden Collections Initiative for Pennsylvania Small Archival Repositories (HCI-PSAR) was funded by a grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

This is a preliminary finding aid. No physical processing, rehousing, reorganizing, or folder listing was accomplished during the HCI-PSAR project.

In some cases, more detailed inventories or finding aids may be available on-site at the repository where this collection is held; please contact Charles Albert Tindley Institute directly for more information.

---

## **Controlled Access Headings**

---

### **Corporate Name(s)**

- Methodist Episcopal Church
- Tindley Temple United Methodist Church (Philadelphia, Pa.)

### **Geographic Name(s)**

- Philadelphia (Pa.)

**Personal Name(s)**

- Tindley, Charles Albert

**Subject(s)**

- African American churches
- African American clergy
- Church buildings
- Church management
- City churches
- Methodists