

**BENEVOLENT FRATERNITY OF
UNITARIAN CHURCHES
(BENEVOLENT FRATERNITY OF CHURCHES)**

Records, 1834-1962, 1997 (with gaps)

Charities Collection - CC 21

1 manuscript box	Processed September 1998 by Laura Finkel
2.5 inches	Supervising Archivists:
Accession number: 1998.046	Claire Goodwin and Joan Gearin

ACQUISITION: In 1911, the Boston Children’s Aid Society gave its entire library to the Simmons College School of Social Work Library. This library included the annual reports of many local and international welfare and charitable organizations. With the passage of time, this collection took on historical significance and in 1991, it was transferred to the Simmons College Archives.

As part of donations in 1988 and 1989, Donald Moreland, a local social worker and collector of social work history, gave the Simmons College Archives a large number of annual reports, pamphlets and other materials related to various welfare and charitable organizations. Because neither of these donations is a discrete collection, the materials transferred in 1991 from the School of Social Work Library and related materials donated by Donald Moreland were combined to form the Charities Collection. The Simmons College Archives Charities Collection consists of numerous small collections. Accession numbers for the individual collections are assigned during processing.

ACCESS: Unrestricted.

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ORGANIZATIONAL HISTORY:

In 1826, Joseph Tuckerman, a Unitarian minister, began a “mission to the poor” under the aegis of the American Unitarian Association. Tuckerman believed that religious leaders had a duty to visit and counsel the needy, the sick, and the incarcerated, regardless of religious affiliation or instruction. He called for a “*ministry at large*; a ministry whose object it shall be to seek out those, who, to be *found*, must be *sought*...”¹

¹ Joseph Tuckerman, “Letter to the Executive Committee of the Benevolent Fraternity of Churches, Respecting their Organization for the Support of the Ministry at Large in Boston,” 1834, 2-9 (quotes); Daniel T. McColgan, Joseph Tuckerman: Pioneer in American Social Work (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1940), 119-122.

In 1834, the Benevolent Fraternity of Churches (BFC), an association of Boston Unitarian churches, was formed in large part to formalize and centralize Tuckerman's Ministry At Large. The BFC also provided free chapels within the city, in accordance with Tuckerman's belief that all socio-economic classes of Christians should have a place to worship. The BFC also upheld Tuckerman's vision of social change through the promotion of self-reliance rather than charity. They did so through industrial and domestic instruction. By 1880 the BFC had delegates from eight churches and maintained four free chapels, two of which supported sewing schools for girls. By 1899 the number of BFC chapels had grown to six, each of which provided instruction in a many areas, including, literature, history, music, domestic skills, and industrial work.²

As time passed, the BFC took on several projects to serve the community, including children's summer camps, assistance for the homeless, and a long-running campaign called the Benevolent Fraternity Fruit and Flower Mission (BFFFM). The Mission fell under the direction of the BFC in 1908. Previously it was run by Helen W. Tinkham, who founded it in 1869. For nearly a hundred years, the mission distributed flowers, as well as fruits and vegetables, "to those in the city who love them but have little if any opportunity to secure them."³

At some point between 1911 and 1914 (the sources are not clear), the BFC changed its name to the Benevolent Fraternity of Unitarian Churches. The organization continued its operation with the same philosophy into the twentieth century, and still thrives today working under the name of the Unitarian Universalist Urban Ministry, located at 110 Arlington Street in Boston.⁴

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE:

The papers of the Benevolent Fraternity of Churches (1834-1962) constitutes 2.5 linear inches. The largest part of the collection is annual reports dating from 1901 to 1962 (with gaps). There are also four early discourses on the organization by leading BFC members (including Joseph Tuckerman). In addition, there a number of newsletters entitled "Our Fraternity Bulletin" covering the period from 1931 to 1941. Also included is a pamphlet issued by the Unitarian Universalist Urban Ministry in 1997.

SERIES LISTING:

² McColgan, Joseph Tuckerman, 241-243; BFC Annual Report, 1902, 2-3; Tuckerman, "Letter to the Executive Committee..." 11-13; Directory of the Charitable and Beneficent Organizations of Boston, 1880 (Boston: A. Williams, 1880), 85; Directory of Charitable and Beneficent Organizations of Boston, 1899 (Boston: Damrell and Upham, 1899), 236-237.

³ Directory of the Charitable and Beneficent Organizations of Boston, 1880, 46; BFC Annual Report, 1914-1915, 45 (quote); Directory of Social Service Resources of Greater Boston, 1947 (Boston: Greater Boston Community Council, 1947), 20; Directory of Social Health, Welfare and Rehabilitation Services in Massachusetts (Boston: Wright & Potter Printing, 1964), 13.

⁴ "Unitarian Universalist Urban Ministry," (Boston: Unitarian Universalist Urban Ministry, 1997).

SERIES I: BFC Discourse, 1834-1882 (with gaps)

SERIES II: BFC Annual Reports, 1901-1962 (with gaps)

SERIES III: Our Fraternity Bulletin, 1931-1941

SERIES IV: United Universalist Urban Ministry pamphlet, 1997

SERIES DESCRIPTIONS:

SERIES I. BFC DISCOURSE, 1834-1882 (with gaps)

This series contains four booklets issued by the BFC within the first fifty years of its existence. They deal generally with the philosophy and methods of the organization.

Joseph Tuckerman, "Letter to the Executive Committee of the Benevolent Fraternity of Churches Respecting their Organization for the Support of the Ministry at Large in Boston" (1834).

This booklet was issued by Joseph Tuckerman on the occasion of the founding of the BFC. In it Tuckerman outlined how and why he started a Ministry at Large in Boston. He also described his basic philosophy on assisting the needy, and included suggestions for a BFC method of operation.

Ezra S. Gannett, "The Object, Subjects, and Methods of the Ministry at Large: A Discourse Delivered Before the Benevolent Fraternity of Churches" (1848).

This booklet revisited the basic framework of the fraternity. Gannett described the purpose of the BFC's ministry at large, its projected beneficiaries, and its methods.

C.A. Bartol, "Jesus and Jerusalem: or Christ the Saviour and Civilizer of the World: A Discourse Preached Before the Benevolent Fraternity of Churches" (1857).

In this discourse, Bartol asserted that every human being, regardless of social class, had a right to Christian instruction, and that with that instruction each individual could become a better citizen.

R. C. Waterston, "Address by Rev. R.C. Waterston at the Public Meeting of the Benevolent Fraternity of Churches" (1882).

This address used a brief history of the Ministry at Large and its original precepts in order to validate the existing organization.

SERIES II: BFC ANNUAL REPORTS, 1901-1962 (with gaps)

The Annual Reports listed the members of the board of directors as well as the various committees. Delegates from each Unitarian church in the fraternity were also listed.

Meeting dates were included as well. The bulk of the Annual Reports was generally accounts of activities and progress of the various chapels and projects.

SERIES III: OUR FRATERNITY BULLETIN, 1931-1941

“Our Fraternity Bulletin” was a yearly BFC newsletter which outlined the progress and activities of each of the chapels and projects of the fraternity. Many also included a report from one or more officers of the board of directors. At the back of the bulletins were lists of officers, member chapels and their delegates, as well as committees and projects and their members.

SERIES IV: UNITED UNIVERSALIST URBAN MINISTRY PAMPHLET, 1997

This pamphlet was requested by the collection processor from the United Universalist Urban Ministry at the time of processing. It outlined the activities of the Benevolent Fraternity of Churches in 1997.

CONTAINER LIST:

BOX	FOLDER	SERIES
		SERIES I: BFC Discourse
1	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Joseph Tuckerman, “Letter to the Executive Committee of the Benevolent Fraternity of Churches Respecting Their Organization for the Support of the Ministry at Large in Boston,” 1834 ◆ Ezra S. Gannett, “The Object, Subjects, and Methods of the Ministry at Large: A Discourse Delivered Before the Benevolent Fraternity of Churches,” 1848 ◆ C.A. Bartol, “Jesus and Jerusalem: or Christ the Saviour and Civilizer of the World: A Discourse Preached Before the Benevolent Fraternity of Churches,” 1857 ◆ R. C. Waterston, “Address by Rev. R. C. Waterston at the Public Meeting of the Benevolent Fraternity of Churches,” 1882
		SERIES II: BFC Annual Reports
	2	1901; 1902; 1903; 1904-1905; 1905-1906
	3	1906-1907; 1907-1908; 1908-1909; 1909-1910
	4	1911-1912; 1912-1913; 1913-1914; 1914-1915
	5	1915-1916; 1916-1917; 1917-1918; 1947-1948; 1960-1961; 1961-1962
		SERIES III: Our Fraternity Bulletin

	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Vol.III, No.1(Jan. 1931) ◆ Vol.IV, No.1 (Oct. 1932) ◆ Vol.V, No.1 (Oct. 1933) ◆ Vol.VI, No.1 (Oct. 1934) ◆ Vol.VII, No.1 (Oct. 1935) ◆ Vol.VIII, No.1 (Oct. 1936) ◆ Vol.IX, No.1 (Oct. 1937) ◆ Vol.X, No.1 (May 1938) ◆ Vol.XI, No.1 (Nov. 1939) ◆ Vol.XII, No.1 (June 1940) ◆ Vol.XIII, No.1 (Oct. 1941)
	7	SERIES IV: United Universalist Urban Ministry pamphlet, 1997