

ArMs 2005.031
4 boxes: 3 record cartons,
1 flat box
(4.3 cubic feet)
4-C/9.1.E

Records of the Women's Alliance
of the First Unitarian Church
1922-2004
(Bulk dates: 1980-1998)

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January-March, 2007
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Introduction

This collection holds the records of the Women's Alliance, an organization operating under the agency of the First Unitarian Church of Brooklyn, located at 50 Monroe Place in Brooklyn Heights, New York. The collection contains three record carton boxes and one oversize flat box, and encompasses the period of the resurgence of the Women's Alliance during the latter half of the twentieth century as a socially conscious and active organization. The inclusive dates span from 1922 to 2004, with bulk dates ranging from 1980 to 1998. The Women's Alliance records consist primarily of organizational material, including meeting minutes, correspondence, and financial documents. A number of records also reveal the group's relationships with other female-oriented and religious organizations. The Brooklyn Historical Society Library received this collection directly from the Women's Alliance and accessioned it as 2005.031. There are no restrictions on the use of this collection.

Historical Note

Unitarian Universalism exists as a liberal movement in faith that holds historic roots in Christian Protestantism and Jewish spirituality. UU congregations serve to keep an open mind to the religious questions people struggle with. Congregations are self-governing in the Congregationalist tradition, and members are not required to subscribe to any Protestant creed.¹ The First Unitarian Church of Brooklyn originated out of a need for members to attend services closer to home instead of in Manhattan. The founders of the Church held the first worship service and Sunday School in August of 1833, and shortly afterward purchased property at 50 Monroe Place in Brooklyn Heights. The founders commissioned architect Minard Lafever to design the church building, which was dedicated in 1844. The history of the congregants of First Unitarian Church includes active involvement in youth work, assistance for immigrants, and support for women's rights and the twentieth century Civil Rights movement.²

The Women's Alliance of the First Unitarian Church of Brooklyn began as the Female Samaritan Society in 1838, several years after the Church's founding. The group assisted in raising money for pulpit furnishings for the church, yet women were not allowed to attend annual meetings of the congregation until 1848. Members of the group also took responsibility for all the physical housekeeping of the church, ran the church's annual fundraising fair, and helped with parish duties such as visiting the sick and cooking for the congregation. In 1897, church women formed a second organization called the Women's Alliance, and shortly after, the Female Samaritan Society united with the Women's Alliance to form the Samaritan Alliance. The united group continued with fundraising efforts and relief work.

The Samaritan Alliance underwent periods of relative inactivity during the twentieth century. In 1973, Katherine Lazarus resurrected the group as the Women's Alliance. Female congregants increasingly held full-time jobs outside of the household and felt the effects of gender disparity in society. The organization emerged in new form under Lazarus as a primarily issue-oriented group concerned with social action and women's rights matters such as reproductive freedom and comparable worth. The group also advocated within the church to establish and maintain female ministerial presence, with members sponsoring female theological students as assistant ministers and supporting the employment of Reverend Orlanda Brugnola. A newsletter, *Women's Work*, is published by the group and sent to

¹ "About Unitarian Universalism." Unitarian Universalist Association. <http://www.uua.org/aboutuu/>

² Hoogenboom, Olive. "History." First Unitarian Congregational Society in Brooklyn. <http://www.firstuubrooklyn.org/history.html>

members and to organizations with similar missions. Other activities included holding educational programs on women's history, workshops for young mothers, donation drives, and encouraging use of the Women's Alliance library collection. Members additionally organized events for the entire church, such as the trip to the "March for Women's Equality/Women's Lives" event in Washington, D.C. in 1989.

The Women's Alliance observed its 150th anniversary in 1988 with a celebration that involved a proclamation from Brooklyn Borough President Howard Golden. In 2003, members celebrated the thirtieth anniversary of the landmark *Roe vs. Wade* Supreme Court decision with a commemorative sermon. The Alliance remains active today, and members continue to represent a broad spectrum of views that reflect the liberal beliefs and practices of Unitarian Universalism. The group participates in the exploration of feminist theology but provides support for men and women alike.

Scope and Content

This collection consists of 4.3 cubic feet of the records of the Women's Alliance of the First Unitarian Church of Brooklyn, 1922-2004 (bulk dates: 1980-1998). The records are housed in three record cartons and one flat box for oversized items. The collection is arranged into seven series:

- I. Administrative Records, 1976-2003
- II. Meeting Minutes, 1974-2003
- III. General Correspondence and Related Material, 1976-2003
- IV. Accounting and Financial, 1922-2004
- V. Subject Files, 1961-2003
- VI. Printed Materials, 1977-2003
- VII. Photographs, 1989

Items range from poor to excellent condition, with most recent materials in better condition.

Series I, Administrative Records, 1976-2003, consists of administrative records created by the Women's Alliance. These materials include annual reports, calendars, and the constitution and by-laws of the Alliance. A large quantity of records pertaining to event and workshop planning are arranged into chronological folders. Membership lists, 1976-2003 (1:9), remain significant because they include information regarding elected officers. Items in this series are in good condition.

Series II, Meeting Minutes, 1973-2003, holds records of the monthly meeting minutes of the Women's Alliance executive board, as well as minutes from the group's annual general meetings. Minutes detail which officers were present, who presided over the meeting, and when it was called to order and adjourned. Topics in the minutes cover all organizational matters such as development, public relations, and programming. Additionally, minutes note upcoming social action events of interest. Some meeting minutes also have attached agendas, reports on finances, and program planning materials. Items in this series are in good to excellent condition.

Series III, General Correspondence and Related Material, 1976-2003, consists of internal correspondence between members of the Women's Alliance, between the Alliance and officers of the First Unitarian Church, and external correspondence between the Alliance and other organizations. These different types of correspondence are grouped together and arranged in chronological order. They include typewritten letters, faxes, handwritten notes, postcards, and drafts of correspondence. Printouts of email correspondence comprise a very small portion of the series, and some correspondence retains attachments such as newspaper clippings and forms. Items are in fair to

excellent condition. Thermofax records and some fragile clippings were photocopied onto acid-free paper, to be discarded.

The fourth series, *Accounting and Financial, 1922-2004*, is composed of treasurer's reports and budgets, annotated pages of finances from ledgers, checkbooks, records of expenses, and banking statements. The series includes three folders (4:1-3) of financial records created by Loretta Anagnost, who served as the Women's Alliance Treasurer from May, 1995 to May, 1997. One oversized expense ledger is separated from the series into a flat oversize box. Two Bank of America checkbooks from the Samaritan Alliance survive as the oldest items, one dating from 1922 to 1925 and the other from 1925 to 1927. They are in fair condition with worn but intact bindings. There exists a gap between 1927 and 1974 in this series; the bulk dates are 1974 to 2003. The materials aside from the checkbooks are in good condition.

Women's Alliance members vigorously engaged in advocacy and outreach in addition to functional activity. Materials relating to such involvement make up *Series V, Subject Files, 1961-2003*. Subjects are arranged alphabetically and vary from abortion rights materials to records pertaining to the library of the Alliance. Other matters in the series include the book discussion group, an older women's group, the Miriam Campobasso Memorial Fund for terminally ill congregants, and the sewing group. One notable item is the manuscript proof for Alliance member Marjory Odessky's book, *The First Seventy-Two Years: A Collection of Three Talks on Women's Suffrage in the United States Covering the Years from 1842 to 1920* (5:5). The folder for the sewing group (5:8) holds a date book that contains notes documenting the progress of members' work from 1961 to 1969. It is in fair condition, and the book is the only item in the entire collection dating from the 1960s. Other items in this series are in very good condition.

Series VI, Printed Materials, 1977-2003, encompasses printed documents created by the Women's Alliance and the First Unitarian Church of Brooklyn. Members of the Alliance collected church programs and printed transcripts of sermons. The series also includes items pertaining to work published by the Church, such as a 'handbook' and a cookbook of recipes submitted by congregants. The Women's Alliance published informational brochures about the group and its history. The quarterly newsletter of the Alliance, *Women's Work*, makes up the bulk of the series, with issues dating from 1982 to 1997. Two oversized items, a mock-up invitation for the Alliance's Equal Rights Amendment fundraising party and a proclamation for the Women's Alliance 150th Anniversary, are separate from the series in the flat box. Two folders comprise items not created by the Church or the Women's Alliance—those that originated from other organizations and newspaper and magazine clippings. Items in Series VI are in very good condition, and clippings were photocopied onto acid-free paper.

Series VII, Photographs, 1989, is arranged in two folders. The first folder contains numerous 4x6 inch color photographs from the Women's Alliance trip to the "March for Women's Equality/Women's Lives" in Washington, D.C. on April 9, 1989. Several of these pictures are labeled "Anagnost" on the reverse. The second folder holds two undated 4x6 inch color photographs from a Women's Alliance program. The items in this series are in fair to good condition but the edges of some pictures are beginning to show evidence of yellowing.

Processing Note

The collection originally consisted of five record cartons and three oversize items that lacked housing. Materials were already divided into meeting minutes, correspondence, financial records, and

publications. Binders were removed from the collection and their contents placed into appropriate series. Three record cartons remained after processing, and the three oversize items were placed into one flat box, resulting in four boxes total for the collection.

Related Material in the Othmer Library of Brooklyn Historical Society

First Unitarian Church Records, partially surveyed (ArMs 1989.002).

First Unitarian Church of Brooklyn, Samaritan Alliance Records, 1833-1968, at the First Unitarian Church of Brooklyn.

Hoogenboom, Olive. *The First Unitarian Church of Brooklyn, One Hundred Fifty Years: A History*. 1987.

Odessky, Marjory H. *The First Seventy-Two Years: A Collection of Three Talks on Women's Suffrage in the United States Covering the Years from 1842 to 1920*. Talks given by Marjory H. Odessky at the First Unitarian Congregational Society in Brooklyn. 1992.

Access Points

Names – Individuals:

Anagnost, Loretta
Brugnola, Orlanda
Campobasso, Miriam
Hoogenboom, Olive
Lazarus, Katharine
Odessky, Marjory

Names – Corporate:

First Unitarian Church of Brooklyn (Brooklyn, New York, N.Y.)
First Unitarian Church of Brooklyn (Brooklyn, New York, N.Y.). Women's Alliance
Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation

Subject Headings:

Brooklyn (New York, N.Y.) – Church history
Brooklyn (New York, N.Y.) – Religious life
Brooklyn (New York, N.Y.) – Social life and customs
Feminism – Brooklyn (New York, N.Y.)
Pro-choice movement – Brooklyn (New York, N.Y.)
Religion and social problems – New York (State) – New York
Social action – New York (State) – New York – History – 20th century
Unitarianism – New York (State) – New York – History
Women in religion – Brooklyn (New York, N.Y.)
Women clergy
Women's rights and spiritualism – Brooklyn (New York, N.Y.)

Form/Gênre:

Clippings
Correspondence
Minutes
Photographs

Container List

Series 1: Administrative Records, 1976-2003

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder Title</u>	<u>Dates</u>
1	1 Annual reports	1982-1999
	2 Calendars and scheduling	1983-2003
	3 Constitution and By-Laws	1982-1998
	4 Event and workshop planning materials	1977-1989
	5 Event and workshop planning materials	1990-1999
	6 Event and workshop planning materials	2000-2003
	7 Public relations	1982-2003
	8 Membership forms	1983-2003
	9 Membership lists	1976-2003

Series 2: Meeting Minutes, 1974-2003

1	1 Executive board minutes	1974-1975
	2 Executive board minutes	1976-1977
	3 Executive board minutes	1978-1979
	4 Executive board minutes	1980-1981
	5 Executive board minutes	1982-1983
	6 Executive board minutes	1984-1985
	7 Executive board minutes	1986-1987
	8 Executive board minutes	1988-1989
	9 Executive board minutes	1990-1991
	10 Executive board minutes	1992-1993
	11 Executive board minutes	1994-1995
	12 Executive board minutes	1996-1997
	13 Executive board minutes	1998-1999
	14 Executive board minutes	2000-2001
	15 Executive board minutes	2002-2003
2	16 Meeting-related materials	1972-1980
	17 Duplicate copies of minutes	1982-1995

Series 3: General Correspondence and Related Materials, 1976-2003

2	1	Correspondence	1976-1980
	2	Correspondence	1981-1985
	3	Correspondence	1986-1990
	4	Correspondence	1991-1995
2	5	Correspondence	1996-2003

Series 4: Accounting and Financial, 1922-2004

2	1	Financial records held by Loretta Anagnost, Treasurer	1995-1996
	2	Financial records held by Loretta Anagnost, Treasurer	1996-1997
	3	Financial records held by Loretta Anagnost, Treasurer	1996-1999
	4	Treasurer's reports and budgets	1977-1987
	5	Treasurer's reports and budgets	1988-2004
	6	Expenses: invoices and receipts	1981-2000
	7	Paid checks and deposit tickets	1994-1997
	8	Account statements	1997-1998
	9	Mutual fund and money market statements	1994-1995
	10	Grants and fundraising	1983-2003
	11	Donations given to outside organizations	1984-1994
	12	Member payments	1995-1998
	13	Financial forms	1981-1987
	14	Ledger pages	1982-1997
	15	The Bank of America checkbook of the Samaritan Alliance	1922-1925
	16	The Bank of America checkbook of the Samaritan Alliance	1925-1927
	17	First National City Bank checkbook	1974-1979
3	18	Check register	1982-1986
4	19	Oversized expense ledger	1988-1994

Series 5: Subject Files, 1961-2003

3	1	Abortion rights materials	1981-2003
	2	Book discussion group	1983-2003

3	Doris and Dan Sage Program	1999
4	Library of the Women's Alliance	1985-1995
5	Manuscript proof: <i>The First Seventy-Two Years</i> by Marjory Odessky	1992
6	Miriam Campobasso Memorial Fund	undated, 1996-1997
7	Older Women's Group	undated
8	Sewing Group	1961-1969
9	Social action/protest materials	1986-2001

Series 6: Printed Materials, 1977-2003

3	1	Church programs and sermons	1977-1989
	2	Church programs and sermons	1990-2003
	3	Church publications	1982-1998
	4	Women's Alliance brochures	1982-2001
	5	Newsletter: <i>Women's Work</i> : drafts	1993-1994
	6	Newsletter: <i>Women's Work</i>	1982-1984
	7	Newsletter: <i>Women's Work</i>	1985-1986
	8	Newsletter: <i>Women's Work</i>	1987-1988
	9	Newsletter: <i>Women's Work</i>	1989-1990
	10	Newsletter: <i>Women's Work</i>	1991-1992
	11	Newsletter: <i>Women's Work</i>	1993-1994
	12	Newsletter: <i>Women's Work</i>	1995-1996
	13	Newsletter: <i>Women's Work</i>	1997
	14	Publications from Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation (UUWF) and other organizations	1985-2003
4	15	Oversized mock-up for Equal Rights Amendment Fundraising party invitation	1982
4	16	Oversized Proclamation for the Women's Alliance 150 th Anniversary: from Howard Golden	1988
3	17	Newspaper and magazine clippings	1982-2001

Series 7: Photographs, 1989

3	1	Photos from Women's Alliance trip to the March for Women's Equality/Women's Lives in Washington, D.C. (Apr. 9, 1989)	1989
	2	Photos from Women's Alliance program	undated