

church

St. John's Institutional Activities

INCORPORATED



Springfield, Massachusetts

1926



ST. JOHN'S CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
REV. WILLIAM N. DEBERRY, D.D., Minister
REV. ROLAND T. HEACOCK, Associate

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INTERIOR VIEW OF ST. JOHN'S CHURCH

ST. JOHN'S INSTITUTIONAL ACTIVITIES, INCORPORATED

THIS booklet is a revision of a similar booklet published in 1921 to meet the frequent demand for information regarding the institutional work of St. John's Church.

The St. John's Congregational Church was organized in 1890 by the union of the old Sanford Street Free Church and the Quincy Street Mission. It was in the Sanford Street Church that John Brown worshipped with the colored people during his residence in Springfield. The Church takes pride in the fact of this association with the "Hero of Harper's Ferry" and it preserves as a valued treasure the old "John Brown Bible" which was the pulpit Bible of the parent church in those early interesting days of its history.

The Church seeks to adapt its work directly to the religious and varied social needs of the community to which it ministers. In addition to the ordinary form of church organization, the membership which on May 1, 1926 numbered 489, is divided into 17 groups known as "Circles for Service." These circles are designated alphabetically and each has a chairman, secretary and treasurer. The work of the Church as a whole is thus facilitated and responsibility more widely distributed than would be possible were the membership to work as a single group.

Few if any colored churches of the country are more fortunate than St. John's in its plant and equipment. The present edifice, erected in 1911, occupies a desirable site at the corner of Hancock and Union Streets and is a model in architecture and general arrangement. It is modern in all its appointments, being designed especially for institutional work.

An almost insoluble problem with the church of our day is that of giving its members something to do aside from money raising for its own support. The institutional church has made a long step toward the solution of this difficult problem.

The Springfield Church Survey, edited by Dr. H. Paul Douglass and published in 1926 by the Institute of Social and Religious Research, places the following estimate on the work of St. John's Church: "St. John's is one of the most highly developed Negro churches in America and perhaps the most highly organized single church in the city of Springfield. It reflects the essential initiative of a group suffering definite, though not extreme, social handicaps, and the development of remedies through the church and through internal resident leadership. This is a distinct variety of church development. The church has the obvious and outstanding marks of what may be called a socially adapted church."



STAFF OF PAID WORKERS

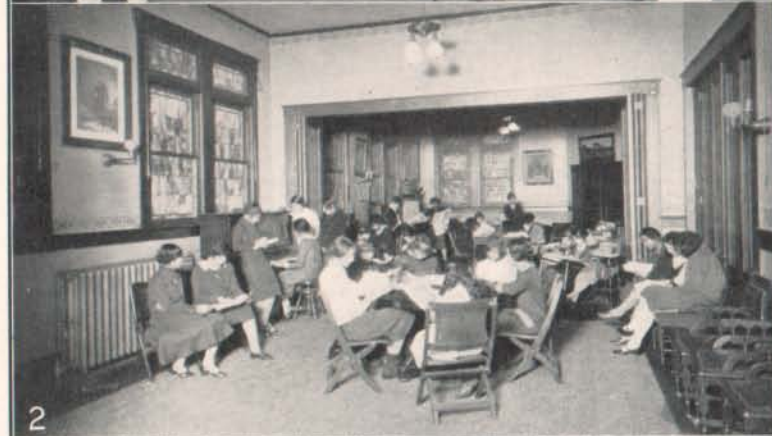
FRONT ROW—LEFT TO RIGHT—REV. ROLAND T. HEACOCK, Associate Minister and Director of Work Among Men and Boys; MRS. AMANDA DEBERRY, Matron of Parish Home; REV. WILLIAM N. DEBERRY, Minister and Executive; MISS LUCILE V. LACOUR, Social Worker Among Women and Girls; GEORGE C. GORDON, Assistant Executive and Treasurer.
 BACK ROW—EUGENE HARRIS, Caretaker at St. John's Camp; MRS. BERTHA L. PERRY, Assistant Matron of Parish Home; LEWIS V. JACKSON, Caretaker of Plant; MRS. REBECCA ADAMS, Matron of St. John's Club for Boys; MISS HELEN E. VICK, Clerk and Stenographer; NAPOLEON P. DOTSON, Assistant Boys' Work Director.

THE INSTITUTIONAL CORPORATION

The institutional work, which now includes seven departments, is incorporated under the name of "St. John's Institutional Activities." The membership of this corporation includes prominent Springfield citizens of both races. The organization occupies a recognized place among the charitable and social agencies of Springfield and with them it cooperates freely in the common task of community social betterment. From the beginning, it has refused to allow its work to be bound by denominational lines. Its benefits and privileges are offered alike to all regardless of religious belief or church affiliation. The present officers are as follows: President, Mrs. Eliza R. Whiting; Vice-President, George E. Robinson; Executive Secretary, Rev. William N. DeBerry; Treasurer and Assistant Executive, George C. Gordon; Committee of Management: Rev. William N. DeBerry, George C. Gordon, Alexander Hughes; Directors: Miss Mary M. Atwater, Lyman W. Besse, H. H. Bowman, Edward S. Bradford, William N. DeBerry, Ralph W. Ellis, Rev. James G. Gilkey, George C. Gordon, Alexander Hughes, Mrs. Columbia Johnson, J. Stuart Kirkham, Mrs. Herbert Myrick, Henry Phrame, George D. Pratt, George E. Robinson, Joseph S. Sawyer, Edward L. Shephard, John H. Sherley, Miss Annie C. Stebbins, Edward A. Treadwell, Mrs. Eliza R. Whiting, T. K. McAllister.

The staff of paid workers now numbers eleven persons, seven of whom devote full time to the work.

The annual meeting of the Corporation is held on the first Wednesday in October of each year.



1. CLASS IN COOKING
2. SOCIAL CENTER FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS
3. CLASS IN SEWING



CLASS IN PHYSICAL CULTURE

SOCIAL CENTER FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS

Two spacious and attractive rooms in the church building serve as a Social Center for women and girls of the community. This center is in charge of the Social Worker among women and girls and open in the evenings from seven until ten o'clock. It is equipped with varied facilities for rest and recreation and has a library of selected books. The reading tables are supplied with newspapers, the leading race journals and a dozen or more good magazines. It serves also as the meeting place of various organizations, both religious and social. From five until seven thirty o'clock on Sunday afternoons the Center is used as the meeting place of the Young People's Forum and is open to young people of both sexes for social contact and entertainment.

In connection with the Social Center clubs and classes for women and girls are conducted, meeting on week-day afternoons and evenings.

The subjects taught in the classes are cooking, sewing, physical culture, arts and crafts.

There are 6 clubs, namely, the Home-Makers, Quicka Shan, Be Square, Wohelo, Rainbow Achievement and Sunbeam Achievement with enrollments varying respectively from 12 to 28. The nature of the work done by these clubs is either educational, industrial or dramatic. The classes and clubs are under the supervision of the Social Worker who is assisted in the instruction by teachers from the city public schools.



1. CLASS IN PRINTING
2. THE BOYS' CLUB
3. BASKET BALL TEAM

ST. JOHN'S CLUB FOR BOYS AND YOUNG MEN

The St. John's Club located at 154 Quincy Street is a popular social center for the boys and young men of the community. To these it offers a desirable substitute for the street as a place in which to spend their leisure evening hours. The purpose of the organization is the moral, physical and mental development of its members. The building now occupied by the Club—a former dwelling house of 12 rooms—is already inadequate to the growing demands of its work.

A troop of Boy Scouts (Troop 29) with headquarters at the Club was organized recently. The troop now has a membership of 23 and promises to take high rank among the 50 troops of Springfield.

Athletics fill a large place in the Club's program. Its basket ball teams compete in the Junior, Intermediate and Senior divisions of the Springfield Sunday School Athletic League and have won several championship trophies.

A small but well equipped print shop is operated in connection with the Club. Instruction in the fundamentals of printing is thus provided for such boys as wish to take the course.

The recreation room at the Club is used on frequent occasions for small assemblies, parties and sociables by groups not affiliated with the organization.



ST. JOHN'S PARISH HOUSE

PARISH HOME FOR WORKING GIRLS

The St. John's Parish Home for Working Girls is located at 643 Union St. The building, together with its furnishings, represents an expenditure of more than \$15,000. It is of the same architectural style and finish as the church building to which it is adjacent, and is thoroughly modern in construction and equipment. It contains twenty-six rooms, including the minister's living apartment and the office of the Church and Corporation.

Its purpose is to offer to colored working girls and women the advantages and protection of a well-ordered, Christian home and it is open alike to all regardless of religious persuasion. It is conducted much after the plan of a Y. W. C. A. home. Here women and girls who come to the city as strangers may, at a nominal cost, secure accommodations for either a transient or permanent period. Here also they are aided in finding employment and given protection against the many dangers to which the homeless young woman in every large city is exposed.

The free employment bureau which is conducted in connection with the Home is one of the busiest departments of our work.



VESTED CHOIR

DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC

The musical gifts of the Negro people are well-known and generally appreciated. It is quite natural, therefore, that music should fill a large place in the program of our work. The Church is exceedingly fortunate both in the quantity, quality and variety of musical talent among its young people. A senior choir of 20 voices and a junior female choir of 15 voices are in regular service at the Church and Sunday School.

Special emphasis is placed on the cultivation of the Negro spirituals and jubilee songs. Owing to the popularity of this latter music and the high excellence of its rendition by our singers, their service is in constant demand for concerts.

A two manual pipe organ built by the Steere Organ Company and valued at seven thousand dollars, a Krakauer baby grand piano and four uprights of other standard makes are a part of our musical equipment.



DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING
CORNER APARTMENT BLOCK AT 81 ORLEANS ST.



DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING
HOUSING PROPERTIES FROM 138 TO 156 QUINCY ST.

THE HOUSING DEPARTMENT

One of the most important divisions of the varied work of our institution is its housing department. Of the many problems which developed in connection with the recent exodus of Negroes from the South, the problem of adequately housing the new comers in the North was probably the most acute and difficult.

In its efforts to aid in the solution of this problem in Springfield, the St. John's Institutional Activities hit upon a novel scheme which has thus far met with gratifying success. A friend of our work was induced to purchase an apartment block to be let to colored families under the supervision of our organization. This property was later deeded to the Corporation with the understanding that the net earnings realized from rentals should be devoted to the maintenance of its work. The example of this friend, who later made similar substantial gifts to our cause, was followed by others. Largely as the result of this benevolence we are today housing 25 families in properties owned either by the Church or the Corporation and free from mortgage incumbrance. We hope to develop this plan of service to the people and this form of endowment for our work.



DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING

1. 616 AND 620 UNION ST.
2. 40 HANCOCK ST.

3. 72 MARION ST.
4. 613-615 UNION ST.



1. THE OLD HOMESTEAD ON THE CAMP FARM
2. THE CAMP HOUSE
3. CARETAKER'S COTTAGE

ST. JOHN'S CAMP FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

St. John's Camp is located on Lake Lashaway at East Brookfield, Mass. The adjoining farm of 50 acres, which was a gift to our organization in 1920, affords ample facilities for gardening, poultry raising and instruction in the fundamentals of agriculture.

Campers are housed in tents and a modern camp house.

Lake Lashaway, a most beautiful body of water, is a mile long and a half mile wide. It is one of the popular resorts of central Massachusetts and its shores are dotted with several camps and many summer cottages. The Camp occupies a commanding site on the north shore of the lake at which point it has a frontage of six hundred feet of clean sand beach. The camping period of two months is divided between boys and girls.

East Brookfield is 35 miles east of Springfield on the Boston & Albany Railroad. The state highway, known as the Boston Post Road, passes directly through the village making it easily accessible by auto.

The recent gift of a Reo speed wagon by a Boston friend of our work enables us to transport campers from New England cities and towns at a rate substantially lower than that demanded by the railroads or other common carriers. Arrangements for such transportation of groups may be made at any time during the camping season.

The total enrollment last season was 141. Of this number 54 were boys and 87 girls. These campers came from the cities of Springfield, Boston, Worcester, New Haven, Hartford and New York. The Camp is also used each year by numbers of persons who come for week-end outings, or picnic parties for a single day. A folder giving detailed information about the operation of the Camp will be mailed to any address on request.



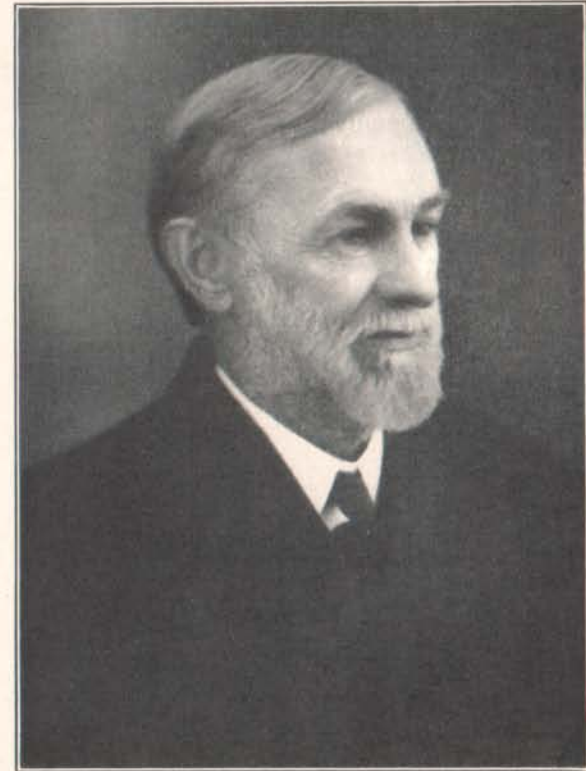
1. GIRLS' PATROL No. 1
2. FLAG RAISING
3. RECREATION ROOM IN CAMP HOUSE



1. BOY SCOUTS AT CAMP
2. READY FOR A DIP IN THE LAKE
3. THE LIFE SAVING SQUAD



1. GIRL SCOUTS AT CAMP
2. SETTING UP EXERCISES
3. GIRLS AT WORK IN CAMP GARDEN



FRANK BEEBE

A GENEROUS FRIEND

Any story of the work of St. John's Church and its Institutional Activities would be gravely deficient which failed to recognize the large and important part which the late Frank Beebe had in its development. Mr. Beebe was, during his lifetime, the most generous friend of our cause. It was his generosity which made possible the possession of the housing properties which constitute one of our chief assets. From his estate also, through the friendly offices of the Service League Foundation of Springfield, established by himself, we have received one gift of \$15,000 for the liquidation of mortgages and another of \$50,000 for the Endowment Fund. For a period of twelve years, Mr. Beebe kept in close personal touch with our work, following every step of its development and progress with keenest interest. In his death which occurred on January 1, 1922, our cause, together with the many others in which he was deeply interested, sustained an irreparable loss.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

The annual budget of the Institutional Activities is approximately \$20,000. This budget is supplied by an appropriation from the Springfield Community Chest, the voluntary contributions of friends and the income of an endowment. This endowment consists of the housing properties owned by the organization and a special fund of approximately \$100,000.

The demands of normal expansion and the maintenance of the work in its present degree of efficiency make it imperative that this endowment be increased. It is our earnest hope that the work herein described may yet find other able and generous friends who will thus aid in placing it on a firm and permanent financial foundation.

CONCLUSION

The work of the organization is now well-known and its influence as an example of institutional church work is widespread throughout the country. It is affiliated with the National Urban League for Social Service Among Negroes, an organization with headquarters in New York and branches in 31 other cities.

The great service which these and similar organizations rendered in connection with the recent Negro exodus to the North illustrated the importance and the need of the work they are doing. The problems of industrial adjustment, of housing and of adaption to a new social environment were some of the serious and difficult problems produced by this exodus and which could not have been met but for the intelligent cooperation of these agencies.

In every community, both North and South, where the two races live in large numbers there should be organized, cooperative effort between them for the study and solution of race problems and the harmonious adjustment of race relations.

The need of such cooperation in the North has been magnified greatly by the coming hither of so many Negroes within the past few years.

If the traditional friendly attitude of the North toward the Negro is to be maintained, both the character and the condition of the Negro in the North must be such as to justify it. It is but reasonable to suppose that the sudden, abnormal increase of the Negro's numbers on northern soil, such as the war brought about, would threaten this friendly feeling. It is in view of such latent possibilities in our race relations in Springfield that the St. John's Institutional Activities pursues its broad program of social betterment among the Negro people of the city. At the same time it seeks to interpret to the community at large the longings and higher ideals of a handicapped but hopeful and aspiring people.