

SMITH, JOHN OWEN, 1902-.

John Owen Smith papers, 1921-1996

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Descriptive Summary

Creator:	Smith, John Owen, 1902-.
Title:	John Owen Smith papers, 1921-1996
Call Number:	Manuscript Collection No. 242
Extent:	22.1 cubic ft. (23 boxes)
Abstract:	Contains correspondence, subject files, sermons, and notebooks from the career of John Owen Smith.
Language:	Materials entirely in English.

Administrative Information

Restrictions on Access

Collection stored off-site. Researchers must contact the Pitts Theology Library in advance to access this collection.

Terms Governing Use and Reproduction

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Custodial History

Formerly MSS562, Manuscripts, Archives, and Rare Books Library, Emory University.

Citation

[after identification of item(s)], John Owen Smith Papers, Archives and Manuscript Dept., Pitts Theology Library, Emory University.

Processing

Processed by Joan Clemens and Aimee Morgan, 2004-2006.

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Collection Description

Biographical Note

John Owen Smith, Methodist clergyman, bishop, and educator, was born 21 September 1902, in Johnston, South Carolina, and died 3 December 1978, in Atlanta, Georgia. He earned his divinity degree from Yale Divinity School, served in parishes in South Carolina (1954-1960), and was appointed bishop to the Atlanta Area of the United Methodist Church in 1960. During his tenure in Atlanta (1960-1972), racial integration of the North and South Georgia Conferences of the Methodist Church was accomplished. After his retirement in 1972, he taught part-time (1972-1976) in Emory University's Candler School of Theology.

John Owen Smith was married to Mildred Brown. They had two daughters.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of John Owen Smith document his years as a B.D. student at Yale Divinity School, his pastoral appointments in South Carolina, and his time as Bishop of the Atlanta area of the Methodist Church (later the United Methodist Church). The collection includes correspondence, subject files, sermons, and notebooks from all phases of Smith's career.

Smith presided over the Atlanta area during one of the most tumultuous phases of his church's history. In 1968 the Methodist Church merged with the Evangelical United Brethren Church. The terms of the merger required that the Central Jurisdiction (which consisted entirely of black churches) be abolished, and that all annual conferences be integrated. Smith's files, particularly his correspondence, illustrate the strong leadership he provided during the merger of the black Georgia Conference with the historically white North and South Georgia Conferences.

Arrangement Note

Organized into 4 series: (1) Ministry in South Carolina, (2) Ministry in Georgia, (3) Writings, and (4) Family Papers.

Description of Series

[Series 1: Ministry in South Carolina, 1929-1960, undated](#)

[Series 2: Ministry in Georgia, 1957-1985, undated](#)

[Series 3: Writings, 1921-1976, undated](#)

[Series 4: Family Papers, 1946-1996, undated](#)

Series 1
Ministry in South Carolina, 1929-1960, undated
Box 18

Scope and Content Note

Subject files related to Smith's pastoral appointments in South Carolina. Topics include race relations, women in the church, youth and young people's assemblies, and church school.

Arrangement Note

Arranged alphabetically.

Box	Folder	Content
18	1	Bulletins from South Carolina Churches, 1942-1952
18	2-3	The Church, Clippings and Miscellaneous, 1931-1943, undated
18	4	Church School Material, 1934-1942
18	5	Conclusion of Term as District Superintendent, 1960
18	6	Faith, 1930-1958, undated
18	7	Funeral Materials, 1933-1946, undated
18	8	Intermediate Work Seminar, 1934, undated
18	9	Leadership Training Materials, 1932-1935
18	10	Letters and Resolutions Recommending J.O. Smith, 1934-1960
18	11-12	Miscellaneous, 1941, undated
18	13	Missions, 1938-1954, undated
18	14	Pastoral Leadership, undated
18	15	Poems, Quotations, etc., undated
18	16-17	Prayer, 1929-1941, undated
18	18	Prayer Meeting Notes, 1934-1935, undated
18	19	Race, 1939-1942, undated
18	20	South Carolina, 1940-1943
18	21	Student Worker Seminar, 1934-1936, undated
18	22-23	Upper South Carolina Conference, 1936-1944
18	24	Washington Street Methodist Church, Columbia, SC, 1938-1945
18	25	Washington Street Methodist Church, Columbia, SC, Correspondence, 1940-1945
18	26	Women and the Church, undated
18	27	World Council of Churches, 1954
18	28	Worship, 1937, undated
18	29-30	Young People's Assemblies, Upper South Carolina Conference, 1932-1934
18	31	Youth, 1937, undated

Series 2
Ministry in Georgia, 1957-1985, undated
Boxes 1-21

Scope and Content Note

Subseries 1 contains correspondence, most of which concerns church appointments and other routine congregational business. Some materials relate to race relations, communism, prayer in public schools, the Vietnam War, the "God is Dead" theology, and other 1960s controversies. The 1968 merger of the Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren Church is also noted. Of particular interest is correspondence related to the 1972 General Conference in Atlanta. Rev. Cecil Williams of San Francisco had been invited to address the conference at an afternoon service held at First United Methodist Church. The minister of First United attempted to withdraw the church's invitation for use of their facility by the General Conference in response to controversy regarding Williams' ministry to the gay and lesbian community, drug users, and prostitutes. Bishop Smith insisted that, under the United Methodist connectional system, a minister did not have the right to refuse the use of church facilities to the General Conference. Smith's incoming correspondence documents the sharp criticism he received from many Georgia Methodists, and his responses to his critics illustrate his conviction that he had made the right decision.

Subseries 2 consists of subject files from Smith's years as bishop in the Atlanta Area. Many files concern administrative bodies of the North and South Georgia Conferences, including the Board of Education, the Board of Evangelism, and the Board of Missions. Other files concern the church's Southeastern Jurisdiction and national administrative units such as the General Board of Education. There are several folders of programs from church services and other events at which Smith spoke. Also included are a few files that document his post-retirement activities, such as the courses he taught at Candler School of Theology.

Arrangement Note

Arranged alphabetically and chronologically.

Correspondence, 1960-1985

Box	Folder	Content
1		Correspondence, 1960–1961 May
2		Correspondence, 1961 June–1962 Jan
3		Correspondence, 1962 Feb–Dec
4		Correspondence, 1963 Jan–Oct
5		Correspondence, 1963 Nov–1964 June
6		Correspondence, 1964 July–1965 April
7		Correspondence, 1965 May–Dec
8		Correspondence, 1966 Jan–Aug
9		Correspondence, 1966 Sep–1967 May
10		Correspondence, 1967 June–1968 June
11		Correspondence, 1968 July–1969 July

- 12 Correspondence, 1969 Aug–1970 May
- 13 Correspondence, 1970 June–1971 Feb
- 14 Correspondence, 1971 Mar–Nov
- 15 Correspondence, 1971 Dec–1972 June
- 18 32 Correspondence, 1961-1977
- 18 33-34 Correspondence, 1968
- 18 35 Correspondence, 1968-1972
- 18 36 Correspondence, 1970-1971
- 16 1-2 Correspondence, Alphabetical, 1960-1963
- 18 37-39 Correspondence, Cecil Williams, 1972
- 19 1-3 Correspondence, Cecil Williams, 1972
- 19 4-8 Correspondence, Congratulatory Letters, 1960
- 19 9 Correspondence, Invitations to Preach, 1975-1978
- 19 10 Correspondence, Ministerial Candidates, 1963-1972
- 19 11 Correspondence, Personal, 1972-1978, 1985
- 19 12-13 Correspondence, Responses to *Advocate* Article by Mildred Brown Smith,
1969-1970
- 19 14 Correspondence, Thanks re: General Conference, 1972

Subject Files, 1957-1977, undated

- 16 3 Amendment [12], 1961
- 16 4 American Bible Society, 1957-1960
- 16 5 Area Planning Conference, 1961-1965
- 16 6 Bishops, 1960-1964
- 19 15 Bishop's Report, 1972
- 16 7 Board of Education, 1960-1961
- 16 8 Board of Evangelism, 1960-1961
- 16 9 Board of Missions, 1961
- 16 10 Camp Activities Fund, 1955-1962
- 16 11 Camp Activities Fund, 1955-1962
- 16 12 Chaplains, 1960-1963
- 16 13 Council of Bishops, 1960-1964
- 16 14 Council on World Service and Finance, 1960
- 16 15 Dallas Uniting Conference, 1968
- 16 16 Emory University, 1960-1962
- 19 16 Emory University, Courses Taught by J.O. Smith, 1972-1974
- 16 17 Foreign Countries, undated
- 16 18 Fund Raising, 1960
- 19 17 General Board of Education, 1966-1967
- 19 18 Georgia Conference, 1970-1972

16	19	Goodwill Industries, 1961
16	20	Inter-jurisdictional Relations, 1961
16	21	Joint Radio Committee, 1961
19	19	J.O. Smith Preaching Award, 1975-1977
16	22	LaGrange College, 1961
16	23	Lake Junaluska, 1960-1961
16	24	M.C.O.R. [Methodist Committee for Overseas Relief], 1960-1961
19	20	Merger, 1969-1970
16	25	Message at Lake Junaluska, 1961
16	26-28	Miscellaneous, 1960-1963
19	21	Miscellaneous, 1964-1968, undated
16	29	Miscellaneous, 1967
19	22-23	Miscellaneous, 1970-1975, undated
16	30	Miscellaneous, undated
16	31	North Georgia Conference, 1963-1965
16	32	North Georgia Conference, General, 1961-1962
16	33	Other Colleges, 1960-1962
16	34	Paine College, 1960-1962
19	24-27	Programs, Conferences, 1960-1972
19	28-31	Programs from Speaking Engagements, 1960-1972
20	1-11	Programs from Speaking Engagements, 1960-1972
16	35	Race Relations, 1963
16	36	Reinhardt College, 1960-1961
20	12	Social Questions, 1961, undated
20	13	South Georgia Conference, 1962-1963
16	37	Southeastern Jurisdiction, 1955
20	14	Southeastern Jurisdiction, 1957-1972
16	38	Southeastern Jurisdictional Council Executive Meeting, 1961
17	1	Statements, Articles, and Speeches, circa 1960-1967
17	2	Student Appointments, 1961
17	3	Student Appointments, 1967
17	4	Student Appointments, 1968
17	5	Supplement [to Together], 1960-1961
17	6	Transfers, 1964
17	7	Transfers, North Georgia Conference, 1967
17	8	Treasurer's Report, 1961
17	9	Treasurer's Report, 1962
17	10	Wesleyan College, 1960-1961
20	15	Writings by Others, 1973, undated

17 11 Young Harris College, 1960-1961

Series 3
Writings, 1921-1976, undated
Boxes 20-23

Scope and Content Note

The bulk of this series is comprised of sermons, many of which are undated. About half of the sermons are filed by topic. There are also drafts of Smith's two books: *Give the Whole Gospel a Chance*, published in 1974, and *Letters in Turbulent Times*, an unpublished manuscript on which he was working at the time of his death. Also included are notes and papers from Smith's time at Yale University Divinity School, where he earned a B.D. in 1925; manuscripts of columns written for the *Wesleyan Christian Advocate*; and notebooks kept by Smith throughout his career.

Arrangement Note

Arranged alphabetically.

Box	Folder	Content
20	16-19	<i>Advocate</i> Columns, 1963-1972, undated
20	20	Banquet Talks, 1950-1956, undated
20	21	B.D. Thesis, 1925
20	22	Early Writings, undated
20	23	<i>Give the Whole Gospel a Chance</i> , Manuscript and Correspondence, 1972-1975
20	24	<i>Letters in Turbulent Times</i> , Unpublished Manuscript, undated
20	25-26	Notebooks, 1924-1927
20	27-30	Notebooks, 1962-1976
20	31-35	Notebooks, undated
20	36	Notebooks, <i>A Course for Cokesbury Training Schools</i> , etc., undated
21	1-13	Notes and Papers from Yale B.D. Program, 1924-1925
21	14	Notes Taken on Lectures, undated
21	15	<i>Outline for the Course of Study for Christian Workers in Senior Young People's Department Program</i> , undated
21	16	Radio Devotionals, 1948, undated
21	17-34	Sermons, 1924-1975, undated
22	1-11	Sermons, 1924-1975, undated
22	12	Sermons, The Beatitudes, undated
22	13	Sermons, The Bible, 1926-1952
22	14	Sermons, Character, undated
22	15-16	Sermons, Christmas, 1925-1953, undated
22	17-18	Sermons, Church Finance, 1927, undated
22	19	Sermons, The Church/Our Mission Today, 1933-1955, undated
22	20	Sermons, Communion, 1938, undated
22	21	Sermons, George Washington, undated

22	22	Sermons, God, 1933-1938, undated
22	23	Sermons, Home, 1951, undated
22	24	Sermons, Lent, Holy Week, and Easter, 1950-1954, undated
22	25	Sermons, The Lord's Prayer, undated
22	26-27	Sermons, Mother's Day, 1938-1953, undated
22	28	Sermons, Nature Topics, undated
22	29	Sermons, New Year's, 1930-1950
22	30	Sermons, Parables, undated
22	31	Sermons, Personal Religion, undated
22	32-33	Sermons, Prohibition, undated
22	34	Sermons, Religion, 1929-1943, undated
22	35	Sermons, Religious Education, undated
22	36	Sermons, Sabbath Observance, undated
22	37	Sermons, Special Series, 1924-1938, undated
22	38	Sermons, Thanksgiving, undated
22	39-40	Sermons, War, 1935-1937, undated
22	41-42	Sermons and Clippings, Lent and Easter, 1929-1939, undated
22	43-44	Sermons and Talks Given at Colleges and Universities, 1929-1964, undated
23	1	Sermons and Writings, 1950, undated
23	2	Speeches and Clippings, 1935-1975, undated

Series 4
Family Papers, 1946-1996, undated
Box 23

Scope and Content Note

Papers and other materials related to John Owen Smith's personal and family life. Included are two scrapbooks assembled by his wife, Mildred Brown Smith. One contains name tags given to ministers' and bishops' wives at numerous church functions. The other contains cartoons and jokes about religion from a variety of popular periodical sources, most of which are not identified in the scrapbook. There are also several folders of ephemera collected by Mrs. Smith during the couple's trips abroad; memorials written about John Owen Smith; news clippings and correspondence on honors and awards received by John Owen Smith; and a copy of a memorial of Mrs. Smith presented by Bishop Bevel Jones at a 1996 meeting of the Council of Bishops.

Arrangement Note

Arranged alphabetically and by format.

Box	Folder	Content
19	32	Photographs from a Trip to the Congo, 1969
23	3-4	Ephemera and Correspondence Collected by Mildred Brown Smith re: Trips to Africa, 1967-1971, undated
23	5	Ephemera from Overseas Trips Collected by Mildred Brown Smith, Australia, 1967, undated
23	6-7	Ephemera from Overseas Trips Collected by Mildred Brown Smith, China, Japan, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, 1959-1968, undated
23	8	Ephemera from Overseas Trips Collected by Mildred Brown Smith, Holy Lands and Europe, 1966, undated
23	9	Ephemera from Overseas Trips Collected by Mildred Brown Smith, Korea, undated
23	10	Ephemera from Overseas Trips Collected by Mildred Brown Smith, Kuala Lumpur and Borneo, 1962, 1966, undated
23	11	Ephemera from Overseas Trips Collected by Mildred Brown Smith, The Philippines, 1964-1967, undated
23	12	Ephemera from Trips to Alaska and Hawaii Collected by Mildred Brown Smith, 1962-1967, undated
23	13	Materials Related to Trips Abroad and Missionary Work Collected by Mildred Brown Smith, 1946-1975, undated
23	14	Memorial of Mildred Brown Smith, 1996
23	15	Memorials and Honors, John Owen Smith, 1960-1996
23	16	News Clippings re: John Owen Smith, 1945-1976, undated Scrapbook of Nametags Assembled by Mildred Brown Smith, undated Scrapbook of Jokes and Cartoons Assembled by Mildred Brown Smith, undated