

# PURCELL, CLARE, 1884-1964.

## Clare Purcell papers, 1902-1967

Emory University  
Pitts Theology Library  
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## Descriptive Summary

- Creator:** Purcell, Clare, 1884-1964.  
**Title:** Clare Purcell papers, 1902-1967  
**Call Number:** Manuscript Collection No. 319  
**Extent:** 10 cubic ft. (12 boxes + 2 oversize)  
**Abstract:** Consists of biographical papers, correspondence, meeting minutes, notes and drafts of sermons, pamphlets, clippings, photographs, and artifacts that document Bishop Purcell's extensive involvement in the Methodist Church and its predecessor organization, the Methodist Episcopal Church South.  
**Language:** Materials entirely in English.
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## 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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### Citation

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

### Processing

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## Collection Description

### Biographical Note

Bishop Clare Purcell, Methodist clergyman, was born on November 17, 1884. He was the youngest of six children born to William Henry Purcell and Mary Ellen Callen of Roanoke, Alabama. Bishop Purcell was educated at Roanoke Normal College, where he met his future wife, Ida West. The two were married in Roanoke on December 28, 1910. Clare and Ida Purcell were the parents of three children: John Robert (born 1911), William Wood Rowe (born 1915) and Ida Claire (born 1921).

Bishop Purcell graduated from Roanoke Normal College in 1903 and worked for Georgia Railroad in Roanoke, Birmingham, and Columbus [Georgia]. He enrolled at Emory University in 1906. While at Emory, he was a member of Phi Delta Theta. Health problems prevented him from completing his course of study at Emory.

Bishop Purcell was granted a local preacher's license in 1906 by the Lafayette District Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. In November of that year he was admitted to the North Alabama Conference on trial, and served a one-year appointment to the Wedowee Circuit. He was appointed to the Rockford Circuit in 1907, but served for only a short time before enrolling in the Bachelor of Theology program at Vanderbilt University. He received the B.D. in 1916, as well as an A.B. from Birmingham College in the same year. Later in life, he received honorary degrees from Birmingham-Southern College (Doctor of Divinity, 1929), University of Alabama (Doctor of Laws, 1940), Athens College (Doctor of Literature, 1954), and Emory University (Doctor of Divinity, 1957).

Bishop Purcell was ordained deacon in 1911 and received elder's orders in 1913. Between 1911 and 1918 he served the Madison Circuit, Owenton Church (later McCoy Memorial) in Birmingham, and Sylacauga First Church. In 1918 he entered service as an army chaplain with the 131st Infantry, spending the winter of 1918 in Luxembourg. After returning from his tour of duty, he was assigned to the First Methodist Church of Hartselle. Subsequent appointments included Talladega (1920-1924) and Tuscaloosa (1924-1927). In 1927, he was assigned to the Jasper District as Presiding Elder. In 1931 he was transferred to the First Methodist Church of Gasden, AL, where he remained until 1938.

On May 3rd, 1938, Purcell was elected Bishop at the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, following a well-received speech in which he argued in favor of union with the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Protestant Church. As Bishop, he served in Charlotte from 1938 to 1948, and in Birmingham from 1948 until his retirement in 1956. In 1955, he was elected President of the Council of Bishops of the Methodist Church.

After retiring, Bishop Purcell remained in Birmingham, where he served as President of the Board of Directors of Carraway Methodist Hospital. He died on February 8th, 1964.

Biographical information on Bishop Purcell was taken from "Bishop Clare Purcell" by Allen D. Montgomery [Series 5, Box 7, Folder 8].

### Scope and Content Note

The Clare Purcell Papers document Bishop Purcell's extensive involvement in the Methodist Church and its predecessor organization, the Methodist Episcopal Church South. Included are

biographical papers; personal, professional and family correspondence; meeting minutes; notes and drafts of sermons and other writings; pamphlets; clippings; photographs; and artifacts.

This collection is richest in post-1938 materials, which document Purcell's tenure as Bishop. The earlier phases of his career are not as well documented. Papers related to his family life are relatively few; the bulk of the family correspondence found in this collection was received by Bishop Purcell's widow and children after his death.

**Arrangement Note**

Organized into 10 series: (1) Correspondence, (2) Meeting Materials, (3) Sermon Notes, (4) Writings and Addresses, (5) Family and Biographical Papers, (6) Printed Materials, (7) News Clippings, (8) Artifacts, (9) Photographs, and (10) Oversize.

## **Description of Series**

[Series 1: Correspondence, 1906-1964, undated](#)

[Series 2: Meeting Materials, 1938-1964](#)

[Series 3: Sermon Notes, undated](#)

[Series 4: Writings and Addresses, 1902-1959, undated](#)

[Series 5: Family and Biographical Papers, 1906-1967, undated](#)

[Series 6: Printed Materials, 1905-1963, undated](#)

[Series 7: News Clippings, 1937-1967](#)

[Series 8: Artifacts, undated](#)

[Series 9: Photographs, circa 1900-1950](#)

[Series 10: Oversize Items, 1903-1957, undated](#)

**Series 1**  
**Correspondence, 1906-1964, undated**  
**Boxes 1-2**

**Scope and Content Note**

Includes personal and professional correspondence written and received by Bishop Purcell. The items in the folders marked "personal" were designated as such by Bishop Purcell; however, much personal correspondence is also found in the general correspondence files. Prominent correspondents included several other Methodist bishops: Warren Candler, Hoyt Dobbs, Denny Collins, and Edwin Hughes. Topics of note include the union of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South with the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Protestant Church, litigation related to the union of churches, prohibition and temperance, and race relations within the church. There are also several folders of letters congratulating Bishop Purcell on his election as bishop (1938) and president of the Council of Bishops (1955).

<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>	<b>Content</b>
1	1	1906-1919
1	2	1920-1929
1	3	1930-1939
1	4-5	1940-1949
1	6-7	1948 July
1	8-9	1950-1958
1	10-12	1959-1964
1	13	undated
1	14	Central Jurisdiction, 1939-1955
1	15-19	Congratulatory Letters, 1938
1	20	Congratulatory Letters, 1954-1956
1	21	Collins, Bishop Denny, 1939-1948
1	22	Dobbs, Bishop Hoyt M., 1932-1948
1	23	Duke University, 1939-1948
1	24	Hospitals and Homes, Board of, 1944-1948
1	25	Hughes, Bishop Edwin H., 1939-1948
2	1	Humorous and Human Interest, 1938-1948
2	2	Layman's Organization for the Preservation of the Southern Methodist Church, 1939
2	3	Legislative, 1959
2	4	Methodist Litigation, 1945-1950
2	5	Personal, 1924-1939
2	6-7	Personal, 1940-1941
2	8-9	Personal, 1942-1944
2	10	Personal, 1945-1947
2	11-13	Personal, 1948

- 2 14-15 Personal, 1949
- 2 16 Personal, 1950
- 2 17 Personal, 1951-1952
- 2 18 Personal, 1953-1955
- 2 19 Personal, 1956
- 2 20 Personal, 1957-1960, undated
- 2 21-22 S.C. Matters, 1944-1948

**Series 2**  
**Meeting Materials, 1938-1964**  
**Boxes 2-4**

**Scope and Content Note**

This series is comprised mainly of meeting minutes and agendas for the Council of Bishops. Also included are minutes from a single meeting of the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees of Lake Junaluska, as well as materials prepared for the 1964 General Conference and the 1960 Southeastern Jurisdictional Conference.

<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>	<b>Content</b>
2	23	Board of Trustees of Lake Junaluska, Executive Committee, 1960
2	24	College of Bishops, 1938-1963
2	25	Council of Bishops, 1938 November-1939 December
2	26	Council of Bishops, 1940 April-December
2	27	Council of Bishops, 1941 March-December
3	1	Council of Bishops, 1942 May-December
3	2	Council of Bishops, 1943 February-December
3	3	Council of Bishops, 1944 February-May
3	4	Council of Bishops, 1944 July-1945 December
3	5	Council of Bishops, 1946 February-September
3	6	Council of Bishops, 1946 December-1947 May
3	7	Council of Bishops, 1947 December
3	8	Council of Bishops, 1948 October-December
3	9	Council of Bishops, 1948 January-May
3	10	Council of Bishops, 1949 April
3	11	Council of Bishops, 1949 November-December
3	12	Council of Bishops, 1950 April
3	13	Council of Bishops, 1950 October-December
3	14	Council of Bishops, 1951 April
3	15	Council of Bishops, 1952 January
3	16	Council of Bishops, 1952 April-November
3	17	Council of Bishops, 1953 April
3	18	Council of Bishops, 1953 December
3	19	Council of Bishops, 1954 April
3	20	Council of Bishops, 1954 November
3	21	Council of Bishops, 1955 January-April
3	22	Council of Bishops, 1955 December
3	23	Council of Bishops, 1956 January-May
4	1-2	Council of Bishops, 1956 December
4	3	Council of Bishops, 1957 April

4	4-5	Council of Bishops, 1957 November
4	6	Council of Bishops, 1958 January
4	7	Council of Bishops, 1958 April
4	8	Council of Bishops, 1958 November
4	9	Council of Bishops, 1959 April
4	10	Council of Bishops, 1959 November
4	11-12	Council of Bishops, 1960 April-May
4	13	Council of Bishops, 1960 November
4	14	Council of Bishops, 1961 April
4	15	Council of Bishops, 1961 November
4	16	Council of Bishops, 1962 April
4	17-18	Council of Bishops, 1962 November
4	19-20	Council of Bishops, 1963 April
4	21-22	Council of Bishops, 1963 November
4	23	Delegates and Reserve Delegates, General Conference, 1964
4	24	Episcopal Plan of Visitation, 1964
4	25	Southeastern Jurisdictional Conference, 1960



**Series 3**  
**Sermon Notes, undated**  
**Boxes 5-6**

**Scope and Content Note**

In this series are sermon notes prepared by Bishop Purcell, arranged by Biblical book upon which each sermon was based. In cases where no Bible verse was noted, the notes were placed in folders marked "miscellaneous" at the end of the series. No dates could be determined for any of the items in this series. Drafts of complete sermons were interfiled with Purcell's other writings, and are located in Series 4.

<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>	<b>Content</b>
5	1	Genesis
5	2	Exodus
5	3	Numbers
5	4	Deuteronomy
5	5	Joshua
5	6	Kings
5	7	Chronicles
5	8	Psalms
5	9	Proverbs
5	10	Isaiah
5	11	Jeremiah
5	12	Ezekiel
5	13	Daniel
5	14	Hosea
5	15	Joel
5	16	Micah
5	17	Habakkuk
5	18	Zechariah
5	19-21	Matthew
5	22-23	Mark
5	24-25	Luke
5	26-29	John
5	30	Acts
5	31	Romans
6	1	I and II Corinthians
6	2	Galatians
6	3	Ephesians
6	4	Philippians
6	5	Colossians

6	6	Timothy
6	7	Titus
6	8	Hebrews
6	9	James
6	10	I and II Peter
6	11	I and II John
6	12	Revelations
6	13	Miscellaneous

**Series 4**  
**Writings and Addresses, 1902-1959, undated**  
**Box 7**

**Scope and Content Note**

This series contains writings and addresses, including sermons, by Bishop Purcell. Many of the items in this series are untitled and undated. The writings span from Bishop Purcell's days as a student at Roanoke Normal School through his tenure as bishop. Some of the earliest writings appear to have written for a debate society. There are a few sermons from the early years of Bishop Purcell's ministry. Titles include "Justification by Faith," "Repentance," and "Witness of the Spirit." Writings from later in Bishop Purcell's career cover issues of broad concern to the church, including the unification of three churches into the single Methodist Church, prohibition and alcoholism, and world peace. This series also includes one folder of notes by Bishop Purcell.

<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>	<b>Content</b>
7	1	Notes, undated
7	2	Writings and Addresses, 1902-1928
7	3	Writings and Addresses, 1931-1959
7	4-6	Writings and Addresses, undated

**Series 5**  
**Family and Biographical Papers, 1906-1967, undated**  
**Boxes 7-8**

**Scope and Content Note**

Condolence letters sent to the Purcell family following the deaths of Clare and Ida Purcell comprise the bulk of this series. Also included are biographical sketches, an address book, an officer's record book, certificates and diplomas awarded to Bishop Purcell, and his local preacher's license from 1906. The final folder in this series contains pages from a scrapbook of religious images. Since the scrapbook itself was deteriorating, the pages were removed for preservation reasons. It is unclear which member of the Purcell family assembled the scrapbook.

<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>	<b>Content</b>
7	7	Address Book, undated
7	8	Biographical Information, Clare Purcell, circa 1964
7	9	Biographical Information, Ida West Purcell, undated
7	10	Certificates and Citations, 1904-1957, undated
7	11	Condolence Telegrams, 1964
7	12	Condolence Telegrams, 1967
7	13	Correspondence, Letters to Ida West Purcell, 1962
7	14-29	Correspondence, Letters to Ida West Purcell, 1964
8	1-6	Correspondence, Letters to Ida West Purcell, 1964
8	7-9	Correspondence, Letters to Ida West Purcell, 1965-1966
8	10-11	Correspondence, Letters to Ida West Purcell, 1966-1967, undated
8	12	Correspondence, Letters to Ida West Purcell from Her Daughter, 1964
8	13	Correspondence, Letters to John Purcell, 1964-1967
8	14	Correspondence, Sympathy Cards, 1967
8	15-17	Correspondence, Sympathy Letters, 1967
8	18	Diplomas
8	19	Local Preacher's License, 1906
8	20	Memorial Records, 1964
8	21	Memorial Records, 1967
8	22	Notes, undated
8	23	Officer's Record Book, 1919
8	24	Scrapbook of Religious Images, undated

**Series 6**  
**Printed Materials, 1905-1963, undated**  
**Boxes 8-9**

**Scope and Content Note**

Included in this series are numerous pamphlets on religious topics collected by Bishop Purcell. The series also contains church bulletins, programs from events attended by Purcell, and several printed reports to the Southeastern Jurisdictional Council of the Methodist Church.

<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>	<b>Content</b>
8	25-29	Assorted Pamphlets and Brochures, 1905-1960
9	1-2	Assorted Pamphlets and Brochures, 1905-1960
9	3	Assorted Pamphlets and Brochures – World Methodist Council, 1962, undated
9	4	Church Bulletins, 1916-1958
9	5	Programs, 1916-1963, undated
9	6	Report of the Commission to Study the Christian Faith and War in the Nuclear Age, 1962
9	7	Report of D. Trigg James / James W. Sells to the Southeastern Jurisdictional Council, 1961
9	8	Report of D. Trigg James / James W. Sells to the Southeastern Jurisdictional Council, 1963
9	9	Southeastern Jurisdictional Council Report, 1960
9	10	Transcript of Declaration of Union, 1939
9	11	Transcripts of Writings by John Wesley, undated

**Series 7**  
**News Clippings, 1937-1967**  
**Boxes 10-11**

**Scope and Content Note**

This series consists of news clippings, probably kept by Ida Purcell. Many of the clippings concern Clare Purcell's career as bishop. Others concern the Methodist Church generally; there are clippings of stories about annual conferences, the formation of the Methodist Church in 1938, and the issue of race relations within the church. Some of these news clippings were originally found in scrapbooks. Since the scrapbooks were in poor condition, the pages were removed for preservation reasons. In many cases, clippings had been placed in scrapbooks without being glued down to the pages.

<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>	<b>Content</b>
10-11		News clippings, 1937-1967

**Series 8**  
**Artifacts, undated**  
**Box 12**

**Scope and Content Note**

This series contains four items: an embossing seal used by Bishop Purcell to mark official documents from his office, a smaller embossing seal designed for travel, and two gavels used by the Bishop.

<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>	<b>Content</b>
12		Gavels used by Purcell [2 items]
12		Official Bishop's embossing seal
12		Travel-sized Bishop's embossing seal

**Series 9**  
**Photographs, circa 1900-1950**  
**Box 13**

**Scope and Content Note**

This series consists of mainly black-and-white photographs dating from the 1910s through the early 1960s. Included are numerous portraits of Bishop Purcell, group photographs taken at annual conferences and other Methodist events, and images of churches. Many of the photographs are undated, and there are many photographs of unidentified individuals. Large oversize photographs are located in series 10.

<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>	<b>Content</b>
13	1	Church Dedications [2 items], 1944
13	2	Churches [22 items], circa 1930s-1950s
13	3	Churches, First Methodist Church, Graceville FL [8 items], undated
13	4	“Cornerstone Laying, Panama City Fla.” [3 items], 1949
13	5	Group Photographs [51 items], 1931-1955, undated
13	6	Hobbs Airfield Base Chapel [12 items], circa 1940s
13	7	Miscellaneous [14 items], circa 1930s-1950s
13	8	Portraits, Clare Purcell [27 items], 1941-1957, undated
13	9	Portraits of Others [15 items], circa 1900s-1950s
13	10	Oversize Photographs [3 items], circa 1930s-1950s



**Series 10**  
**Oversize Items, 1903-1957, undated**  
**Box 14, oversize folders**

**Scope and Content Note**

This series consists of large format posters, photographs, diplomas, and other documents. The container listing below includes a complete inventory.

<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>	<b>Content</b>
14		Posters depicting John Wesley, Francis Asbury, and Jesus Christ [5 items], undated
14		Oversize photographs, unidentified [4 items], undated
14		Council of Bishops of the Methodist Church, Dennis Hotel, Atlantic City NJ, Photograph, 1940 April 18
14		Print displaying portraits of the Vanderbilt University Biblical Department Faculty and Senior Class, 1910
14		Print displaying portraits of the Council of Bishops of the Methodist Church, 1952
14		Posters with portraits of the Alabama and North Alabama Conference Delegates to the General Conference [2 items], 1938
14		Poster with group photographs from the General Conference, 1906
14		Oversize Christmas card, 1951
14		Certificate of election to Bishop, 1938
14		Citation from Birmingham-Southern College, 1955
14		Diploma, Roanoke Normal College, A.B., 1903
14		Diploma, Roanoke Normal College, Ida West, B.Ph., 1904
14		Diploma in Theology, Vanderbilt University, 1910
14		Diploma, Birmingham College, A.B., 1916
14		Diploma, Vanderbilt University, B.D., 1916
14		Diploma, Birmingham-Southern College, D.D., 1929
14		Diploma, Emory University, D.D., 1957
15	1	General Conference of the Methodist Church, Atlantic City Auditorium, Photograph, 1940
15	1	District Superintendents Conference, Centenary Methodist Church, St. Louis MO, Photograph, 1944 September 26-27
15	1	Council of Bishops of the Methodist Church, Huntington-Sheraton Hotel, Pasedena, CA, Photograph, 1956 December 12