

**ROBERT H. MENEILLY, Sr. PAPERS (2007.74)**  
**Date Span: 1962-1995**

Robert Meneilly was the founding pastor of the Village Church in Prairie Village, KS, retiring in 1994 after 47 years of service. He delivered sermons that were rather progressive for the times, speaking on topics such as race relations, sexuality, religion, and war. This small archival collection has three series, the first being sermons delivered by Dr. Meneilly. The second series consists of correspondence, mostly letters received in response to his sermon, "I Trouble – Segregating God." The third series is awards.

**ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION**

**Source:** Robert Meneilly, Sr.

**Size:** less than one linear foot

**Access:** Open

**Processed by:** Erica Flanagan, 2010, as part of an internship program at the Johnson County Museum and funded by the Johnson County Heritage Trust Fund.

**Supervising Archivists:** Russ Czaplewski and Kathy Daniels

**BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH**

- 1925 Born in Mt. Lebanon, Pennsylvania (March 5)
- 1947 Ordained to the Christian Ministry by the Presbyterian Church USA
- 1947 Graduated from Pittsburgh-Xenia Theological Seminary, earning a Masters of Divinity
- 1947 Married Shirley Ann Dunlap (June 21);
- 1949 Founded the Village Church in Prairie Village<sup>1</sup>
- 1961 Traveled to the Philippines and India for a project of a National Mission Board
- 1964 Phyllis Matchette became the first female elder at Village Church
- 1965 Delivered the controversial sermon, "I Trouble – Segregating God" (Feb 14)
- 1972 Attended the Paris Peace Talks regarding the Vietnam War<sup>2</sup>
- 1973 Named "Citizen of the Year" by United Community Services of Johnson County<sup>3</sup>
- 1984 Named a Distinguished Pastor in Residence at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary<sup>4</sup>
- 1993 Helped found the Mainstream Coalition
- 1993 Delivered the highly controversial sermon, "The Dangers of Religion" (Aug 13)
- 1993 Sermon, "The Dangers of Religion" published in the Sunday Op section of the New York Times (Aug 29)
- 1994 Named "Kansas City Hero" by Ingram's Magazine
- 1994 Announced retirement (Aug. 22)<sup>5</sup> Last sermon as pastor of Village Church given

---

<sup>1</sup> Anderson, Lynn. "Always practicing what he preaches." *The Best Times*, March 2005, page 1.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 7.

<sup>3</sup> Katz, Judy. "Meneilly named 'Man of the Year'." *The Johnson County Sun*, April 17, 1974.

<sup>4</sup> He is also an emeritus director, having served actively on the board from 1981-1990;

[http://www.pts.edu/faculty\\_chair\\_histories/](http://www.pts.edu/faculty_chair_histories/)

<sup>5</sup> Bessier, Elaine. "A Vision for the Future" *The Sun* September 16, 1994.

(Dec 4)<sup>6</sup>

- 1995 Awarded the Harry S. Truman Good Neighbor Award
- 1995 Awarded the Kansas City Spirit Award
- 1996 Awarded the Eddie Jacobson Award by Kansas City B'nai B'rith Lodge 184
- 1999 Named the World Citizen of the Year by the Kansas City United Nations
- 2001 Awarded the Stand Up and Speak Out Award by Mainstream Coalition
- 2003 Awarded the William Yates Medallion by William Jewell College

## COLLECTION DESCRIPTION

The Robert Meneilly Papers document primarily sermons delivered at the Village Church in Prairie Village, KS during his tenure there as pastor. Included is a series containing correspondence with citizens who wrote regarding a sermon delivered on the topic of race relations and fair housing. In 1994, Dr. Meneilly delivered a controversial sermon regarding right-wing extremists that was subsequently reprinted in part in the New York Times.

The small collection is composed primarily of printed sermons and correspondence with his congregation and the public.

The collection is arranged chronologically at the item level, alphabetically at the folder level, and according to subject matter at the series level. The collection consists of three series: Sermons, 1962-1994; Correspondence, 1965-1981; and Awards, 1995.

## SERIES DESCRIPTION

Box No.

1 SERMONS, 1962-1994

This series contains printed sermons delivered by Robert Meneilly during his career at Village Church in Prairie Village, KS.

CORRESPONDENCE, 1965-1981

This series is comprised of letters from citizens in response to a sermon delivered February 14, 1965 concerning race relations and fair housing in Johnson County, KS.

AWARDS, 1995

This series contains the Harry S. Truman Good Neighbor Award given to Dr. Meneilly in 1995.

## FOLDER TITLE LIST

---

<sup>6</sup> Worgul, Doug. "Good Cheer." *Kansas City Magazine*, December 1994, page 6.

Box 1

SERMONS, 1962-1994

Folder 1: 1962-1987

Not dated: "Predestination and You"

Not dated: "Safe Sex, or Sacred Sex?"

1962, Aug 25: "Science and Religion – Friend or Foe?"

1965, Feb 14: "I Trouble – Segregating God"<sup>7</sup>

1966, Feb 27: "Majorities, Minorities or Neighbors"

1971, March 28: "Who Cares Enough about Peace on Earth?"

1971, June 20: "What our Church is Saying to the World Via Angela Davis et al"

1987, Jan 19: "I Have a Dream"

1987, Jan 25: "An Open Letter to Our Kansas Legislators: Regarding Capital Punishment"

Folder 2: 1991-1994

1991, July 21: "Sexuality and Spirituality"

1991, Aug 4: "A Good Faith Makes for a Good Sense of Humor"

1992, Feb 16: "Dying, Death and Funeral Practices"

1993, July 4: "Abraham Lincoln, Friend of God"

1993, Aug 15: "The Dangers of Religion" (from Reference File)

1994, June 5: "Making Your Frustrations Fruitful"

1994, July 3: "God Save America From Civil Religion"

1994, Oct 16: "Christ and the Crisis of the Child" (from Reference File)

1994, Oct 30: "God Works in Everything for Our Good" (from Reference File)

1994, Nov 6: "Religion and Politics Do Mix" (from Reference File)

CORRESPONDENCE, 1965-1981

In opposition; Race Relations sermon; 15 Feb 1965-21 Mar 1966

In support; Race Relations sermon; 15-24 Feb 1965

Miscellaneous; 24 July 1981

AWARDS, 1995

Harry S. Truman Good Neighbor Award; 1995

---

<sup>7</sup> See "Dr. Meneilly on Segregation" *Country Squire* March 11, 1965 p. 3; and "On segregation—More from Dr. Meneilly" *Country Squire* March 18, 1965 p. 25