

Interview with Barbara Bingham [BB1]
w/ Freida Thompson [FT]
taped at Episcopal Church of All Saints, Indianapolis, IN, October 2021
Transcribed by Diantha Daniels

[FT] Good afternoon, Barbara.

[BB1] Good afternoon.

[FT] As you know, my name is Freida Thompson, and I've been a member of All Saints for close to thirty-four years. I am new[er] to the Indianapolis area. I grew up in New Jersey, from many generations of Episcopalians, and had moved to Indianapolis. I had a daughter and needed to have her baptized so I came in search of a church and I found All Saints. So that is what brought me here.

Actually, the church was recommended to me by another Episcopal priest in Indianapolis, and I am grateful to him every day. What brought you to All Saints? How did you hear about the church?

[BB1] Well, I heard about All Saints from two parishioners who showed up at my house one day. It was my day off between my many jobs and I was cleaning house and one of my children ran upstairs and said, "Mom, there are two white ladies at the door!"

And I thought, "Oh my God." I didn't have time for this; I didn't want to buy in any magazines. I went downstairs and they introduced themselves. One of the lady's names was Bonnie Harvey, and years later she became godmother to one of my children. But that day she introduced herself and she said, "Would you like to come to All Saints? There's plenty to do for children. They have Cub Scouts, and a preschool and a kindergarten. And they have a gym."

I had three children then, and I said, "Oh, great." Because there wasn't any place in the neighborhood for children. And so they went around there, and they liked it. Of course, they got ice cream, too!

So that was my introduction. It wasn't until quite later that I started coming. My mother went first. She lived downstairs from me. She came here, and she really enjoyed it. She liked it, but I was kind of dubious about it because I'd bounced around to different churches.

A friend of mine recommended a church. Said there was a band [and it was] very charismatic, and he talked about equal opportunity for blacks and everything. and I thought, "That sounds great."

So – one day, they were giving away bicycles and fruit baskets or groceries, and a friend of mine said, “Let's go down there and see what's going on.” So we went down – didn't get any bicycle for my kids (but my niece got one). But I got some groceries.

I saw the man, and shook his hand. I talked to him. But I wasn't really impressed by him. Something kind of “off” about it. Years later found out that was Jim Jones! I am so happy I didn't join.

But a little later, I said let me check out this church [All Saints]. I only lived a few blocks away at 1422 North New Jersey, so it was just a stone's throw away. And so, I walked up one Sunday, and the first thing I saw was the sign over the door: “Everyone is welcome.” And I said, “I wonder if this is true?”

I walked in. First thing I saw was a lady with a nice fur coat and some jewelry, and I thought, “Oh, my God.” But next to her was a young man with a t-shirt and blue jeans. And there were children, and there were black people; there were white people. There were young, there were old. Some were openly gay. And I thought, “Hey, this may be something.” And, from that day on, I stayed. I haven't found anything that was worse or better or anything so I've been here since then – with a few minor interruptions.

[FT] So when you came through the doors, then you saw a group of people in a setting you felt comfortable in. Was there anybody at the door that greeted you and said oh, you need to sit here, or this is where our guests sit here? Or were you just invited to the space?

[BB1] No, I can't remember who invited me in, and but they said come on in. And, you know, they gave me the paper [bulletin] and, you know, just find a seat. And I sat up front. My kids were all there in the front row: they had joined the choir; my son and my nephews were acolytes. They looked like little angels, but I knew better.

I mean it was just everything through the years. I became involved with a lot of other things. I would organize the Easter egg hunt on Easter. I took a bunch of kids on a picnic; we had a lot of picnics. And one year Bernie Harvey [?] and my sister, my older sister, and I took the kids to a farm. Well, we rented a bus and a lot of other mothers were supposed to show up but they didn't, so it was just the three of us and about thirty kids – and it was like herding cats. And the driver made it known that he was only there to drive the bus; he wasn't going to take care of any kids, but we had a great time and the kids sure enjoyed being out at the farm. They never saw animals up close like that except in books, and it was a great outing for inner city kids that never got out.

Over the years, the children [also] went to camp: Waycross and Happy Hollow and Boy Scout camp. That was my children, and my sister's children, and a lot of children

from the neighborhood that didn't have any place to go during summer, so it was it was really good.

[FT] I would say then, just looking at this list of parish clergy, that you arrived in the early 1960's. That would be Father Carthy. Now what would you say was the mix of races then? Was it like ten percent or twenty percent? Thirty? Fifty?

[BB1] When I started, there were only a few, I'd say a few, black people in this church. A handful. Well, maybe two percent, I guess. Very little. But after my family joined, it really increased. My sister had 5 kids. I ended up with 4 kids. My other sister had 3 kids. There were other neighbors, so we had about 25 kids all together. Plus there was a Miss Screen [?] and her daughter and she was a long time. ...

[interrupted by visiting dog - plus Mark G? - from 9:45 - 12:50]

[FT] So, you said that when you first came to All Saints, you would guess there were less than 5 percent black. Yes, it was integrated, but less than 5 percent. This would have been in the early '60's?

[BB1] Right.

[FT] When I came in 1984, I would say it was about 30 percent African American at that time. And I know that the senior warden Maurice Edelyn [?], was black. Frank Lloyd followed him; he's black. So, there was a big presence ...

[BB1] Yeah. I forgot about Dr. Lloyd.

[FT] Yes. And certainly, some of the attraction would be Nan Peete, who was one of the first African American women priests and she came to this parish.

Can you remember - let's see, between Fr. Carthy when you came, we have Fr. Moony, Fr. Wood, Fr. Eastwood, and then Mother Peete. So, over those years, was there a steady increase in black congregants? Or did Nan Peete have a ...

[BB1] It was steady. I think the word kind of got around. I believe a lot of the people here were Baptists. I know some of my family were and they kind of switched over and they started to come. My mom, she was just crazy about Fr. Eastwood, and she loved midnight Mass. She never missed one until she passed. It seems like every generation - a priest from this church buried one of my family.

Fr. Eastwood buried my mom and my sister. My two nephews were buried from All Saints. Father Giovangelo [?] helped bury my brother. Fr. Eastwood performed - married - my sister. So, it's been a long time family thing. Most of it enjoyable. Some of it tragic. But I always feel that this is my home.

There was a time that I stopped coming. This was Father Wayne. When he went public and said he had AIDS, it was in all the newspapers and some of the people I work with said, "Don't you belong to that gay church?" And I said, "No, it's not a 'gay' church. There are people there who are openly gay; *everybody's* welcome." But ... I don't know. I just kind of folded under the pressure and I stopped coming for about a year. But then I felt ashamed. This was stupid of me: why listen to people with small minds? So, I came back. I haven't left since except for times when I was in the hospital.

But I've always enjoyed being here. Doing things. My family – one of my sisters – helped teach the children's class. She was a VISTA volunteer – Volunteers in Service to America. Her name was Audrey.

My granddaughter, Terry, helped with the teenage group. She had a little thing going there; it's in one of my books. I taught the martial arts class – self defense – class here for a number of years. I also did a Kwanzaa party one time to teach people what Kwanzaa was and we had a great time that day. I think even Father Chastain shook his booty a little bit when we were doing the dance!

There are a lot of things that I remember there were great and they're always be with me ... and I'm still here!

[FT] I know from history that All Saints was the first Episcopal Church to integrate. I don't know what year that was. I don't know when it actually happened, but it sounds like it occurred by at least 1960. And it slowly grew, and then with Nan Peete, it was an explosion shall we say?

[BB1] Right.

[FT] And when she left and father Wayne Hanson came, the direction of the church was different. . .

[BB1] Yes.

[FT] And with that, I know a lot of the black congregants went to St Phillips?

[BB1] Right.

[FT] And several went to Trinity, and a few to St Paul's, and there was just a change in the way, the look, of the church.

[BB1] When that article came out in the paper about Father Wayne, we lost people but it's slowly built back up. They [the paper] talked about that, but they didn't mention that we welcome *everyone*. We had funerals here that no other church

would take because of AIDS. In the winter time there were people waiting outside to get in so that they could sleep in the pews to keep warm. They were giving food and shelter that other places would not give them.

My sisters, and a lot of the parishioners worked in what we call – they had a kitchen back there the breezeway which was on that side - it attached to Dayspring, where they had all the classes and everything. The groups would serve meals there. Anyone could walk in off the street and get a free meal. That's one of the things that I loved about this place, because they didn't turn anybody away. Black or white, anyone, I mean it like they said, anyone was welcome. It was true.

[FT] When I first came in, as I said, when I walked in the door, first of all I loved the space because it was large – big, high, open, and that welcomes. You feel like there's air to breathe, so to speak – the metaphor. And then I looked up on the high altar, and there was Nan Peete, and the thurifer was a young black man. . . I can't remember his name. . .

[BB1] That's nice – my memory is not that great any more either!

[FT] And the congregation – whites and blacks were mixed, right? There was no black section, either *de facto* or . . .

[BB1] No, no you sat where you want. At first, I started out sitting up front because the kids were in the choir. The choir sat over there [pointing], and the pulpit was here [pointing again]. Of course, we had the walkway over to the Blake's [?] building. The organ was across there. There's been a big change, yeah, things have been moved around a lot. I know it took forever to get the organ refurbished because they I think they had to send away to Germany to get parts for it. It took years. I thought maybe it would be like the building of Rome before we got it back! But when they installed it, it sounded marvelous.

A lot of changes. Some of the changes didn't go over real well people for instance when - you see it right here – when Jackie Means [pointing to commemorative tile on the floor of the sanctuary] was ordained, or was going to be ordained here at this church we lost people there, too. The day of the ordination I had work; I couldn't make it. My mom did. She said she was scared because there were people outside picketing. They didn't think a woman should be ordained as a priest but it went off smoothly, and I love Jackie Means. It was a great moment for the church and for us.

[FT] Well, when I came here, as I mentioned, [my family had been] Episcopal for generations, and I'd only been to black Episcopal churches. I had never been in an integrated or a white Episcopal church until I set foot in here. And I was forty years old, so it was just such a shock for me. And I remember calling up my family and saying it's integrated, the church's integrated, and they whoa ... And I said a black

woman is our priest, and it was just mind boggling. Now, had you been to other integrated churches before you came here?

[BB1] No, no. Like I said, I set foot in Jones's church. It was integrated and *not* integrated if you know what I mean, and that kind of sent a chill down my spine. So I think that was one of the reasons I did not stay there. But this [All Saints] was comforting. Like I said, I used to sit up front here, but as the years came along, and the grandkids came along, I spent more time in the back.

The room back there was a “choir” of the cry room for the babies, so I took all the little babies back there to keep them quiet so they wouldn’t scream out during the service. It was nice; you didn't have to leave the church, and you could enjoy the sermon and still be surrounded by children, you know, and if you had to get up to take them out you didn’t have to disturb anyone.

Also, another change was that there was a confessional right there [pointing] ... the wooden structure. I never got there though! [laughs]

[FT] I know you told me that there was a picture in Father Chastain’s book, and I look here and I see your grandchildren. I found it. So – this was the children's choir? Do you know about how many years old they were?

[BB1] This is Barbara Jean right here [pointing in book]. That's my oldest daughter.

[FT] She looks like she's a teenager, yes?

[BB1] Yeah, I think she's about twelve or thirteen. This is my niece, Regina; She's passed. This is my niece who passed a few years ago. And this is my niece. And I wonder if this is Father Eastwood’s daughter? I’m not sure.

[FT] How big was the children's choir? 10? 20? 30?

[BB1] Well, they had quite a few. I think it was maybe about 20 or 25. And they even took a trip to New York. They still talk about that, and they really enjoyed it. Like I said, they were in the choir and they were acolytes, and they were just into the church.

But as they grew older, you know, my son went off to service and my nephews were a couple of them in service, and some just left town or they went their own ways. My daughters attend now and then. My sisters – I have one Colorado and one in Florida – who still talk about All Saints: “Do you remember when we did so and so and so ...”

[FT] So, in the children’s choir there were about 25; what was the racial mix of that?

[BB1] I think the majority of them were black because they were kids from the neighborhood. Plus, there was my group, and those who were children of the prisoners here. They sang and it was marvelous.

[FT] So the neighborhood children that were in the choir, did their families attend the church also or just some of them?

[BB1] Yeah, some of them did. Some went to their own. Some of them attended because of what was going on in the church – the children. And the children stayed, but a lot of the parents did not. Still, we had quite a few.

[FT] This would have been in the '70's, then?

[BB1] Yes.

[FT] I also found some other pictures. These are from the '80's. Easter pictures?

[mic check 30:30 - 31:48; and again at 32:00 – 32:40]

[BB1] When did they move the baptismal fountain? Because it was right there at the doorway.

[FT] I know it *was* back there [when I came], because she was baptized back there. That I can tell you.

[resuming, after tech issues] So, anyway, I found some pictures. These are from an Easter: I think it has to be 1990, 1991. Anyway, there's your granddaughter, and I think that's Robert.

[BB1] Yes, oh my gosh, that's Robert!

[FT] Yes, he's showing off. He's gotta be almost 40 years old. Yes, because she's [FT's daughter Elizabeth] is 34, and he was a couple years older.

[BB1] Here's the whole crew here. Yes, everybody all decked out.

[FT] And that's one of the Day boys, and that's my daughter. And then her cousins came for this particular Easter. See there, there's the old red carpet? . . . So, certainly, on this particular Easter there was a fine racial mix.

[still looking at pictures] I looked at some others. . . Remember when we did that? And there we've got Nicki. And this is the feast of Corpus Christi. Remember, we went and walked around the block to incorporate the [Passion] ... and I think this was in the newspaper, this event, with the canopy ...

Now . . . this is when she was baptized. And here's a picture of Mother Nan Peete, and Elizabeth, and this is the back of Mark Gastineau ...

[BB1] He came with the place! [both laugh]

[FT] And Father Gordon Chastain. Remember his stole was too long? And he would wear it like a Deacon? I remember Father Hanson was quite put out about that.

[BB1] Yes, he was a stickler for rules and everything.

[FT] This is the parking lot before the parish hall. And one of these I sent to Nancy Adams of her husband as an acolyte. [setting pictures aside]

Well, any other thoughts you have?

[BB1] Well, I remember the baptismal font down there now was right over there. [points] Most all of my grandkids and also my great-grandkids were baptized here and I still have some of their baptismal cards . . . I mean, like I said, my whole family's been involved with this church on and off for years and years and that hope to continue.

[FT] Now – was the Michael window here when you first came?

[BB1] Yes. And I spent many hours gazing at that. It's beautiful. I've never seen anything like it – except for today when I saw this [the newly-installed Mary window?] It was worth waiting for. I could gaze at it forever. It's beautiful.

[FT] It is beautiful. So – that means that in one way one could say that All Saints as a parish had the foresight – let's see, you came in 1960 – so, in the 1950's, then, All Saints had the foresight to put a window in that certainly is an artistic wonder. But the angels are not right, are they?

[BB1] No, they're not. And some of the depiction up there you wouldn't see in other churches ...

[FT] No, there are scenes you would not see in other churches. I mean, a city scene of despair might have black people in it, right? But a scene of power and glory not depicted as white is most unusual. It's quite a testimonial.

[BB1] Well, everything about this church is unusual. And beautiful.

[FT] Yes, I had lots of stories to tell my family.

[BB 1] Yes, some stories I love to tell, and then others I keep to myself. [laughs]

I remember one time ... We didn't have air conditioning in here *forever* and it was sweltering. People would have to get up and go outside; it was cooler outside than it was in here. The choir didn't wear robes at some time because it was just too hot up there when they moved up there [up in the gallery] and then when they came down for [Communion], you know, to the altar, the choir leader was wearing Daisy Dukes [ultra-short denim cut offs, named for the fictional character]! And that ... I mean, mouths fell open! I mean, it was different!

[FT] Yeah, I bet they did; I can only imagine!

[BB 1] Yeah, there were a lot of things that happened that were kind of comical. One time there was a mouse up there in the choir and you could tell where he was because everybody would go, "Ooh. Ooh!" But I'm glad for some of the changes although I miss some of the old ones.

[FT] So, you have seen a lot of changes. Were you here when they built the apse?

[BB 1] Yeah, when they changed the ceiling up there, it was leaking, and there was always a damp run down the wall [where the apse was built] almost to the cross.

After Nan Peete was here, they donated the space over there to Dayspring, you know, they let them have that, then all the agencies and things that were over there moved on to other places. Yeah, I had a lot of memories over there.

[FT] Do you recall if the Stations of the Cross have always been over there?

[BB 1] It seems like they've always been there. I believe so.

[FT] So, in terms of big changes: well, we changed the floor, the walls were cleaned, the windows were changed, and you were here for the apse, and then was the new choir loft and all those organ changes ...

Are any other parishioners here now that were here when you first came?

[BB 1] I can't remember. I don't believe so.

[FT] So you may have the longest experience in the church.

[BB 1] Yeah, I know people have come and left, and then come back, but I don't know the dates.

[FT] So I suspect Jean Smith came after you?

[BB 1] She may have been here before and left. That would have been 1977 ... And I'm not sure about the Greens, Annie May Green, she was here when I came, so she was here before me. But she left, gosh, in the 1980's or '90's.

[FT] It may have been more recently maybe. I know Lance and Pat were driving her.

[BB 1] Yeah, they were. And she moved, and I kind of lost track of her [Annie May]. I tried writing her but couldn't get hold of her. Her number changed, and everything so ... but I miss seeing her.

[FT] Yeah, she used to sit behind me. I know Ida Edalyn [?] is at Trinity, and I think Louise Jones.

[BB 1] Yeah. I think she was a godmother to one of the kids, too.

[FT] Another friend of mine was Denise Senter. She was here in her youth so you probably you might not recognize her now, but she's still in town. And then I remember Clifford; he went back to St. Phillip's.

[BB 1] Oh, OK, and there was Scotty. I can't remember his full name, but we always called him Scotty. He went to the Circle [Cathedral]. For a number of years, we used to volunteer for the strawberry festival [at Christ Church Cathedral] and we would go down there. My whole family would turn out, and we had T-shirts for just about every year for about, gosh, for about ten years. I kept those T-shirts until they were rags. I said I was gonna make a quilt out of them but I never got around to it so there may be a couple of around there somewhere still.

My daughter Barbara Jean, she loved to go. And after awhile my granddaughter Terry also went, and Nikki. They always went and we'd spend the day cutting out biscuits or dipping ice cream, and, of course, they got to get a free ice cream. But we certainly enjoyed doing it.

I wondered about you got into teaching the martial arts and who came? What was going on in the neighborhood?

[BB 1] I was at work at Saint Vincent ... It was always really receptive here ...

[FT] I wonder about your being here now, as the city has changed and now without your family here, what is the sense of community like now?

[BB 1] So, my family, yes, no one nearby. Everyone is grown up and moved to do their own thing. I remember Robert, he came a long time. I remember chasing him around the building, too, because he didn't want to go to class!

[break; a couple of other people talking – not sure who, besides Catherine and L]

[FT] You spoke of having a Kwanzaa program. And you talked about Fr. Chastain. Now, was that [the Kwanzaa program] during his tenure as rector, or was that before?

[BB 1] It was during.

[FT] So that would have been probably in the early 1990's? [Yes] In your memory was this the first time there'd been a specifically black celebration?

[BB 1] Yes. The way it happened is I had begun celebrating Kwanzaa a few years before that. We would go to different places in Indianapolis that had celebrations. The second day of Kwanzaa was the children's day that we celebrate, and this was done second day after Christmas. A lot of people thought that Kwanzaa was taking the place of Christmas, and so I tried to explain to people what it was. I asked Father Chastain if I could use the parish hall to give a little celebration for the church for anyone who'd attend to find out what it was, and I would have people come over and arrange what it was all about.

And so, what happened was, I had some friends of mine: my sister and two of my nieces were in an African dance class, and we got a drummer. We had the parish hall decorated and everything, and had everybody start down here and then we had the drummer call everyone upstairs. This was to celebrate calling the people from the village to celebrate. So everybody came up and I explained to them that Kwanzaa means "first fruits." It was not a religious celebration - because in my family I have Baptists, Episcopalians, Muslims, you name it, and most of them [also] celebrate Kwanzaa, and it was a time to get together and celebrate. I told them what the 7 days of Kwanzaa were; we lit the candles; we had the girls show them some dances and explain what the dances were; the drummer was drumming. Fr. Chastain, he kind of shook his little self a little bit before he had to leave!

Everybody had a good time. We had a little class where some of the kids put on an act: I had written a script called "The Lion," and gave everybody a section to read, and the kids, they loved that. They got to play the parts, and we had some little things that they could make. I had saved all the little jars that I collected at work; I worked in the nursery, so I had all these bottles that the formula came in, and we decorated those little bottles. Some we put candy in for the mothers or potpourri or something for the dads. They had fun doing that - they made a big mess, but it was it was good, and it went over quite well!

So I think people understood then, and the word got around that it wasn't a religious day. It was just a celebration.

[FT] So did the parishioners then follow, or was it mostly children?

[BB 1] It was mostly children, but everybody had a great time. I think Marta Diaz was there, and I'm trying to think who else was there. Sullivans, I believe. There's a lot of people that were there but now have moved away. But everybody enjoyed themselves.

[FT] So this would have been one celebration. I know the diocese now does Absalom Jones and we just did Pauli Murray. So really, this church, specifically apart from Kwanzaa, has not done any other celebratory [black events]?

[BB 1] Not that I know of.

[FT] Another thing I wondered about is, now that your children are grown and have moved many places in the city and gone to different churches, what is your sense of what your community is here? When they were there, that had to be a special part of your community, yes? Has anything taken that place, or is the larger community now your community?

[BB 1] Well, it has changed; it has changed. My family is spread out, and, you know, they go where their husbands go or their wives go, or whatever. My sister married a Baptist minister, and my other sister, Blanjean [?], her son became a deacon of another church and so she started going there. It's, you know, people start changing. Like the neighborhood changed, you know. This was not considered the Old Northside when I was living here; it was "other" than that, and it was kind of a rough and tumble place. But the church was always an anchor here.

[FT] You said that this is your home, I can say that when you are here, you usually sit at about the fourth row from the back right on the aisle, and you never want for people coming to speak to you. I always notice there's always someone speaking to you, often three or four people. So, you still do have community, yes?

[BB 1] Well, that was my spot. I could watch the back of the kids, and see, you know, if they're jumping off the pews or whatever, I could catch one of them! It's just comforting to me to sit back there and remember, you know, where they were. I can still see them up there with their little robes on and everything.

[FT] So this is still the community spot, yes? You still have community within community within community.

[BB 1] Right. And from time to time, they'll say, "You know, I feel like going to All Saints," and they'll come. And a couple of times, my sister from Florida, she'll come. The last time she came was for my daughter's memorial.

[FT] I remember that.

The other thing that you have spoken of over the years would be your martial arts classes. So please tell me what was the impetus to start the classes? Was it connected through the church? Was it for the neighborhood? How did it work?

[BB 1] OK. After the Scouts and everything had moved out, and the children that had started here were no longer little children; they were teenagers. But still there was nothing in this neighborhood – well, there wasn't then anyway; I don't know what the situation is now – for children to do. After school you didn't want to hang around the playground because there were the gangs starting up then: a lot of drugs. They needed something to do.

My daughter was babysitting then for Father Eastwood. His kids. And she saw me practicing one day and told him and he said, "You want to teach my kids a little?" And I said sure. Why don't we just start a little class and get some kids over here? So we did. We started out with four or five kids, and I was showing them a few things, and they liked it. Then in the [next?] class we had about ten kids and it kind of grew. The mothers would bring the kids and I told them, "We're not going to babysit your kids. So if you want to bring your kids and drop them off and go shopping or whatever, make sure you pick them up on time. Or you can stay here." Because the class was only an hour or an hour and a half. So a lot of the mother hung around. And they started asking, "Well, how do I do this?" or, "If somebody did this and somebody did that . . ."

I said, well, let me show you. It ended up we had to start another class, and the mothers would stay, and we had like three classes going for a while there. My friend Thomas, who was also a Black Belt, he had just gotten out of the service, and I asked him if he'd come down and help me. He did, and he stayed with me for a long time and we taught a lot of people.

[FT] So the program was through the auspices of the church or on the church grounds?

[BB 1] It was over in the other building, you know it hadn't been turned over yet to Dayspring, so we were still there, and up until they turned it over, we still had the classes there. Then after they turned it look over to Dayspring we moved down to – what do they call it now? - Landmark. I think it was a Methodist church there, and we moved down there to their basement. I had the class there until I had to have surgery, and then that ended the class right there.

[FT] So the program was sponsored, so to speak, by the church; it was on church property, but open to the community, not just to parishioners?

Do you have pictures?

[BB 1] I do have pictures, but I don't have any with me because I couldn't find them.

I've got tons of them. Hopefully, one day I can bring those pictures in of the class over there. Now these are some of my pictures.

This is a picture from when I was teaching at Flanner House, when Flanner House was on 16th Street when I first started out. And these are some of the people who taught. This is my best friend Thelma who's no longer with us. This is me. [laughs] This is a friend of ours who became a policeman, and this young lady went into the Service.

[pulling out another picture] I joined the National Women's Martial Arts Program after I became a Black Belt, and they had a convention in 1988 in Geneva, New York. It was a three-day convention, and I'm in here [pointing to picture]. There were five hundred women. Can you find me? [laughs] There's a lot of people in here.

There were all styles of martial arts: there was Judo, Jiu Jitsu, Aikido, Kendo, O Goshi Judo ... you name it, they were there. We stayed on the campus of the university and, at five o'clock in the morning he got up, and you'd see women running across the campus, a sword on one hip and a baby on the other – because you could bring your children. I didn't bring mine! And you could attend any class or performance you wanted to. I had a ball! It was hard, hard work: you had to participate in a lot of classes. I met a lot of people, and we've been friends forever.

[FT] So when you were teaching here and out of the Landmark Center, how many years did that span? 5? 10? 20?

[BB 1] Oh, gee, I think I was over here for 5 or 6 years. And at the Landmark for a year. I did some summer things at the Boys Club. I did one summer at the Children's Museum. I'm think I'm the only person that ever did a class at the Children's Museum. I got that through All Saints. A man was visiting Nan Peete, and he came downstairs while the class was going on and he said, "Do you do this all the time?" I said, "Well, just part time – one or two days a week." And he said, "How would you like to come to the Children's Museum? We're looking for something for the neighborhood for the summer."

And I said, "Well, give me a day, and, if I'm free, sure." He got back to me in about a week, and, next thing I know, I was teaching at the Children's Museum. I've got pictures of that, too, at home somewhere!

Yeah, I got a lot of memories of that and a lot of kids. I've had kids from that class who are grown now – in their 30's and 40's – and I'll run into them and they'll say, "Do you remember me?" And I'll say no. And they'll say, "We were we were in your class, and I'm so-and-so, and now I've got kids and I really enjoyed the class."

And I'll say, "Are you staying out of trouble!" Yeah, but I can say that none of the kids that I taught, I've never seen their names in the newspaper or gone to their funerals.

I'll see their mothers or their fathers, and they'll tell me, well, you know, so-and-so really enjoyed that class, and he taught me a few things, and I learned a few things. And I say, great, because we taught practical stuff; we didn't teach the things that you see on TV. The kids think you got to jump, turn flips, and to do all that stuff. It's stupid. but just learn the things that'll save your life and keep you out of trouble.

[FT] That's a true service.

Over you many, many decades at All Saints have you been in leadership roles like the Vestry, or a Sunday School teacher or ...

[BB 1] No. I helped with the search one time in the interim for one of the priests. I can't remember when. I've been on a couple of committees but mixing being both a single mother and working all the time I couldn't do something full time. A lot of the time, I was working more than one job, and I didn't have babysitters or things like that so I depended on my mother or my sister. So, I didn't really get involved with organization things.

[FT] Well, one search committee is more than enough! That'll do you in.

Did you have relationships with other parishioners socially outside of a church service or a coffee hour? Did you go to other people's houses? Was that something that happened within the church community in the congregation?

[BB 1] A couple people, yeah, but they're no longer with us, but, yeah, I did.

[FT] Were they black or white – was there a social life outside of the church that was integrated as well?

[BB 1] Yes. There were parties and things like that. And, of course we had picnics and things. Yeah, there were quite a few of them. Of course, like I said, Annie Green and a couple of people who, like I said, are now passed on, but yes, there were.

[FT] So – then there wasn't a feel of isolation?

[BB 1] Oh no no no no no no.

[FT] Like you're the only one ... because certainly any black person at some point is going to be the only one in the room, the only one in the museum, *the only one* ... And that was not a feeling here?

[BB 1] Yeah, I've been that one before.

[FT] Yeah. You might as well just not back right on out of the room, right?

[BB 1] But, no, I didn't get that feeling here.

Mr. Davie [?] used to have a movie night for the kids. They loved that. We'd take turns babysitting – Greg Davie did – I know the kids would – Miss Bonnie Harvey [?] - the kids would spend weekends with her. They loved her cats; she had a house full of cats. She would come to my house. She brought me a dog one time. Yeah, I'm a sucker for animals. The dog had been hit by a car and she took it to a vet. And the kids cried and cried and cried. They wanted to take care of a dog. So she brought it to me, and I said sure. That was Connie [?] and we kept her for a long time until she passed.

[FT] Well, thank you so much, Barbara.

[BB 1] You're welcome.

[Catherine Crouch?] Can I ask something? Did you ever feel excluded from leadership or committees because of your race?

[BB 1] I never felt that. No.

[FT] So in your in your years at All Saints, then, you felt there were opportunities you could belong to? That you could sign up for whatever you wished?

[BB 1] Oh yeah.

In my scrapbook, there are the organizations my granddaughter was in which I think she started into right away. She was invited to the [Diocesan?] Convention, but I don't know if she made it or not. That was Terry. Yeah, they were always into something.

[FT] It does it does feel like, from my experience being here, too, that everyone is woven into the fabric of the church, and we're all in it together. We're all here together. And I think that sign that "Everyone is welcome" over the door, I do think it is true.

[BB 1] Yes, I do believe so with my heart. Yes.

[Linda Ferreira?] I'm curious. If you two were going to be thinking about how we address white privilege here or white supremacy, I wondered if you had any thoughts about that - within the church – given that other part of the research concerns where we have missed the boat on race? Because you might you might both have some thoughts about that.

[FT] So the question is, "What do we think the church could do to bring more diversity into the pews? [some internal conversation to clarify]"

When we think about opportunities for awareness of the church and its wealth, and growing the congregation in more diverse ways, like when we think about reclaiming all those that left after Nan Peete left, all the black parishioners that left ... I wonder in what direction could we go towards reclaiming that history as well?

[BB 1] For one thing, the neighborhood has changed. When I lived here, it was predominantly black, okay, but with a few whites. And, like I said, the push from downtown, when they were reclaiming downtown, and people started moving in this direction, and all these beautiful houses – some of them were in bad shape. They were cut up into apartments. And then you see people moving in, people taking notes, you know, walking around, and for sale signs going up. People pushed out.

I know the house that we were living in, somebody bought that while we were living in it. We were renting it. It was a duplex; I lived upstairs, my sister and I and my kids. Mom lived downstairs with my brothers and sisters, the ones that were still at home. And so, we had to move because someone bought that house.

There were, in this area, three filling stations: there was one across the street, there was one there [points], and there was one down there, a Marathon station, on Pennsylvania.

[coughing, etc.]

So ... okay, the neighborhood has changed, and a lot of the people that moved out were forced out. When they started beautifying all these houses – they called it “beautifying” then; they call it “gentrifying” now, but it's the same thing. They buy these houses up for a little bit of nothing fix them up, and then the taxes go up. And the people still try to hang on to the house even if they can't pay, so they have to move out or sell or whatever. If they don't sell, they're [the homes] “condemned.” So, either way you lose.

That's one of the reasons I moved out of the neighborhood, because we couldn't find anything that was close that we could afford. So – I moved west. I was working. A lot, you know, and trying to pay for my house and everything else. Raising kids, and then grandkids. But some of the people hung on as long as they could – like Annie May and a few other people. My sister, she lived on Parker – here's her and her husband [shows picture] – and they were kind of forced out, and they moved they moved into an apartment. As a matter of fact, they moved into - there was an apartment right across the street, right here [at 16th and Central]. She lived in that building until it burned down. And so then they moved again.

Most of the people who moved away went to other churches, went other places. A few of them started coming back, but not for long because of transportation. That was one of the problems with me getting here – with transportation. I would take

the bus from my house. What we would do every Sunday, we'd take the bus to come over to church, stay for church, and then get on the 12:15 bus, go downtown, go to the movie, and then go home.

And then, when the movie closed down – there used to be a theatre right where the AT&T building was. It was right across from a bar. And we went to the movie there for awhile until people started coming in that you did want to sit next to! [laughs]. Then I started taking the kids to Lafayette Square. Yeah, we'd go out there to the movie, and then we'd go to Murphy's. They loved to eat at Murphy's, and then we'd go back home. But after awhile, as they grew up, they didn't want to make that trip. They were interested in other things.

So I started coming by myself, and a couple of parishioners started giving me lifts, and that's how I've been making it.

[FT] I think it's hard to "reclaim" the diversity experience from the 1960's and 1970's when the neighborhood changes, and, in a city where mass transportation is so poor, that if you're forced to leave for whatever the reason, it's hard to use public transportation to get back, and the other churches – the other Episcopal churches – have said, "Oh, we're happy to have you."

Now, we wouldn't have been "happy" ten years ago, but we're happy now!

[BB 1] Yes, there's more of a choice now.

[FT] Yes, so that makes it difficult.

[BB 1] Yes, they're other churches close by where I live now, but I'd still make the trip here.

[FT] I don't think we from my experience in this building, as we touched upon before, I don't think there's anything here that's compellingly off-putting. Do you have any thoughts? Is there anything in here that you would say if we didn't have it – whatever, like if we didn't have the pulpit or we didn't have the whatever - we would attract a more diverse congregation? Do you have anything that you notice?

[BB 1] No, I like it the way it is. And I mean it's ever changing, whether it's the building or the people. It's the feeling. I've gone to other churches that, oh, were beautiful, you know. They've had sliding glass doors, and, you know, screens that show the preacher from all the different sides. But it's not the feeling [there]. You feel like you're at a . . . I don't know.

[FT] No, you are right about that.

[BB 1] Well, I'll be here until they pull the covers over me!

[FT] [to the others in the room] Anything else? Did we did we answer your question, Marcus?

[Linda F] I have a "then" and "now" question. The "then" question is, at the point when the white flight and the [later] gentrification was happening, did the church try to save the neighborhood? Was there social action around trying to help people keep their homes?

And then the "now" question is: do you have any thoughts about when we try to get social action going here in this church, supporting social action like [the racial disparity around] transportation or the mass incarceration? We have a very small number of people involved.

[FT] So the question is, Barbara, when the white flight and the gentrification occurred, did All Saints have many resources to impact these changes?

[BB 1] I think they tried to help a few people. I think they did help Annie keep her home for long as she did. But a lot of people, like I said, there were those great big houses that were cut up into tenements, so they didn't have a stake in those. But the people who did own their houses lost them. They either had to sell them real cheap, or they were condemned because they couldn't keep up, or for taxes or whatever. But as long as they could hang on, they did, and I'm pretty sure the church tried to help. But to no avail. You know, the people with the money.

[FT] In your experience over the years, there's always a certain number of people who are active in any church. Do you think there were more people active thirty years ago, as opposed to twenty years ago, as opposed to now? Has the active group expanded or contracted, or do you think it's about the same – in terms of initiatives?

[BB 1] Well, I think it comes to population, because when I first joined, like I said, it was a full congregation. I mean, sometime, was only standing room. But then during the AIDS epidemic people left, and it went down. Then it started building back up when Nan Peete was here; when she left, it went down again. and has been slowly building back up since. So it depends on who's here and what's going on.

[FT] So one could say that, when the pews were full a hundred percent, all of the parishioners were not invested. Like investing in initiatives, and helping, and committee work, and doing the work to support social justice – a hundred percent weren't involved then, and then when we had thirty people in the pews, a hundred percent weren't involved then. So the proportions were probably the same.

[BB 1] When I first got here there were other things that were going on also because they had different help organizations here. They had the space upstairs in the

building next door. Like I said, there was Cub Scouts, you could get your taxes done. There was a guy who would come to provide for free legal advice. Different organizations would be here, and, if you needed help, you could come over here and get it or they would tell you where you could get it.

[FT] So our space was used more as a community space, right? And we don't have that that now.

[BB 1] Yes. I think why we lost a lot of the children once the children go and they don't want to come, then the parents don't come. But, yeah, [in the old days] we had we had fun with kids.

[Catherine] Anything else you wanted to say, Barbara, that you didn't get to?

[BB 1] No. But I'd like to show you my scrapbook if I can.

[Catherine] We'll scan that, OK? Can we keep it for a little bit? We'll get that back to you in a hurry!