

**Interview with Bethel Bose [BB2]
w/ Linda Ferreira [LF]
taped at Episcopal Church of All Saints, Indianapolis, IN, Oct. 2021
Transcribed by Diantha Daniels**

[LF] Bethel, we're here to talk about the history of the Church, and, in particular, the history of race and race relations. You are one of the people who's been here the longest. I came in 1995, and when I came there was probably mostly white, and a good – maybe 5 to 10 percent African Americans. Frank Lloyd was still here for instance. So I'd like to first of all hear about ... how did you come? How did you even find out about All Saints, and when did you come?

[BB2] I was a student at Methodist School of Nursing. My father was a priest, and he was pressuring me to go to church [laughs]. So I ended up here – visiting, when Father [Felix] Cirlot was still here. I didn't come regularly until I graduated. A friend and I moved over on 14th and Alabama. I could walk over here then, and so that's where I started coming regularly. I met my husband here. I had four children all of them were baptized here.

[LF] Do you remember your first experience of walking into the church, what that was like for you?

[BB2] At the time I was counseling with a Catholic priest, getting ready to become a Catholic, and I came over here. I don't remember why, but I came one Sunday morning and I think what I did was just a lot of comparison about the service and the Catholic service that I was used to. I was happy here; it was a nice place to be, so I started coming regularly. There were several other girls my age, and we sort of became a group, along with the social worker who worked here: Bonnie Harvey. I was very happy. I mean, this was my entertainment, my church. This was where I was ... I don't know what I'm saying. . . .

[LF] Well, to follow up on that: this is a place where you were young; you were in school; you came to this place, and you made very dear friends, it sounds like. So tell me a little about how that came about. Were the young people's programs here? How else did you find each other out and become friends?

[BB2] I really don't remember. I think just gravitated to people my own age, and then Bonnie – we all kind of gravitated to her. She was one of those people that really enjoyed being with young women.

[LF] The make up of the church when you came under Father Cirlot?

[BB2] I don't remember a lot, but it was not it integrated the way it was later, as I recall.

[LF] So, should I guess that that first group of friends was white group?

[BB2] Yes. It was.

[LF] And did the group of you tend to stay at the church?

[BB2] Yes. Two of the four women married priests from here. They went from here to study. This parish sponsored those priests.

[LF] I was thinking about this being a friendship group for you, and you married here. Can you tell us a little about how the parish evolved in the course of the time that you were here as a married couple?

[BB2] Actually, it began to become pretty integrated when I still single. People – whites - were moving downtown, which pushed all the Blacks up into this area. And I think that's about the time that they began to come. The kids came first and brought their parents and brought their families, and we were pretty much 50/50 Black and white. That was under Father Carthy. And we had lots of curates [like Sam]. We had Mitchell Powers, Henry Adkins, Tim Smith, and lots of people from here that became priests. Oh and Caroline Godfrey – her son.

[LF] Are you saying to me that this church was financially capable of having a priest *and* a curate?

[BB2] No, the Diocese and Mr. Lilly were helping to support us. We did not become financially on our own from my understanding ... Yes, we became financially independent probably not until the 1990's, later than that even, with Gordon Chastain ...

[LF] It was later than Gordon. It might have even been Mother Suzanne.

[BB2] No, I know it was before Mother Suzanne, probably Steve Giovangelo. At least one big announcement was made about how we were able to support ourselves.

[LF] I'd be curious about what it was like for you and your group of friends as this church began to integrate. I'm curious about what was the conversation in the parish, and was it welcoming?

[BB2] It was very welcoming, yes.

[LF] And did programs go along with that?

[BB2] Not a lot. The choir more than anything, the children's choir. I think that's what brought a lot of kids here was the choir, and then they brought their families. So we ended up a very integrated group at the time. And that would have been early 1960's? 1970's? I don't know exactly when it was.

[LF] Did your children sing in the choir?

[BB2] Yes, a couple of them did. Yes. For a while it was a real “going thing,” the children's choir. I can't remember, I think it was Bob Goodwin who was director.

[LF] I heard that he actually went door to door and invited families to send their children.

[BB2] I didn't know that. That sounds like something Bob would do.

[LF] So your children, at least a couple of them, sang in the choir and that was an integrated choir. Was that like 10 children? Or 25 children ... ?

[BB2] I can't remember. But probably more like 25. Although that's pretty small, maybe 50 – more like 50.

[LF] Where there adventures that went with that choir?

[BB2] A lot of the kids belonged to the summer camp that Bonnie ran. And I don't know much about what was done at that camp or what the camp was like. I just know that there was one. My kids unfortunately didn't join. They were at the point where they needed to be more independent of the church.

[LF] I know from talking to you before that your friendships expanded during that time. Can you tell me about that? Susie Mallory in particular, right?

[BB2] Susie came here early on during my entrance to the church. I can't remember exactly when, but she sat in the second pew on the left side. She was Black. She became very involved. She was cooking for both Sundays and lots of dinners and that kind of thing. She had New Year's Eve parties at her house with church people and her community around the church – friendships from the street that she lived on. She was a wonderful, wonderful woman. At Christmas time she gave all of the kids in the church something: often it was just a dollar bill or sometimes it was a little something that she had made or something. But she always gave each child a gift at Christmas. I laughed because my son said to me one time after I said she liked the kids so much, “Yes, but she liked me the most!” She babysat for Michael for a while and they all loved her so much.

[LF] So the friendships in the church expanded beyond the borders of the church?

[BB2] Yes, somewhat.

[LF] Well, me about where they did and where they didn't tend to expand.

[BB2] Well, we didn't see an awful lot except the ones that came and became members. We didn't see people from her neighborhood much other than at that party. But we were a very comfortable group, an integrated group when that was not the norm in this community.

[LF] No, it was not the norm, and I think – we're talking about maybe early 1960's? Have some of those friendships continued over time?

[BB2] Yes. I don't see them very often, many of them. . . A few months ago one of them had a party that many of us were at.

[LF] So what happened to Susie?

[BB2] Susie died while I was in the nurse midwifery school so I didn't see anything of her over that last few months. I understand that at her funeral the church was absolutely packed. Her grandson came; he was in jail and he came in chains and they allowed him to come and be with the family.

[LF] It was a big loss for you ...

[BB2] it was a very big loss for me, definitely, and for the church ...

[LF] My memory says you were godparent to one of her children?

[BB2] One of her grandchildren. Phil, the younger son ... Well, actually he was one of her great grandchildren because Phill was Polly's son, and Polly was Susie's daughter. She also was a member of the church. The boys served at the altar, both Phil and David, her two grandsons that were very active here.

[LF] So help me guess about which decade this might have been?

[BB2] That would have been the late 1960's, early '70's.

[LF] Do you think the sign was already up – “Everyone is welcome”?

[BB2] I'm not sure. I don't remember ever not having it up, so I don't know when it actually went up.

[LF] But in that late 1960's you could have walked through that door for the first time and there would have been Black children acolytes, right? And at that time the priest was still always quite white, right?

[BB2] Yes. We didn't have a female priest until ... 2014 ... That can't be right! No, 1977, right, and she was the first female priest that was legally ordained in the country.

[LF] Jackie Means.

[BB2] Jackie Means. Yes, she was ordained and it was a big deal. Most people were thrilled. There were some who broke off from the church because they didn't want female priests. It wasn't anything against Jackie herself; they just didn't believe in having female priests.

[LF] Although I have to say I've heard that Jackie was pretty spicy! So can you tell me anything about how the debate was carried out in the church?

[BB2] As I said, some people left the church. We talked among each other, but there was never anything really big, but, you know, I talk to you about it; I talked to her about it . . .

[LF] Do you remember any of those [kinds of conversations?] Because I'm curious about when there was a break in the church and people left. I'm curious how did that conversation go? Did people do formal resignations? Did the people speak up? Or did they only talk in two's and three's?

[BB2] I think, more or less, it was in two's or three's. The other thing that was going on in [right around] the same time frame was the new Prayer Book, and I don't know which was more uncomfortable for those who left, whether it was the prayer book, or having a female priest?

[LF] What was different in the Prayer Book? I don't even know about this debate?

[BB2] Yes, there was a new prayer book. I wish I could remember when this one came out but probably in the 1970's. This prayer book was changed a fair amount. Before that it was these lovely poetic prayers and it just was very different. A lot of people just were not happy with that at all, and there are other people who were thrilled. They didn't like the fact that they couldn't understand some of the words and stuff.

[LF] So there were mostly quiet conversations, yes? I've heard with the ordination of Jackie Means that there was press coverage and people sometimes objecting outside the church?

[BB2] Yes, yes. I don't remember much about that, but, yes, that happened. My husband and I in fact left for about three weeks, and came back. We left because we had a female priest. . . .

[LF] Well, say more about that. Because that means you had a change of mind and a change of heart in the process. How did that come about?

[BB2] I don't really know except that I really, really, really missed All Saints and I think my husband did, too, and we decided that we were going to come back and support Jackie here.

[LF] That sounds like quite a discernment.

[BB2] I think it was for me, at least. I thought about it a lot. In my own head; I didn't talk too much about it. Yes, it was quite a big decision for me.

[LF] And the two of you just said we must return. . . .

[BB2] Absolutely. Yes. Yes.

I was thinking in this time, while Jackie was being trained, and the prayer book changed, and actually a little before that, that these windows went in. . . .

[BB2] I think the windows came in the late sixties L.

[LF] I guess it was before Jackie – just because I looked it up!

[BB2] I don't know what got us going on that, but there was an artist who, from what I understand, offered to do this for us and she did a wonderful job. She did these all these windows and these are just very recently put in.

[LF] So your sense was that there was an offer made ... Do you have any idea how they were financed, or whether there was a conversation about what would be pictured?

[BB2] I don't know. I wasn't I wasn't in any of those conversations. They just said we're going to get stained glass windows and not really much was said about what they were going to be until they were installed. Then there was a lot of discussion and teaching about what the windows were, and what was in them...

[LF] What stuck in your mind about what was in them?

[BB2] I think I was thrilled that there were Black people in them because that was still early on, when the community wasn't integrated much. I don't know, I just used to just stand here and look at them. I just thought they were wonderful.

[LF] I agree. I agree. Do you have favorite scenes?

[BB2] Not really I guess. I like the whole thing. I do like the mother and infant down here on the bottom. I believe that's my favorite. I guess being a nurse midwife, that that sort of drew me in a little bit! [laughs]

[LF] Yes. Say a little about the business you started when you came back to Indianapolis.

[BB2] Oh, well there were actually three midwives who opened the birth center around 38th Street. There were a lot of home births being done at the time that were illegal, and there was a lot of problems with that, and this was partially to balance that out. Although we as midwives at the birth center supported the home birth midwives very much. They would consult with us rather than call a doctor and be bawled out or whatever.

But we are opened it in ... in 1992, I think, maybe, I can't remember, I have to look up the date. . . . and it grew fairly quickly. We usually would have fifteen or twenty people on the books at a time, and we'd have maybe two or three births a month or sometimes we'd have four or five a month. I don't think we ever had a month where we didn't have any at all.

[LF] And how, how did people pay for your services?

[BB2] The insurance didn't cover it initially so they had to pay out of pocket, but the services were not nearly as expensive as the hospital, and I suspect that some people came for that reason.

[LF] Was that integrated? Or did you serve mostly white?

[BB2] Mostly white. I pushed a lot for Medicaid patients. My [midwife] partner at the time was not so enthused about that. So I think that the Medicaid started out being of fairly large part of our practice but that kind of dropped off after a while. Very unhappily for me.

[LF] Help me think about how to talk about this idea. You and I are a bit unusual in that we are both white women who been in integrated families for years – interracial families – and I'd like to think about what observations you might make from a slightly different vantage point.

When you come to church with, for instance, your great-granddaughter Victory, what you notice about her experience in this parish?

[BB2] As far as the the congregation was concerned, it was just a normal part of life. You know, there was no big deal made of it at all; it's just who we are and what we do. The girls – two of them have been here – and they, Victory, the younger one who was with me last week, was just thrilled. She was so excited about it and the problem is not so much she didn't like the choir as that they did too much “warbling” for a six year old!

[LF] It's interesting. I brought my grandson when he was five or six or something like that, and he'd be in the choir loft crawling around during the service I don't

know if you remember Wessley? Because he would be in and out over a few years, and he thought it was his church. His mom wasn't involved in the church then, and so he thought it was his church. The people were welcoming, and he was our only choir child at the time, so they made a big deal over him.

[BB2] A funny story I told you earlier: my son Michael, he must have been four or five, and we were getting ready to walk out that door, and he looked up at the altar there and said you, know I have to be a priest because they've named this chapel for me!

I thought that was kind of cute - to my disappointment he ended up not being a priest! But it's interesting what things kids tend to latch onto just because that was named "Michael's Chapel."

[LF] Have any of your children continued with church life?

[BB2] Not really, no, and I'm very disappointed about that. My oldest son Michael, although he doesn't attend regularly, he's probably the most deeply - again, I don't know what word I want to use - he has a very, very strong sense of "I am a Christian." So I think he got a lot of support here that that gave him a spiritual or religious center of some kind.

[LF] And if we could interview your children in their most relaxed and open state, what would they tell us about life in this parish? And then we can go on to what would they tell us about race and diversity in the parish?

[BB2] They would probably mostly talk about the choir. They were both involved in the choir - the girls were. The boys served on the altar some of the time. It wasn't particularly about the service or anything like that. It was that they connected with people. What was your other question?

[LF] At their most open, what reflections with they have about race relations or integration? They were growing up in an era where there were big issues ...

[BB2] They grew up in a home that was very racially aware. They wanted it to be integrated and so forth. In fact, my son has said to me several times lately, "Thank you for doing that for me." So there wasn't really anything particularly that they talked about. It was just church; they were just part of the church.

[LF] Were there diversity programs here?

[BB2] Not in the beginning. Well, it did grow into something over time. We had several different programs where we discussed, you know, things like race and our role in it, and so forth. Our role at the church, and our role as the church in this neighborhood. Because at that time, it was the people who had been shoved out of the downtown and moved out. . .

[LF] So there were discussion groups? And then, in a later era, were you here during the time folks that were living in the big houses with three or four apartments in them, or folks that couldn't afford their taxes and were losing their homes in this neighborhood?

[BB2] A lot of them were. It was because the same thing was happening here that had happened previously downtown: it was now becoming an upscale neighborhood and so people who were poor with three four families living together, that kind of thing, they couldn't stay. They couldn't afford it. And they moved elsewhere.

[LF] Do you remember whether the church made any kind of concerted attempts to help with the housing situation?

[BB2] I think, not in a big way, but certainly a lot of us were very supportive of the way things were in the neighborhood previously. All what was going on was very upsetting; we discussed it a lot.

[LF] So it was of concern, but not something where there was an avenue discovered to challenge what was going on ...

[BB2] Not that I recall, no, not that I recall.

[Catherine] Okay, one of the things that I noticed in your question about racial integrated families – I don't know what that means for you and I think maybe I know for you, but I don't have a clue what it means for Bethel, and I think that that's something people might want to know. What is the racial makeup of your family? And how did All Saints become integrated? Was it a conscious decision by the vestry?

[BB2] No, it was just something that happened as the children came in. I don't recall any announcement or anything. People came in and everybody was ... you know ... There wasn't any negativity about it as far as I can tell.

[LF] But you don't remember a vestry decision? That this is going to this church is going to integrate?

[BB2] No. I mean it was it was just obvious to everybody it was going to integrate. It started first with the children, the children in the neighborhood started coming in. Part of that was the choir, and part of it was Bonnie Harvey in her work with summer camp and that sort of thing. And very soon the adults then began to come, parents of families of these children.

[LF] Okay. So if I'm understanding rightly your question how did the first Black person know they could walk through the door? And what you're aware of is that

Chilcott was starting the choir, and we know from Barbara Bingham yesterday Bonny Harvey was also knocking on the doors right? And I know that Chilcott was, too. But it sounds like for you, as a parishioner, you didn't know what was happening ahead of time?

[BB2] No, but it was just I was very - what's the word I want to use - racially interested and involved outside of the church - even back when I was in high school. I remember it was a very good thing and, from what I recall... I'm sure that there might be a few other people that said something different but, from what I recall, it just kind of happened, and everybody was greeted and welcomed and accepted. And so I need to think about how to start that-

[LF] So, Bethel, I just wanted to go back to your children's experience in the choir, a pretty pivotal part of church life, and that choir was a mixed race group. So I'd like to hear some about how it was for you? How you did you nurture the mixed race relations for your children, and how did they experience that?

[BB2] I had always had very strong feelings about the need to have a mixed society. I grew up with it in grade school, high school. And then when it came to the choir, well, my kids grew up in that family environment. I mean, we had mixed race parties and mixed race best friends. From the time they were born. Well, even before they were born. It was just a given. I'm sure there were a lot of kids - white kids - that felt like that, whose families were all very supportive of integration.

[LF] And then, over time, your family itself had some partnering across racial lines, right? Can you tell them about how that happened in your family?

[BB2] Well, my oldest daughter had a Black partner, and so the first - and sixth - child were both mixed, and then her daughter Mary, she partnered with a Black and her first two children - the one you met, Victory, she and Promise were both mixed race from one man. And there were others ...

[LF] You said she has the young one ...

[BB2] Oh yes, one of my younger grandchildren has two that are Black / white mixed. Her third one, she married a man from Jordan, and so we went through the Muslim faith with that. And so we have quite a quite a multi-racial, multi-faith family.

[LF] And I'm assuming that sometimes that goes well and sometimes there's been difficulties. Do you want to comment on either end?

[BB2] I think it's pretty much gone well for our family. It was not that that they had mixed race of connections; it was more that they were a in family with relationships that were producing children. The fact that they were mixed was of no concern to me or to my husband. That was not the issue is not the issue at all.

[LF] In my own family, I was married a good many years and then adopted a mixed race toddler. And then, as it happened, I got pregnant, so I had two children in that marriage. And the Wesley I was referring to was my daughter's child. Then, a number years after I was divorced I met Freida, and she had a child. And Freida is African American, and so is her child. So, just as you were saying, it is a more complicated family make up.

[BB2] There are in our family, too, well, we had a lot of Black and a lot of white, and, you know, we had very integrated parties. We were in a neighborhood that had no integration until my next-door neighbors moved in – which I was very supportive of, and Don was very supportive of it. I think we kind of maybe – hopefully – kind of eased that transition.

[LF] You then have been a proactive welcomer. You were in that neighborhood that was pretty white, right? And you were a recipient here [at All Saints] since you came before it was very integrated.

So – so far you're talking about the process happening informally at home: you knew what your values were. In the church, to your best awareness, the choir and the summer camp brought neighborhood children in who were Black. And the church was welcoming. And that isn't a time when people left the church? There was no split over that?

[BB2] Not that I recall. Well, that may not be quite true. I think there were a couple of families but not very much, not in general.

[LF] So you would describe that as a fairly informal process, right? There were no vestry meetings to decide, for example?

[BB2] Not that I knew about. I was not on the vestry so I can't fully answer that for sure but I certainly didn't know of any discussions in the vestry about that, or other concerns or whatever.

[LF] And do you remember – because another big area of social change was when Jackie Means came. Do you remember whether there was discussion or formal discussions about what does it mean to prepare to ordain a woman?

[BB2] There were discussions about the fact that she was going to be ordained here, but it wasn't a big teaching session or anything like that. It was just a couple or three times it was mentioned from the pulpit. But it wasn't it wasn't a big deal for most of us ... Well it was a big deal for Don and I at first.

[LF] So if I'm understanding the process, there were a few group discussions set up. It was announced from the altar, I mean it was commented on that this was

coming. And, as far as you could tell, any struggle with it was more private. For you and Don it was a fairly private, right?

[BB2] There were a group of families who left because of a female priest being ordained. And they actually started another congregation that used the old [1928] prayer book. They had all men – I don't think women even served as acolytes or anything like that. It was pretty rigid.

[LF] Was that Edward the Confessor – up on Keystone?

[BB2] Yes. And one of those people wrote that history that I showed you.

[LF] So, you'll have to help me out here. If I remember, one of those families was Jean Smith and her husband, correct? Well, I know Phil Smith is buried over there right here in this parish, right? What do you know about how that reconciliation came about?

[BB2] Well, it was it was Phil that made the move away from All Saints. And Jean, as a dutiful wife, went along, but I don't think she ever agreed with it. So she has just recently come back to All Saints when Phil died. The family had all been at All Saints all their lives, until very recently. Phil had grown up here – in this parish – from the time he was a young man. He was actually coming from work on a bus, and he saw this church, and I said I need to check that out ... And he stayed. . . Where was I going with that?

[LF] I was asking the question about this family that left the church, and he actually comes back to be buried out of this church. That was quite a reconciliation.

[BB2] That was really the rest of the family. The children and Jean. I mean I think they still thought it this was their church. Jean had actually talked to Phil about it before he died, and he was okay with that.

[LF] Did you come to that funeral?

[BB2] Yes.

[LF] Yes, I did, too. I think I might have been on the vestry then because I think the vestry went to all the funerals. So I was the outsider to the story but I was very moved. It felt like the whole church opened up and said welcome home. This is your home. What was your sense of it?

[BB2] The priest from where they were going at that time was invited to come and do the funeral, and that was interesting because we went back to what we had known here many years ago.

[LF] Yes, that was the interesting part. One part that was interesting is that the district welcomed the priest.

[BB2] Absolutely. They were thrilled. They were just thrilled to have a family back here and have a funeral here. They saw it as an opportunity to reintegrate the two different groups of people. They were hoping for [a respite] from the disillusionment. That others would then come back here.

And it was a lovely service. For those of us who are a bit older it was a return to what we knew years ago. The service – what was in it – it was wonderful. We really liked it.

[LF] Is that what we would call Rite One, or was it even before that?

[BB2] It was before that. In the current Prayer Book there are two Rites: Rite One is the first one, and then the second one is the one that we normally use. But before that, we had the break up with some people who did not agree with producing the [new Prayer Book]. They felt that theirs was sacrosanct, I think.

[LF] Thank you. We were kind of on a theme about who goes away and when there are sometimes reconciliations, so I wondered about your observations of other times that there were breakaways – where the church divided or a time where people left over things?

[BB2] I think the two things were Jackie and the change in the Prayer Book.

[LF] Okay. What about when homeless people were sleeping in the pews?

[BB2] I think people were very accepting of that. It was a horrible, horrible, horrible, cold winter, and I think most of us were very touched that the priest at the time chose to do that in order to open it up so people could come in here and be warm and sleep. And they slept in the pews here.

[LF] Do you remember who was the priest? Was that Nan Peete?

[BB2] No, it was before Nan. It must have been Father Jack Eastwood.

[LF] So there was a pretty broad community support and not a break-off right with homeless people right in our pews ... which is interesting.

[BB2] Well, we were actually encouraging those people to come to church, and then that was just another piece of it.

[LF] So I think about another couple of big changes. Another was this church brought Nan Peete, one of the very, very first African American clergy ...

[BB2] I was not here then. That was when I went away to school.

[LF] Okay, so you weren't here. And then another big change was when Wayne Hanson was here. One of the things happened one was he acknowledged he had AIDS to the congregation. And this was one church that would do funerals. I understand that there was some distress during that time, too. Some people left.

[BB2] I'm sure that's probably true, but I was gone during that time.

[LF] Oh, so you can't make direct observations. [pause]

I would like to think now about cultural exchange – what we learn when we go into each other's homes. For example, when I first started going with Freida to visit her relatives, even her home. I remember, in her home, one of the first things I saw was a series of photographs that one of the photographers from her hometown had taken in Africa. Big beautiful photographs that never would have been in my home growing up.

Just there to start with ... so when you would go to a party at Susie Mallory's, for instance, what new things did you come across that weren't in your home?

[BB2] Probably the biggest was music. We were classical music family, and so to go into that different community and hear their music and learn to love it was special.

[LF] Any particulars that you can remember now? Dance music, or jazz music, or...

[BB2] Well, definitely jazz music. About the same time I got very interested in the Preservation Band from New Orleans, which was Black music. The kids were all playing, you know, their music, which, at the time it sounded to me like it was all coming from the Black community. I don't know whether it really was or not.

[LF] So, if I'm hearing you right, you were saying you went, and it was music that was not the same as in your home, correct? And that you actually expanded some of your interests? Basically at the same time a whole field of new possibilities?

[BB2] Correct. Other than that, it I just felt like it was no different than going to somebody else's home for a party.

[LF] Yes, I'm hearing that it's a pretty central thing. That's why I was trying to find out if there were differences in art or music or even customs? The foods that were served, or kind of drink?

[BB2] I don't think there was anything like that really. I think they were pretty much – what I ate and drank – was normal to me. [pause]

[LF] I know. I was going to go ahead with ... I know that Susie was very central in your life, and so I'd like to hear some about what she nourished in you. What did you turn to her for?

[BB2] Well, I think just basic support. She was kind of like a mother at times. She was a very good friend. She babysat the kids now and then. We'd take them down to her home, and so that got them in an environment that was the same – and different than what they were used to. I mean we had Black friends that came and went and so forth, but her home was within the Black community. It was predominantly Black. I felt very supported by that, and supported for my children.

[LF] And during this time, was your mother in Canada? So your mother was far away ...

[BB2] Yes, that's right. Yes. And, so Susie was, as I said, a friend and also very motherly.

[LF] Any stories you could tell me about being able to turn to her? How she was like a mother?

[BB2] Well, I can't think of anything specific at the moment except that she was very supportive of me as a mother, and, as I said, she babysat for the kids. Particularly for Michael for a while.

[LF] Michael your oldest child?

[BB2] My oldest boy. He was my third child. The other two were old enough at that point they didn't really need a babysitter. And Eric stayed with a neighbor who loved babies, so it was mostly Michael. She did babysit Eric occasionally, but mostly Michael.

[LF] So, Bethel, you came into the church when it was very white and you watched it grow with the choir and the summer camp, and the parents following. And that's not our parish right now. I know you were away for some periods of time, but I'd like to hear your best understanding of what happened to the parish that left us as a mostly white parish at this point?

[BB2] As you said was gone. I left in 1982, and I moved back to town in 1994. I was shocked and surprised and very disappointed that it was no longer an integrated parish. Most of the folks were gone.

[LF] So tell me what it was like, what did you see when you came into the parish that very first time after your return?

[BB2] It was a very, very small congregation. There were probably seven or eight, mostly men, and I just didn't feel like – as a woman with children and babysitting and being a midwife and all of those things – I didn't fit in.

And it was not – well, I think maybe a part of it was the LGBT stuff, but it was not that I was uncomfortable with that; it was just that I just didn't fit in. There wasn't anybody at the time that I felt like I could, you know, really latch onto.

[LF] It wasn't your own affinity here ... So what altered that? Because you did return. What process did you go through on the inside to alter that?

[BB2] I don't know that mentally or intellectually I had to alter much of anything. I was supportive. I just didn't feel like there was anything there for me as well.

[LF] Before you go on, I think what you just said was very important. That you don't think you were opposed: you didn't have to change mentally as far as you know. But the base was gone for you, correct? The integration, and the people you would identify with, right? ... How did you get back here?

[BB2] How did I get back here? I had not been going to church for some time. Partially because of my work I was often called out on Sunday, and it's hard to go to church and know that you might be leaving five minutes after you got there!

I had been without church for some long period of time. And I had retired and moved to the home I'm now in. And one Sunday morning I woke up, and it was like our Lord said you're going to church today. I just got up and knew I was going to church. And I got dressed and got in the car. . . and I thought, well, where am I going to go? Well, I'm going to go home! And I walked back in here, and it was like I *had* come home. Even the walls just kind of hugged me. It was very special.

[LF] Even the walls hugged you. Yes, when I think about these walls it's one of the most important aspects because of the light, and the high ceilings, and the incredible sound. So I get that part. But who was in the church? Who was on the altar? Do you remember anything about that?

[BB2] I think Steve was the priest here at that time. I remember seeing Gordon the first time I was here. But there were a very small group, and all men.

[LF] Interesting. So it was still all men in the congregation? And yet you were home. . . And the racial makeup?

[BB2] Well, Barbara Bigham. She was the only one. Oh, yes, and Annie Mae was here, too. But there just wasn't the group that had been there when I left. There were no children. Of course, my life had changed at that point, too; my kids had grown up and left home. I was still working as a midwife, so I was very involved

with babies. That kind of upset me that I didn't see any young children and babies here.

[LF] What have you observed since that time?

[BB2] Things began with Suzanne coming. She just somehow filled the church again. There was a full congregation. There were still not many Blacks, but there were more than just one. A few children, a very few children.

One of the big things that I missed was the cry room – this room in the back. When I was raising a family, that was a room that mothers could take their children to if they were getting unruly or crying or anything like that. And we had a speaker back there so we could hear what was going on in the church and we could sit back there with our kids, and they could play with the toys and stuff, and we could still be in church. But that was no longer there – well, the room was there, but it was not used as a cry room at all. And again, I don't know whether it's just because I'm getting old and change bothers me? But that bothers me.

[LF] One of one of the things that makes me think about is you've returned to this parish a handful of times. And you've returned when you've returned and stayed, it's been with this profound sense of home. Whether or not you got what you had been distressed about. You returned. Yet your Black friends were gone in the main. And there weren't children. Still, you returned and were home. To me, there's something happening there that – as David Kubley would tell us – something magical happens here.

[BB2] I don't know what that is for me. I don't know.

[LF] But you described it pretty powerfully. “The walls hugged you.”

[BB2] I don't know what made me stay, except that the walls hugged me, and there were more people than the first time that I came back, and they were all so warm and so accepting, and greeted with obvious love – for this parish, and for people that were coming to either visit or become members.

[LF] What you're saying is significant, I think: that the warmth and welcome made a big difference.

[BB2] Yes, absolutely.

[Catherine Crouch] Did you live here when Martin Luther King was killed? In April 1968? Do you remember that night?

[LF] Tell me about when Martin Luther King died. What happened in the city, in this area?

[BB2] Well the park right over here was where the original plan was for Robert Kennedy to come and speak politically, I guess. But anyway, he was coming to have a speech and there were a lot of people that were here. Probably, because of the neighborhood, the majority of them were Black, I think. I was at home and heard all this on the television. He gave a wonderful, so special a presentation. I don't know that anybody else could have handled it the way the way he did.

[LF] You mean Bobby Kennedy?

[BB2] Yes, it was horrible. I mean I cried for hours, that's how horrible it was for me. And then to turn right around and have Bobby killed not too long after that. A sad time in our nation.

[LF] Do you remember anything at the parish that helped with grieving around that time? Around the assassination?

[BB2] I just think we supported each other. We were like family at that point, I think, and people just supported each other. We could go to any of them and cry on their shoulder or sing his praises or whatever.

[LF] I wasn't in the city at the time. Where I was, there was fear in the streets.

[BB2] I think that there probably was here, too. I think the people did become very concerned and more careful about where they were, and with whom. And locking up – I never locked my doors before that occasion. But I started locking my doors when I went out of the house. The only time I locked my doors before that was when I went to Canada. It had just been very, very safe. I felt very safe, and then shortly after Martin Luther King died I begin to feel less safe.

[LF] Were there any security issues around the church? Did you walk each other to cars after midnight service or anything like that?

[BB2] Not that I recall. I mean, people did walk each other to their cars and chat, so I don't think there was anything unusual about that.

[LF] You're very clear that you wanted an integrated world and an integrated church, with social justice. How did you learn that? How did that come into being in your personal life?

[BB2] I don't really know. My father was a minister, and I'm sure he taught me some of that. Some of it was rebellion (laughs) to those around me that weren't that way!

[LF] Well, tell me about that.

[BB2] One of my classmates would go to my father, and tell him that I had been seen hanging around with a Black boy at school – just things like that. . .

[LF] And you did something? You objected in some way . . . How did you do that?

[BB2] I just said, that's who I am and that's what I'm doing. And he said, well, you just need to be careful of what you're doing.

[LF] Your father said that. That you just need to be careful here. Did you know what he was talking about?

[BB2] Well, he wasn't talking about not being integrated. It was more about my own safety. If I was doing things like going out with a boy who was Black. . . .

[LF] So you were you were telling me that your father wasn't warning you against seeing a Black boy, but he was warning you about something you were starting to think about what he was warning you to watch out for, right? So what was it that you thought he was warning you?

[BB2] Yeah he, actually both my parents, were very concerned with the fact that I was I was going towards Black folks. I was seeking them out mostly . . .

[LF] What danger did they see that they were trying to warn you about?

[BB2] I think just the horrible things that were going on with interracial couples. How everyone who was like me was afraid of being hurt in some way, either physically or verbally.

[LF] So he was warning you against potential harm or attack, either verbally or actually, right?

[BB2] Right. My parents were not as radical as I have always been, but they were very supportive of integration. So I think I got it from the very beginning. One thing that stands out in my mind though was a discussion we had. They had company, and whoever the company was asked Mother something about would you be okay if one of your girls married a Black man? And her reaction was, I wouldn't like it because he was Black; I wouldn't like it because I wouldn't want her to be hurt – mentally hurt. And what that said to me was the safety of my. . . .

[LF] I think you're saying is that you think she was afraid you would be endangered if you went against the social norms.

[BB2] Right. It didn't come across as being an anti-racial thing at all. It was just, I would worry about how you would have to live and how you would be hurt.

[LF] And you said you thought your tendency was to rebel against that?

[BB2] Well, no, not that particularly. But it was in general against my parents. I was pretty rebellious.

[LF] What I was thinking about was, when they were protective of you, they were protective in this area because they thought you could be ostracized, right? Were there other areas that could have been scarier, or took real courage on your part where they found it easier to support? For instance midwifery – that was quite a departure, wasn't it?

[BB2] No, that that came long after I left home. I never felt that they were against it or disagreed with it. Particularly my mother was supportive. When she finally came to see what I was doing, where I worked in the hospital, and I took her on a tour of the birth unit and then up to my office, she was very surprised at what her daughter was doing. That was one of the things that she was very supportive and positive of me with.

[LF] So she learned that you had the capacity to go beyond her imagination. And you didn't just working at a birth unit in a hospital, you set up a whole birthing center; you were an entrepreneur - right there on your own. So these were parents that could support a courageous venture on the edge.

[BB2] It took me awhile to accept how supportive my parents were, but, yes, they were very supportive of me when I look back on what was going on. For instance, as I said earlier I think I said that I was studying to become a Catholic. They were in disagreement with that. My father, I know was hurt by it, but they didn't try to stop me. I think if I had totally left any church, they would have been more unsupportive.

[LF] So when it came to race, the hesitation they had, had to do with whether you would be ostracized for injured. Were there ways in which you continued on to pursue a life that was integrated and they came to support it? That they came to see that you really could manage?

[BB2] I think so, although they didn't say anything specific about it. I don't know how much they knew about what/who I was because I was living here they were living in Canada. But I never felt they were unsupportive of me.

[Marcus Harvey] Were you aware of the integration that happened around Crispus Attucks High School? Do you have any information around that?

[LF] You were a member in this parish right at the same time that this city was going through major changes and integration of schools and neighborhoods. I am curious about what you observed in the larger community and how that was the same or different in the life of the parish?

[BB2] Right. I lived in an all white neighborhood. There was fear; there was anger. All those things that people think and do and say when they're opposed to something. Here, I felt supported. I felt at home my values were like the values here. I don't think I learned my values so much as I was supported in the values that I have.

[LF] So were your children at School #70?

[BB2] They were for a while, yes. There were at 91 and then at 70.

[LF] So – School 70, that's 46th and Central. School 91 is almost to 52nd, and only a few blocks from Keystone. When they were at #70, was that a white school?

[BB2] Oh yes. The neighborhood that I was living in, which is just northeast of where we are, was, as I said, all white. The first family that were integrated moved in next door to me, and I think we as a family were able to ease that coming a little bit. The second family came not too long after, and one of the children died shortly after that – in the family. The neighborhood all came to them and were supportive of them, and from then on it was an integrated neighborhood.

[LF] So people who had kept a little distance gathered with the death of this child?

[BB2] Yes. Yes. She had just recently moved in, and some of the men went over and helped her unpack boxes and get her house in order. I think they painted some rooms for her. The neighborhood just generally was there in support of her and taking food to her. And then it wasn't too long after that the neighborhood really began to integrate.

[LF] One of the things I'm struck with in this whole afternoon is your observation about describing yourself as holding this value. And then something happens where you're holding the value with very few others . . . and then something happens and it opens up and you say that without having a way of understanding what activated people together. That people who were distant became kind, and helped this mother after the loss of her child. Do you have any words or explanations?

[BB2] I felt at the time and feel now that that when someone goes through a terrible situation like this woman did, that people just tend to support, that it's universal. People support the people that are left: take food and that kind of thing just because that's what they've done all their life. That's what they've learned when they were going to church or whatever. And in the neighborhood it just kind of happened after that. You know, a second family moved in, and before we knew it there were five or six families and lots of children.

[LF] So, when you think about the larger community, what were you hearing out in the city that was different than this kind of evolution?

[BB2] One of the things that I remember is that over by the Naval Armory there was a park, like Santa Claus park – or whatever. And when Black people started going there, it closed. They just closed it down. And that is just one of many things that were going on during that time in the city.

[LF] And for you it sounds like that was a shame. . . . When did your children's school start to be integrated - #70 or #91?

[BB2] Well, #91 when people started moving in there, most of them had children and it just automatically became integrated. IPS #70 was already integrated when we went there.

[LF] Do you know what decade we're in here? For when your children would have been at those two schools? My children were in those two schools, too.

[BB2] Let's see. Dawn was born in 1969 and she would have been 5 or 6 when she went to #91. So – mid-1970's. She was there probably until about third grade and then we moved and she went to IPS #70.

[LF] Okay, then you would have known both of those schools pre-integration.

[BB2] For the most part.

[LF] One of my observations during that very similar era is that the school #70 right about the same time started to have a "Gifted and Talented" or something. You had to test into it, and it was almost all white. So there was a "de facto segregation" happening again, right? So that would have been part of your school experience, yes?

[BB2] That's true. Their ideas, their morals were, of course, like Don's and mine at that time, and so they were kind of on a different path than a lot of the kids at that school.

[LF] It would be interesting if you and I could talk a little about what aid that gave our children and what dilemmas that created, for instance.

My son went to IPS #91, and then for high school he went to Broad Ripple. He was in the performing arts program and the jazz band. In my opinion, it might have even been more Black than white. They would travel all over the state for these competitions and I would often travel to observe them. So here we were the city school, and I remember in most of the towns we went to, the other bands would be White – not like this group – and our guys, if they had to be in uniform, then they had to wear their marching band uniforms because they didn't have other clothes. So they often stood out, looking very different than the other bands. Which they seemed to manage pretty well.

[BB2] I think the kids manage most things like that so much easier than we do. Like the masks!

[LF] But here's where the story goes, that I've always hung onto as being interesting. When he was in Confirmation class – I told both kids you need a religious education. You can choose whether you're confirmed, but you need to do the education. The little church I was in then didn't have much by way of a youth group thing so he joined a couple of other churches, which included two travel times to work on other people's homes. One was to the south, rural Tennessee or somewhere to help rebuild a home, and one was Urban poor in Cincinnati. And this youth group he went with was pretty White, and he said, "Mom, everybody was so afraid in the city, and they didn't know how to navigate in the neighborhood, and I felt right at home."

And that was one of the first times I had a clear observation that he was saying, "My world gave me something that helped me make sense of life, and helped me navigate." But when he went to IU, he was actually quite distressed because it was very White compared to what he was used to, and he couldn't easily find his way.

[BB2] Yeah, I think my kids went through quite a bit as well. They also were in mostly white schools. And a few times they would come home and tell me things that had happened and in were rather distressed about the way their friends were behaving, and so forth.

[Catherine Crouch] . . . Okay. back to the church. Do you remember any skirmishes, or the racial discord or people feeling upset? Any incidents in our history that you can recall here at All Saints?

[BB2] Not that I remember. Now there may have been, with some of the youth groups or the camp for kids and that kind of thing. I don't know. I don't remember there being anything here. There were a few people that, like Jean's husband, that I was very aware were not real happy with the whole integration thing.

[LF] How did he make that known?

[BB2] We were good friends, and we would spend time in each other's homes and we would have conversations with about all kinds of things – church being a large part of it. And so they would just talk to us. I don't know; I assume they had other friends that they talked to the same way. I don't know.

[LF] I think part of what I'm trying to think about is what showed up here and what was only talked about informally away from the parish. Because he was still in the parish during that time, right?

[BB2] Well, the early part of it, yes. I don't remember exactly when the prayer book was changed. But, yes, he was.

[LF] So I understand what you're asking for, but I'm not sure how to get . . .

So, you may or may not have observations about that . . . But I'm thinking about your father pastoring a church in Canada, right? Was that a white church or was that an integrated church?

[BB2] I don't know for sure. I think it was probably a white church. My feeling is that Canada was a bit behind the U. S. in their struggles for integration. When I was a young child I remember that more with the Chinese people, not Blacks. Chinese people, because there weren't many Blacks up there when I was a young child.

[LF] So if there was cultural distress it would have been with the Chinese folks. I'll go a little ways this way: Do you remember what the issues were? What people struggled with?

[BB2] No, I don't. It was just a general sense that people were biased against Chinese people. And even back then I was very much supportive of the Chinese people.

[LF] You wanted to figure out how to welcome, right? So now, if we come back to the parish and are thinking about that, you could surmise that there were some white friends, who found integration difficult? But, apparently, if I'm hearing you right, you're not aware of that conflict being acted out overtly in the light of the parish? And so I am thinking, I am guessing, that Black folks still could figure out what this person's views were, I'm sure. So I am curious about any observations you had about how people figured out how to dodge issues, how to enter conversations, how to stay away from them?

[BB2] I don't know that I can answer that.

[LF] You don't know? You're pretty sure it happened though. It just wasn't overt, right?

[BB2] Right. Right. I'm sure there were things. I was raising my little kids so I didn't always know what was going on in the church.

[LF] It feels like what you and I are going back and forth about is that there was a place where things became very covert. Personal feelings weren't acted out overtly in the parish. There weren't policies enacted to make folk less welcome.

[BB2] Not as far as I know. In fact, there was a sign put up in front of the church – actually two signs, I think the one that's there now over the doors, but there was also a sign like a street sign that “Everyone is welcome.” I can't remember exactly what it said on it, but it was it was very much welcoming.

[LF] But that sign got there somehow. . .

[BB2] Yeah. I don't know. I don't know. I think maybe, I would guess that it would be Father Carthy and Bonnie that made sure it happened.

[LF] So . . . there is like this point/counterpoint happening: there is racial distress, and there is action to make welcome. There is resistance, but it doesn't seem like it's very overt. You were friends with Susie. Did you and she ever talk about things she had a hard time with or where she did not feel welcome?

[BB2] I don't think so.

[LF] Were there people she stayed away from?

[BB2] Not that I know of. I don't know. Susie was a special kind of person and everybody loved her, you know. I don't know that she said anything like that.

[LF] So you mean she might even approach people who were uncomfortable with integration or with diversity programming? She would still stay connected with those folks?

[BB2] I think so. I think so. It was just like she was part of the group. And she was very friendly and very close to all of us.

[LF] We are wondering about other kinds of diversity. Whether there were other ethnic groups: Spanish-speaking people, people from other nations? Were there any people with handicaps that needed help with hearing or other handicaps? Were there other kinds of people here?

[BB2] I'm sure there were, but I don't know. I'm sure there were, but I don't remember.

[LF] And when the community center next door was still active – before that became the homeless shelter, did you take part in any of that programming? The tutoring, the legal services?

[BB2] No, I didn't take part in any of that. I was pretty involved in what kids were doing, and, you know, making them comfortable and good. "Proper." But that was like Sunday school and church programs.

[LF] Was there a lot of crossover between the parish and the neighborhood programming there?

[BB2] I considered, as did, I'm sure a lot of people, considered it part of All Saints. I mean, it's a church. And we tried to remember what all we . . . There was a food bank

upstairs, and probably a clothing bank, too. We pretty much used the downstairs parish-wise. For a while Jack Eastwood had his office up there.

[LF] Did any of the people that went for tutoring or went to the preschool also attend services?

[BB2] I think that probably for a good many of them, yes, because we were interested in bringing in people that needed those services, living right in the neighborhood, interested in their coming to our church.

[LF] So when that program shut down, what happened to our pews? Did it change who was in the pews?

[BB2] I don't remember much of that turning point, and what happened. All I remember is that it was "them" and "us" – rather than all of us together serving the community. I don't remember much about Dayspring . . . I do remember being upset about it – angry that our church was being taken from us.

[LF] Just then when you said "them" and "us" instead of just being "us" – between Dayspring and all that turned it into a "them" when before it was all *us* . . .

[BB2] We had a food bank, and we had this and that, and we had a gym, we had martial arts, and then we were just a "church."

[LF] So you were angry that you lost your church, and angry that that "big we" was altered, correct?

[BB2] Correct. We used to have Sunday morning coffee over there, and usually some sort of a class about something. And it was always the kitchen being used; we usually had donuts. I think some of the kids got to the point where they were coming to church to get the doughnuts. My son told me that he was special.

I don't know. It with more open and I think probably, because of the space, it was easier over there kitchen and dining area now part of Dayspring for us to visit back and forth that it is up in the small space up here.

[LF] So this is one of the few times I've heard you say, "I was angry. I was angry at this change."

[BB2] I just felt something was being taken away from us.

[LF] Do you understand how it happened?

[BB2] No it came from the diocese. I don't know exactly how or why. I think it probably it was just a matter of wanting to serve a larger community than just All Saints people.

[LF] But it was it's actually clear that the programs were serving anyone who would come, right?

[BB2] Right. But I don't think there were so many using the programs then. I think that had changed.

[LF] So you think there'd been some dwindling. Let me check: Was that at the same period of time that Black folks were losing their homes in this area, or poor folks, were losing their homes?

[BB2] No, I think Dayspring – they became Dayspring – a bit later than that. I can't - I can't remember the time frame.

[LF] But you don't know exactly why that those programs were dwindling?

[BB2] Only that the new practice was taking those people into their program, and it wasn't ours anymore.

[LF] You mean Dayspring, yes?

[BB2] Yes. But that was just my personal feeling. I don't know that I've ever even talked to anybody about it.

[LF] Which again is important, because this is a time that you were aware of being angry and grieving a loss but you're not aware of having talked a lot about it, right? I know you weren't on a "sofa," but you thought you something had to be done about this, right?

[BB2] Right.

[LF] Any other thoughts?

[LF] That's a good question. I was thinking about when the programming was at its liveliest, it was serving a lot of people who were poor: legal services, tutoring. What was the economic make up of the congregation?

[BB2] At that time we were a very integrated congregation, and I think many of the folks came from this area, and housing that at that time was very poor.

[LF] So much of the housing in this neighborhood was poor. . . . Now I know that people like Frank Lloyd, and a number of Black leaders, as well as a number of white leaders and white professionals like yourself that were in this congregation, but I don't know the time spans. . . .

[BB2] You've mentioned Frank several times. . . .

[LF] That's the name I know. . .

[BB2] Oh, OK. I don't remember when he really started coming here regularly. I don't think it was until the late 1970s or early '80s, maybe. But he would show up occasionally. But at that time he was the director of Methodist and a very busy man, so I think he didn't attend because of his other commitments a lot of times.

[LF] So at the time when the community center was still active, you said the neighborhood folks tended to be poor? And the rest of the congregation, what kind of mix and proportion was it in terms of professionals, and working class, and poor?

[BB2] I would say we were more working class and poor. I don't think I can even think of a person who was really wealthy here at our church. Mr. Lilly [of Eli Lilly] supported us financially a lot, I think. But we were really struggling financially as a parish to remain afloat.

[LF] So the diocese supported this church – and Mr. Lilly.

[BB2] Well, I would say Mr. Lilly supported the diocese more than the other!

[LF] We had diocesan approval, right? So you would say that it was a small population of people who were in the professional classes?

[BB2] Very small, yes.

[LF] That was a small group, and no one that you would say really had money, right?

[BB2] And there wasn't the congregation that there is now. Like this morning when the place was practically packed. We just didn't have that back then. It was a much smaller a group of parishioners.

[LF] So when Gordon and Tom left St Paul's and were looking for a church, it was a fairly small congregation when they came?

[BB2] I think so. Yeah. I don't think back then we ever had 75 even. Maybe Christmas Eve or something. And now, this is wonderful. I walked in here this morning thinking that maybe we would not have many people here because Suzanne had left. I was so thrilled to see the church that packed this morning.