

Interview with Gordon Chastain [G]  
w/ Father Sam Vaught [S]  
and Catherine Crouch [C]  
taped at Episcopal Church of All Saints, Indianapolis, IN, October 2021  
Transcribed by Louise Boling

S: Why don't you start by telling me your full name?

G: The Reverend Gordon L. Chastain

S: And when did you serve as rector of All Saints?

G: I was rector from 1994 to 2000.

S: And Fr Gordon, where were you born?

G: I was born in Indianapolis Indiana about a block from here.

S: Right here. In what year?

G: 1938.

S: Did you grow up here in Indianapolis?

G: I lived in Indianapolis or its suburbs until I was ten then we moved to Anderson Indiana. And then I went to school in Greencastle. I'm a Hoosier. Through and through a Hoosier.

S: And then, Father Gordon when were you ordained?

G: I was ordained in 1962 at St Christopher's, Carmel to the priesthood, well, to the diaconate at the cathedral in the same year. The bishop was John Craine.

S: Early in his time as bishop?

G: I would have started as a postulant under Bishop Kirchoffer, but I was ordained by Bishop Craine.

S: You were inherited by Bishop Craine, right? The same thing happened to me – Bishop Jennifer inherited me from Bishop Cate.

S: I wanted to start by first asking just a couple questions about not necessarily just All Saints, but just churches in Indianapolis in general. In the nineteen sixties when you were ordained, okay, at that time, were most of the churches in Indianapolis segregated by race?

G: Yes most definitely that. They were segregated by race. In the Episcopal Church there was quote, “the Black church”, St Philip's, and the rest were white churches.

S: Were you aware of any churches in the city at that time of different denominations that were integrated?

G: I don't remember that being true; now maybe there were and my memory is wrong, but I do not remember any

S: At that time broadly within churches of any kind in the city, were there areas/questions where integration was a topic that people talked about?

G: Yes there were. I remember newspaper articles about once a year anyway that eleven o'clock on Sunday morning was the most segregated hour of the week. And most mainline churches, [pause] there were struggles, you know, feeling guilty about that in some way. I do believe, thinking about it now, that there were some Roman Catholic churches that were integrated. Some that were predominately Black.

S: Did you get the sense at the time that there were certain policies or social trends that contributed to the churches being segregated? I'm thinking of the idea of neighborhood churches, more of the parish system.

G: Yes if you thought of yourself as a neighborhood church you thought of yourself as either a white or a Black church since neighborhoods were segregated, specifically here by redlining.

S: So you alluded to this, but when you were ordained, Father, the churches and the Episcopal churches in this diocese were all segregated.

G: As far as I remember they were.

S: Do you have any memory of what Bishop Craine's attitude towards integration was.

G: Mmhm, yes, and I don't know how true this was at what time but he was, yeah, he would have voted for integration in all manners of places in society and encouraged it.

S: You mentioned St. Philip's. At that time was St. Philip's a hundred percent Black parish?

G: When I was ordained yes - a few years later no. Actually there were some members from All Saints that started going to Saint Philip's. That was precisely as All Saints was becoming integrated. They went to St Philip's to partly financially support them, and also to make them an integrated congregation.

S: So these were white parishioners from here. At the time was the rector of St Philip's Black?

G: I cannot remember. Certainly in the sixties the rector was Black. I can't remember when he died. Then in the late sixties the rector of St Philip's was white.

S: Who is that do you remember?

G: Rich Russe

S: do you remember the name of the Black rector in the sixties.?

G: I really can't. We can look it up.

S: Other than the rector of St Philip's at the time, were there any other Black clergy in the diocese of Indianapolis?

G: Not when I was your age that I was aware of. Shortly after. Certainly in the sixties sometime there were two or three. I don't believe they were rectors of parishes. One was a hospice chaplain. And there were others. Quite frequently there were African priests here for one reason or another.

S: From churches from Anglican provinces in Africa?

G: Exactly right.

S: Do you remember when All Saints began to become integrated?

G: It was before I came. The first time I came here was, I believe '56 or '57.

S: Would you still have been in seminary at that time

G: I was in college

S: and you just came to here?

G: I was a visitor, right.

S: How integrated do you remember the parish being in that time

G: I don't remember at that time, but well, I always came on my vacation after I was ordained and it was majority Black, well, on a Sunday morning.

S: Let's move into some questions on All Saints in general since that seems to be where we are going. What year did you first come to All Saints as a priest?

G: As a priest? For an official purpose or just to visit?

S: For an official purpose

G: 1978. I came as a priest to All Saints and my priesthood was recognized, and I occasionally celebrated in '78.

S: This is not the sole purpose of the interview but could you tell me a little bit about why you came to All Saints?

G: Well yes because my partner Tom and I had been kicked out of another parish and we were very mad at the Episcopal church in general, and the rector at that time of All Saints was Jack Eastwood. As a matter of fact we lived across the street from him and he insisted that he would take us back to church and make us come.

S: And how did he do that?

G: He just kept after us.

S: When you arrived in 1978 what was the racial composition of the parish?

G: I think it was probably a majority Black.

S: And did you have the sense that that had been that way since the first time you came to All Saints in the late fifties?

G: Yeah. I knew something of the history of the place yes

S: What was its reputation among the other churches in the diocese?

G: Its reputation among the other churches in the diocese was somewhat mixed. There were other people and priests of other parishes who thought that this was a dangerous neighborhood and didn't want anything to do with the place and certainly didn't want to come here. On the other hand there were people and places, parishes that supported part of the work that was going on here. Of course, they all supported it because this was an aided parish and there may have been some resentment about that but they supported in other ways. There was what was called the Indianapolis Metropolitan Episcopal ... what was that? [fumbling for name] Anyway it was for the fourteen Episcopal parishes in the city and surrounding counties that for example became the group that officially founded Dayspring. And that was not the only work here that was supported by people from the diocese, so it (support) was mixed.

S: Why do you think other priests and parishes thought this was a bad neighborhood?

G: Because it was Black! Essentially. Although the very hints of gentrification were just beginning then in the seventies.

S: Do you remember any specific encounter both positive or negative that you or other priests at All Saints at that time had with other priests in the diocese?

G: Oh by that time any negative things I had had to do with my being gay, not being here.

S: Was the vestry in 1978 when you arrived, was the vestry as integrated as the rest of the parish? Who was in charge?

G: I don't remember. I know that the first woman to be a senior warden was actually an African American.

S: Do you remember her name?

G: Ida Edelin. Who is still alive...

S: Where is Ida today?

G: Church wise, Church of the Nativity.

S: Why do you think All Saints became integrated; what's the story from your perspective?

G: Well the story from my perspective is that in the forties, late forties, the rector I think he died. Anyway, when there was a vacancy... Essentially All Saints was not sure what to do with itself. It was dwindling white population in an increasingly Black neighborhood. A consultant from the national church came in. He said you'll never survive. If you're going to stay here, you're going to have to relate to the neighborhood. So finally they found a priest, Father Carthy, who was employed by the diocese to be the director of Christian social relations, which was anything we might call social justice today and he was also paid by what little pittance All Saints

had to be rector so that was the beginning of a whole lot of neighborhood outreach programs culminating in the building of the Dayspring building which was originally built to be basketball, a basketball court, salvation through basketball, but that was a symbol of, you know: We're going to try to be relevant to the neighborhood. And so actually the biggest mode of bringing black families here was getting kids for a choir. And then the parents started coming with the kids.

S: When you arrived in 1978, how did the parish talk about becoming integrated? Was it a story that was already being told?

G: Yes it was. I mean it had been told for a long time and told around that little sign on the front door, "Everyone is welcome."

S: So Father, in, when you got here in the late seventies and the story of how the parish came to be integrated was being told which was twenty years then at that point, right and it was fairly obvious ... Were there any stories told about how easy that process was, how hard, how painful. What were the emotions people used when they talked about those days ?

G: well, If you are talking about the white part of the congregation who might have talked about it, who I remember talking about it more than others, they were bragging: look at us. The parish talked about the story of becoming integrated... most of the talk about how this parish became integrated starts with talking about the sign on the front door, the little sign that says everyone is welcome. And people, particularly white people, were proud of that.

S: That's a story that still told of course mmhm; and that's the narrative that, mmhm,those of us at All Saints love to tell because we're proud of that history.

G: But is it true?

S: Do you want to say some more about that?

G: Yes I do actually [pause]. In the context of telling that story which certainly has a lot of truth in it, it seems to me some things are forgotten. One thing that is forgotten is that All Saints would have died if they hadn't listened to that consultant, and then actually to Bishop Kirchoffer enough to realize they had

to relate the neighborhood. And hired Fr Carthy who had the kind of charisma who could put together the programs that would bring in kids who could bring their parents and actually do what he set out to do. But if the parish hadn't been on the verge of death that wouldn't have happened and the parish was on the verge of death because the parish wasn't doing anything like that.

S: So was there a great clamoring for integration or was there a sense of this is what we have to do to keep our doors open?

G: Yes it's almost like we were forced into this in a certain sense.

S: Were there stories of people leaving the parish because it became integrated.

G: No, there are a lot more stories about it being the place where the first woman was ordained a priest, or having become a gay church and that has something to do with the story too. Because a part of the story needs to be, okay, why isn't it so obviously integrated now and a great part of that is, well, the neighborhood changed, gentrified, despite the efforts of the parish to stop the gentrification and the efforts of the parish to relate to the remaining Black neighborhood, which was just north of 16th street. But, nevertheless, that's only part of the story, that the neighborhood changed and our former parishioners moved out - either felt forced out or just moved out.

Another part of the story is that following the example of All Saints, seeing that integration was not such a fearful thing after all, other parishes became integrated and welcoming so people didn't have to, African Americans who didn't want to go to Saint Philips for whatever reason didn't have to come here.

S: It was no longer the only option

G: It was no longer the only option. But there is another part of the story that we don't tell. And I think this is the first time I'm actually thinking it through to tell us and that is we had one African American rector, Nan Peete, a black woman. After that there were three white gay males including me in succession, and we were all white gay males. Three in succession. We worked a lot harder to be welcoming to gay people than we were to Black people. We were not unwelcoming, none of us, but in terms of where our real efforts and passion went, it was for welcoming people like us.



S: Let's back up a little bit and keep talking about that. Nan Peete becomes rector in 1985. What was that like?

G: There was great rejoicing on the part of All Saints. We were proud of Nan. She was a big deal. She was a speaker at the Lambeth conference. She was the big deal and moving force that got Barbara Harris elected the first bishop.

S: Tell me more about that.

G: Nan was on a committee and wrote the report for a theological and historical justification for women bishops.

S: She was a bit of a superstar even outside the city of Indianapolis.

G: She was a star, yeah. She was much more known outside of Indianapolis than here.

S: And she was only here for three years is that right?

G: Three or four.

S: Tell me about what it was like when she left.

G: I don't remember anything special about that time. I mean it wasn't, it seems like a typical ... although it lasted quite a long time – interim process. She was replaced by Wayne Hansen.

S: What year did he come?

G: Not sure; around 1990. Yeah maybe '89.

S: So Wayne was the first of the three white gay male rectors, right? as you say who followed ...

G: Right.

S: Did that difference, was that difference obvious right away when he came in that he was focused on something different than she had been?

G: Yes because the other thing that was going on precisely at that time was AIDS and among other things this was a place that was known where people who got kicked out of other churches could come when they had HIV AIDS and we did funerals for people whom for whom nobody else would do them.

S: Do you remember the first one?

G: I don't know who was the first one. I really don't.

S: What was the feeling like in the parish in those early days of starting to bury people who are dying of AIDS?

G: There were some people who left because of that, who didn't just didn't want to be associated with it, not too many. It was a solemn sad melancholy time. On the verge of depression but also a kind of triumphant time.

S: Say a little bit more about that.

G: Because so many people here were involved with that. And so many of our parishioners ... One year a third of the parish died. That may be an exaggeration but I remember somebody saying that. But we kept doing such glorious funerals. There was a real sense of triumph.

S: Do you remember the people who were dying of AIDS, who were being buried? Were they mostly young men?

G: White young men.

S: And I imagine that Father Hanson and others preached about the issue of AIDS in the early nineties. Did he?

G: Oh sure. We had AIDS Sundays but they were diocesan.

S: What about ministries that had been focused towards Black children who lived in the neighborhood, the choirs of the fifties and sixties that brought families to All Saints? What was the nature of those ministries by the late eighties, early nineties?

G: Well, okay, we've gone through several. Actually the other way to read the story of All Saints is to read it as a series of responses to social crises hitting either the neighborhood or Indianapolis. Because we missed talking about one which was during Nan Peete's time, and that was homelessness, sleeping people in the pews until we could turn what was our parish hall into Dayspring Center. And then came the AIDS and then you know one thing after another and then there was then in '77 the issue was with women, women's ordination.

S: So were you here at Jackie's ordination?

G: Oh yes! [laughing] It was an overflow crowd and I was in the other building. We had a video kind of thing simulcast so while the bishop was presiding at the altar here I was presiding at the altar there for those people.

S: So you had two masses?

G: Yeah

S: I never heard that before. You've alluded to the fact that the racial makeup of the parish today is much different than it was forty years ago, right? And you also suggested that one reason among others could be that Nan Peete, the first black woman rector of the parish, was followed by three gay white men. Do you want to say any more about that?

G: No, it's just, it is something, in preparation for this, it just really hit me hard. I mean I have always been aware of that. It did hit me.

S: In those days, the mid eighties, early nineties, what was your impression of the relationship between the Black community and the gay community.

G: The best example I know of that, we were talking about it a bit earlier. There was an article in the Indianapolis Star when General Convention was here and it was about All Saints. One of the pictures was Mary Campbell, a woman

priest at the altar, and then the other was an interview with Annie Mae Green, who was a longtime parishioner, who was African American and she was asked by the Star interviewer about what she thought about gay people and she essentially said they don't bother me as long as I don't bother them, you know.

S: You think that Anne's attitude was probably the predominant one at the time.

G: I would hope. But it was not exclusive. I know some folks who actually were unhappy that it was becoming a gay church, I mean among Black folks.

S: And your time at All Saints, and this may be difficult question, but have you ever witnessed, did you ever hear something that you would describe as racist or discriminatory based on race, something that was said to someone or said about someone or...

G: I do not. I do not remember any such thing.

S: Did the parish become more integrated when Nan Peete was rector or at that time? Or was the racial makeup of the congregation pretty stable?

G: She attracted some people I know, but I don't ... the parish under Nan did not suddenly become Blacker. No there was no obvious difference.

S: Is there anything else you want to say? I'm going to take a step from some historical stuff to some broader questions. Is there anything else you'd like to say about the history of the parish as it relates to integration specifically and your impressions.

G: Uhh ... No, it's my feeling is it's still something to be very proud of. When it had to the parish did respond to its situation, its neighborhood, and it responded in very positive ways. Now was there some white do-goodism about that? Yes. I know of some instances of that. Were/are we a little too proud of what we did in those days? Probably but it also was the first social response to the twentieth century issues and it laid the groundwork for subsequent responses. If the parish hadn't gone through the process of

integration and maybe disintegration I doubt it could've faced homelessness, HIV AIDS, the women's issues, and whatever it needs to face tomorrow.

S: I want to ask you about that. What from your perspective are the issues today All Saints should be facing as you see them?

G: This has been a core group of questions I do not have the answer to. I knew it was coming and that's why I resigned as rector to a great degree. And that's part of our problem. I mean I know what the problems of the world, in the society and of Indianapolis are. And I don't think any of us know how to respond.

S: Now speaking a little more broadly, about our history, what do you think makes it difficult for Christians especially white Christians, for them to be open about their complicity with race and racism.

G: Two things I think of are one: guilt, shame and guilt that leads to shame maybe, resentful that somebody would accuse me of being racist. But the other thing is the kind of hopelessness. If you're aware of anything at all, you live in the society, you know that underneath it all is our own history as a country with two great sins. Racism slavery and racism ethnic cleansing of the indigenous population. I mean those two things are so much in us we feel helpless.

S: What do you think the gospel can speak to that helplessness?

G: Repentance. I mean that we live with sin what the gospel says about sin is repent. Now I don't know what form repentance takes. How to do it I don't know. But I think that's what needs to happen.

S: How do you think the church is doing with that?

G: Well this whole project of the diocese is an attempt to do something about that. At least acknowledging our history and acknowledging the racism of the Episcopal Church as a national institution. Well, that's a start.

S: What gives you hope right now.

G: Well I'm going to talk about this tomorrow night. Those windows tell me that what we live out on the lower level, you know; for example the lynching of a black man on the cross of bigotry and greed, that's what we live out right now, but I look at other stories of redemption, the story of God's final victory, the story over there of humanity and heaven.

S: I can't wait to hear that. Father as you were preparing to come here today for this; first thank you very much for answering my questions with such candor. Is there anything you were hoping to say that we haven't gotten to?

G: I said the one thing I really felt necessary; that is my part as one of the three white gay male rectors acknowledging that. That's what I wanted to say.

S: I think you've given us an example today of how Christians are supposed to tell the truth. Thank you. I don't think I have anything else.

[new speaker, woman] Let me ask one. I was wondering about this ... [unclear – something about Bishop Craine and the diocese and issues like redlining in the city]

G: That was during Father Carthy's time right, yeah .

S: Why don't you say a little bit more about the diocese response to redlining in the sixties?

G: Actually one of the heroes of the response to redlining was a member of All Saints, Dr Frank Lloyd. He was also the head of Methodist hospital. He, with some other folks who had enough money to do this, founded the bank, Midwest National Bank. His whole purpose was to give loans to Black folks who could not get them at other banks because of the redlining. And Fr Honderich worked for him at Midwest bank. So that wasn't a diocesan response; that was an All Saints response.

S: What years was that happening?

G: I don't remember. 1970's? Dr Lloyd also integrated private clubs around town.

S: By becoming a member himself?

G: No, by All Saints having functions at the club.

S: Which clubs?

G: One was that the swimming club(Riviera), I can't remember, on Illinois. As to the other issues; housing, etcetera. The diocese made a whole lot of well meaning statements at conventions year after year about all of these issues as they came out. Some got more traction than others.

S: Can you remember any in particular that got traction?

G: No. Well, but of course Dayspring is now at least a diocesan response to homelessness.

S: Did you read either resolution that came from diocesan convention last year about racism ?

G: no.

S: One of them is why we're doing this today.

G: Yes I figured. [laugh]

S: Telling our stories about race and racism, about triumphs and failures, about complicity. I get the sense of course the church continues to write the kinds of resolutions like you suggested, especially at the national level, trying to legislate our problems away and making statements to make ourselves-

G: -feel better, feel whatever, yeah.

S: I get the sense that these two resolutions that were passed last year by this diocese are of a different quality.

G: I think they are getting more response as I hear of other parishes, not all; some are not doing too much, but there are real attempts I think.

S: I suppose the real test will be what we do in response to the report.

[woman] It's kind of, I hope it is a good talking about church, the Diocesan response to social issues over the years especially. A lot of people that I know right here say: They say things like, well, I love: "I want to worship God but I just can't take Institutional religion" so that they don't want to just see what happens, yes thank goodness. "Yeah what is the value of institutional religion in dealing with these issues?"

G: Okay. What is the value of institutional religion in response to social issues like this? There is a value. It used to be said that the Episcopal church had a lot of power. It doesn't have quite so much power any more but it still has power. If influential people still are part of institutional churches and therefore they can hear the gospel, and they can act on it. Institutional churches also are great examples of the sin of the world and of what human beings do can do to each other that's harmful. And if they admit it and try to address it, that says something. So we're a part of this world of human beings. There's good and there's bad, and at least these windows tell me the good wins, not the bad.

[Sirens...]

C: I have a question. To your knowledge when the parish was most integrated, were there some adjustments made? Different songs, changes in the programs, other things to welcome their culture?

G: When the parish was the most integrated, there were some adjustments, and some non-adjustments. An example of an adjustment was recognizing that the bulk of the congregation lived in real poverty. In order not to embarrass people about the offering, when you entered the door if you had some money you put it in the plate that was on a table back there. Also you took a wafer, for bread, and put it on the on the paten, the plate. That was your offering. And so there was no plate passed to embarrass anybody who didn't have money. But everybody had made an offering. They put a piece of bread onto the plate so it could be shared. They might or might not get their own. I thought that that was a brilliant adjustment. As to music and things like that, in those days we did do tambourines and at all such things.



But we also had the choir. The kids' choir was taught, not tambourines and not kum by ya, they were taught plainsong. Ancient music. As a way of developing musical knowledge, actually. Which led to a least one success story. One of the kids in the choir ended up going to IU and getting all sorts of degrees in music, and becoming a singer, a classical singer.

S: I love that story about the hosts on the plate as you come in and there is something that strikes at the heart of the origins of the liturgical offertory right there isn't there? That sounds downright fourth century Greek to me.

G: It was beautiful.

S: How long did that happen?

G: I think it happened all the way through Fr Carthy's years, so all the way into the '70's.

S: The people's offerings, the bread and wine.

C: It's my understanding that this building used to connect to that building. Is that correct?

G: Yes, through that door.

C: Do you remember why they walled it off, or why?

G: The blockage between this building and the Dayspring building was when, it happened right before I was rector. It really made me mad but it was theoretically necessary, by somebody's judgment, necessary for code, that you could not let those two buildings be connected, although they were on the same heating system so they were connected. For the city code, fire code.

C: Why did it make you mad?

G: Because it cut us off, essentially that cut us off, physically and somehow emotionally, from Dayspring and since that time the parish has not been nearly as responsive to Dayspring and to the plight of the homeless since that door was closed. That's what made me mad.

C: Anybody got anything else?

S: I have one more two-parter, if you could, Father. Could you think of the thing that you're most proud of at All Saints, as it relates to race and racism, and think of your greatest disappointment?

G: My greatest disappointment is that All Saints probably has a smaller percentage of African Americans of any church in the town, of any Episcopal church in town. Which is, you know, if you wanna look at it that way, that means we've paved the way so people could have options. You can look at it as a positive, but it's also a very sad thing.

In terms of the thing I am most pleased about, is that attention to racism as an issue has not gone away but in fact has paved the way for our response to the other social issues.

S: Thank you.

C: Can you think of a racial incident that you were personally disappointed in yourself, for the way you responded, maybe not being welcoming, or something?

G: Okay... One I think failure on my part was not following up on what had happened in Jack Eastwood's time of relationships with the Black churches here. I made one attempt. I went with a Black, sort of parishioner, but I never followed up. And that was not just with the Black churches. That would have been with particularly the folks in the housing at just north of sixteenth street. I could have done that, but I didn't.

C: Why didn't you?

G: Why didn't I? Well I could always find an excuse. I don't know.

S: Who in the parish was interested in joining you or whoever was connecting with the neighborhood and the communities?

G: I've forgotten his name or I would have said something.

C: This is kinda vague too, but it seems to me like, if it was integrated then stopped being integrated, what kind of energy do you feel like we lost?

G: When we began to lose a larger percentage of African Americans, a lot of it through death, but others through going to other parishes, we lost the energy of kids. In the 70s and 80s the first 2 or 3 pews were full of kids. By the 1990s there were no children at all. I mean this is a kind of sign of loss of energy.

S: And if you feel like that, where the energy landed, in the nineties, does the energy feel here now, does it feel about the same as it did then?

G: No, it's, it is totally different.

S: In what way?

G: First of all we don't have that many kids. [long pause] But it's just different.

S: What year did you write your history of All Saints?

G: 2001 I think.

S: And that covered from the origins of the parish until when?

G: Until about 1994.

S: Obviously you couldn't write about your legacy, it is still happening, and in many ways Father Steve's time as rector was just yesterday, and Mother Suzanne's time as rector was last night.

G: Exactly

S: Do you have any sense at this point, where we sit in 2021, in the present, how you might write about the last twenty years of this parish and race, anything else that we haven't touched on that you would include if you were catching us up in our history?

G: Well ,there are obvious differences now, that were not true from the back then.

S: What are those?

G: One is the place is self supporting. Actually until what maybe, what I think until during Suzanne's time for the first time in a hundred and fifty years it supported itself. Why? Because we live in a neighborhood of rich white people. They can and do support this place. The other thing is also is there are a lot more people here. The last time we could fill this place was early in Father Carthy's time, which would have been in the fairly early 60s. The only other times that this place gets filled is by prominent people's funerals. Until now and now except for Covid, it is full. So that's a difference. The other is something that I alluded to earlier, there is this constant sense of what's next, what do we do next. We have this history of social awareness, how do we keep it going? Where is it to be focused?

S: There is a big difference between a parish today that can self-support itself and one in the late 40s, early 50s that's told that if you don't change, if you don't do something, you'll die.

S: What is a church that doesn't think it's close to death, what does it need to do?

G: Either die or do something. Bishop Cate used to say only dead things can experience resurrection.

S: This a pretty privileged parish, for the most part. How are we to find Resurrection? I think of the gospel the few weeks ago, what is that rich man to do?

G: This is a question and issue the church has faced at least 300 AD, and needed to figure out what to do with. Ever since Constantine we have been an institution of privilege one way or another, often a whole lot of ways. So it's a constant question.

One of the things we've got to do is, first, yeah, admit we're privileged. And then we need to remember that it's all about grace. We have nothing really. Our privilege is an illusion. We have nothing. It is all a gift. The question is what we do with gift.

S: It's easy to remember, to know, that we have nothing when the lights are going to get shut off because we can't afford the bill.

G: But when we think we are somebody...

S: Yeah, mmhm, how do we do that?

G: I don't know, but you and I need to keep preaching it. [pause]  
Folks, you have nothing.

S: Every instance of transformational change in this parish was out of one of those moments, wasn't it?

G: Right, exactly. Right. The homeless had nothing. People dying of AIDS has nothing. The people who lived in these big old houses cut up into 6 or 7 apartments in the 40s and 50s had nothing.

S: When did Covid enter this conversation?

G: That's one I haven't figured out yet. I really don't know. I don't know whether Covid will help us understand that we're all joined together and [pause] we need each other because we all have nothing except what we have in common. Anti-vaxxers would say that's not true. But a whole lot of people would say it's true.

S: It seems to me also that the jury is still out on whether the end of the day this will be something that didn't just make our divides grow bigger.

G: Right, exactly.

S: But it's not affected those with privilege the same way it affected those without.

C: Do you have any recollection of when and why we got the sign that says, "Everyone is welcome"?

G: People often ask me that. It was a little before I got here. I have no actual knowledge of when the sign, "everyone is welcome" was put there, and I don't think I've ever heard any stories about that, but certainly during the time of Father Carthy which would have been whatever that plaque says - sometime in the 50s or 60s or 70s.

C: Do you have a recollection of comments about the sign by African Americans other than that it said welcome to you?

G: Maybe. No, can't remember. ??? I've always been a little worried about that. There was one other thing - the crucifix over the main altar. It is before my time, came originally from St George's, a parish that closed. And when it was put up there in 1963 when the addition was put on it was painted brown. Somehow or other the brown has ripped, has worn off. It looks gold now.

S: So Jesus' skin was brown.

G: Jesus was browner. It's a sign.

S: It's a metaphor

G: Exactly. This is the way it turned. You know I think it's just time and atmosphere of the building. It gets dusted once in a while.

S: I hadn't heard that

G: Well I don't know anybody else's thought of it.

C: What about the Stations of the Cross?

G: Yeah they were here in the I think about the 40s. I'm sure they were put here by Father Cerlot, which would have been 30s or 40s.

C: Do you know where they came from?

G: I do not know where they came from.

S: Do you know what time it is? It is five to five. Almost dinner time!

