Interview with Jane R. Cosby by William W. Cutler for the Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania Oral History Project, Germantown, Pennsylvania, July 28, 2015.

WILLIAM W. CUTLER: Well, good morning, Jane. It’s nice to see you again.

JANE COSBY: Good morning, Bill. Good to see you, too.

WC: We’re here this morning to talk about your life in Philadelphia, in the Episcopal Church, and anything else that might come up that’s interesting to talk about. And I would ask you to start by telling me where you were born, when you were born, and a little bit about your family.

JC: My birth took place at 234 West Penn Street, in Germantown, on the 11th of August, 1929—a hot, humid, sticky, miserable summer day, my mother said. And we lived there until I was two or three, and then we moved to 5222 Pulaski Avenue, just around the corner from where I was born. And then in order to be guaranteed access to Emlen School, which was a demonstration school then, my parents moved to 6333 Ross Street, so that I could be within walking distance of Emlen School. And we lived there until I was a pretty good sized. And then we moved one more time, as a family, to 6720 Chew Street. So I’ve been born and reared in Germantown. I’ve never lived anywhere else.

WC: Tell me about the neighborhood when you were a child. Who lived there?

JC: Well, the Penn Street house and the street were just beautiful! There were big semi-detached houses, set back from the street, with front lawns that people manicured beautifully, and we all knew each other. The Beckett’s—the original Beckett Funeral Parlor people—were across the street, and there was a retired schoolteacher next door. And the people’s occupations and ages were varied on Penn Street. On Pulaski Avenue, the families—it was families again, but they were—they didn’t seem to be as well established on Pulaski Avenue as they had been on Penn Street. And I guess that’s why my parents moved. They wanted a different atmosphere for us, because I had two younger brothers.

And so when we moved to Ross Street, it was different than Pulaski Avenue, but not—still the same, atmosphere that had been on Penn Street. The climate there, the atmosphere, the people—those of us black, as I said, we all seemed to know each other, and it’s true that it takes a village to raise a child. I knew that if I said or did anything out of line, it would get home before I did. [Laughs] And so you learned not to say or do things that you aren’t expected, that isn’t part of the expectation.

My entry into Emlen School was interesting and painful, interesting in that I was either the only black child, or one of just a few in the school. The area then was still predominantly—or had been predominantly Jewish and Roman Catholic. But my parents seemed to be talking about it a lot, and the advices from my parents were to excel. I had to excel. So from a little thing in first grade, excellence was the only expectation that I knew, little understanding then that in order to be even seen, you had to be as good as or better than, but that—

WC: The white kids.

JC: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

WC: So there was an expectation of your parents, by your parents, that you had to do exceptionally well—

JC: Yes.

WC: —stand out, because otherwise you’d be ignored?

JC: That’s right.

WC: Black child.

JC: That’s right. They didn’t fill in all the details. It was just “excel, excel, excel,” and so homework was very important, and playtime got reduced by the amount of time needed for study. And then there was tension in the home, because I was an “A” student, and then I had a teacher—second or third grade—and the A’s weren’t coming, and when my mother went to school about that, she was told that teachers didn’t give A’s to black children. And so that was tension, and a problem in the home. And interestingly enough, I got caught in that NAACP gerrymandering suit for the school board, and so—

WC: In the 1930s?

JC: Mm-hm, mm-hm. And so my parents—we didn’t know about Quaker schools, and scholarships, and things. They just wanted me in public school, and that same kind of school, and the next closest demonstration school was Logan Demonstration, at 17th and Lindley. [Sighs] So my parents went there, and took me with them, to ask for the transfer, because Emlen became a regular school and not a demonstration school anymore, and my parents did know at least that a demonstration school meant exceptionally good education. What they ran into were arguments from the principal that I was out of district.

WC: At Logan?

JC: At Logan. And my admission was because my father threatened violence to principal, physical violence to her and the office. He was going to beat her and wreck the office. And my father was a handsome, bright, talented, capable man, and to see him do that frightened me, on the one hand, but he did it for me, and so that made me feel bad, because that meant that I was on the spot. I was young enough to recognize that.

WC: That Logan school would have been a distance from your home?

JC: Yes, it was. And I’ll tell you about that, after I tell you that we did learn that there were other out-of-district children there, so I wasn’t the only one, and the practice at Logan for the out-of-district students was for parents to sign up to have that child come home with their—who lived in the area to come home with their children for lunch. But I was never invited, and so I ate lunch alone every day in the school, and played in the yard after lunch alone, until those children came back.

And as for the distance, the train wasn’t too far from my home, and it wasn’t far from Logan, and so I took the Chestnut Hill East train to the nearest stop. And the money was so tight at home that there was money to ride to school, but I walked home every day after school, regardless of the weather. And then when—

WC: From Logan?

JC: From Logan, yes. Every day. Every day, that’s right. And so that was interesting, and a challenge. And then I had a younger brother; the next brother next to me was five years younger than I am, and so he was enrolled there, too, and the two of us walked together, because by then I’m fifth or sixth grade, and he’s first or second, or something like that. And so that’s what we did. And so when I hear young people today complaining about this or that, or having to walk or whatever, I just look at them, and want to be able to ask them, “Do you have any idea how privileged you are?” And they don’t seem to understand what sacrifices really—really mean.

And then I went from Logan to Roosevelt Junior High, in the academic section. And again, not as much of a minority, but there were many fewer black students in the academic section than there were in the commercial section. And one morning, toward the end of the eighth grade year, my homeroom teacher called me up to her desk and asked me where I was going to go to high school. And because my family’s situation was what it was, there had been no conversation about that, and I told her I didn’t know. And she said, “Well, I’ve filled out”—she opened her drawer and pulled out these little sheets of paper, and she said, “I have filled out these EH-36’s for you. All your mother has to do is sign them.”

WC: That was the application form?

JC: Yes, to go to Girls High School, 17th and Spring Garden, in those days.

WC: Right.

JC: And if it hadn’t been for her—her name was Melhorne—if it hadn’t been for her, I would have wound up at Germantown High. And so a sadness that I have is that I never had the presence of mind to go back to her and thank her for caring enough about me in a day when that wasn’t fashionable, to see to it that I got to a high school where I would get a superior education, because the academics at Girls High were. Now, all the while that this is going on, the communities are changing. We were at 6720, where Vernon Road dead-ends into Chew, and when we had first moved into that house, we understood afterward that there was an agreement amongst the real estate brokers: no more of “them” after us, meaning no more further west on Chew Street toward Mt. Airy Avenue. In fact, one of my high-school teachers—English teacher, Miss Noe—lived on Vernon Road. And so I thought that that was interesting. But, gradually, the white people moved out, and the neighborhood became more and more black. There was a plumber—

WC: This is sort of on the border between Germantown and East Mt. Airy?

JC: Yeah. That’s right, that’s right. The dividing line is Washington Lane. Well, up here, it’s Johnson Street—Johnson Street. So we were just—yes, into Mt. Airy. I can remember when we first moved to—was it Ross Street? I think Ross. There would be, on the Fourth of July, fireworks at Temple Stadium, and I can remember my father going down Vernon Road, and once you cross Stenton Ave—because we walked that. Once you cross Stenton Avenue, from Stenton to Cheltenham Avenue, it was farmland still, and there was corn, and cows, and that sort of thing. And the corner across from Emlen, on the Emlen Street side, but the corner going toward Washington Lane—that was an open lot, and so I remember when those houses were being built. And while I was at Roosevelt Junior High, the transportation system integrated, and we had state guards—a state guardsman on every vehicle.

WC: You’re talking about the motormen, now?

JC: Mm-hm. On every vehicle, with a gun with a bayonet on the end of it. And I looked at that, and the anguish! To think that because of the color of my skin, we had to have army people on every vehicle! I can’t tell you what that did to me mentally and emotionally—both anguish and anger at the same time. And in the meanwhile, my father, who had worked all these years at the Post Office, had taken exams and passed them to move up, and he was denied being a supervisor, and was told that the black men—the white men wouldn’t take direction from a nigger, and so they would never promote him to supervisor.

WC: How much education did your father have?

JC: Well, that’s a good question. I’m not really sure. It was never discussed.

WC: How interesting.

JC: I knew how far my mother had gone. My mother had graduated from Girls High, and had wanted to go into—wanted to become a dental hygienist. And I think she began that, and then [she] got pregnant with me, and that ended her career. So my mother finished high school, but I can’t tell you. I’m not sure. I’m not sure.

WC: But he insisted, as did your mother, that education was important—

JC: Mm-hm. Oh, yeah.

WC: —and that you would go to school and excel?

JC: Excellence was the only word that I knew. And I’m afraid I never got out of it. [Laughs] It stayed with me all of my life, and I passed it into my children, and my children didn’t always respond in the same manner that I did.

WC: Now, you went to Girls High; graduated in ’46, is what you told me?

JC: Forty-seven to ’48, somewhere in there. I was a year late because I came down with polio in my sophomore year, sophomore or junior year, and spent a number of weeks in the hospital and at home. And when I returned to school, my physical activities were limited. And I ran into a problem there, because the gym teacher, even though I brought a doctor’s note, didn’t believe that I had had polio, and when I had to be excused from gym class, thought I was faking it—when I was laced into a corset that went from under my bosom down to my thighs, and I had to wear that every day. It didn’t have any meaning for her at all. But you live with it. You pretend that you don’t hear the things that are said, that are derogatory, about your race or your physical condition.

WC: Were there any other children in your class, or in the school at the time, who were victims of polio, as far as you know?

JC: No. If there were, I didn’t know about it. And while I was paralyzed when I went in, I walked out, and the doctors never—they had consultations, brought in doctors from New York and DC, and who knows wherever else, and they claimed that it was polio, but it was a strain that they’d never seen, and so they didn’t know what it was, or why it went away.

WC: Where were you treated?

JC: At the Hospital for Incurable Diseases, at Third and—over near the Boulevard, Third and something. And that was scary, because I was in a room where there were numbers of other children, and many of them were in iron lungs, and while I was in the hospital, two or three of them died. And I was just in awe at what can happen to a child, and wondered what was going to happen to me. And my mother said that when the word got out in the neighborhood that people, young and old, black and white, Christian and non-Christian—all prayed, she said. And as far I’m concerned, that’s why I walked out of the hospital, because the prayers were answered.

WC: Polio in those days was a really fearsome disease.

JC: Yes. Mm-hm.

WC: Parents lived in absolute horror at the prospect of their children being afflicted.

JC: That’s right. And coming down with it is pretty scary, because you start out with a headache, and then you take things for the headache, and the headache keeps coming back, and it keeps coming back worse. And then I couldn’t turn my head, and my head kept pulling back, and there was pain down my back and into my legs, and then—because I didn’t pay attention to it right away, you see? It was: get up and go to school, and get up and go to school, and so I tried ignoring it, so that gave it two or three days’ advancement. And then my mother saw that I was in trouble and took me to the doctor, and he was the one that gave the early diagnosis. And then the next day, it was so bad they sent this—it was an ambulance, but not the kind that we have now. It was a rickety kind of something painted white, and with a terrible-sounding bell, and they put me in that, and then clanging, I went all the way to where this hospital was. The parents have a right to be afraid.

WC: Absolutely.

JC: Mm-hm.

WC: Tell me about Girls High when you were there.

JC: Well, I was astounded, first of all, because Miss Melhorne had done it, and mother had signed the sheets, and I took them back, and by then it was June, and so I was told to go to 17th and Spring Garden on this day in September. And I went into the auditorium with all these hundreds of other girls, and they called my name! I was amazed that they were really expecting me, because someone else had made it possible. And Girls High, the education was tremendous. I was thrilled with the things that were taught—not always the manner in which they were taught.

And for all intents and purposes, on the surface, things looked pretty good. but if you looked really deeply and carefully, you could see that there were differences, and a prime example—there was twice—because we were on semesters then—and so once a semester, there would be—or once a year, maybe, there would be a career day, and people in professions would be brought into the school, and the black students were never told about the sciences. We found out about those accidentally. And then another example of life at Girls High: there would be plays and concerts that the students would put on. And interestingly enough, the monitoring of the hallways and the lunchrooms were done by students, not by faculty.

And so this one day, in study hall—we had study halls in those days. This one day in the study hall, they were rehearsing—it was winter; the play was going to be put on just before the Christmas break. And the rehearsal was going on while we were in study hall, and there was this little girl, student—little, because she was short—just about as big as half a minute—a black girl, very dark complexion, whose name was Maxine Stein, which I thought was interesting. And Maxine was—I guess you would describe her as a Type-A person. She’d just talk, talk, talk, talk, talk, talk. And there was no talking in study hall, but there she was, down front, just going, going on. And the teacher who was doing the rehearsal just turned around—stopped the rehearsal and turned around, and in front of Maxine, said, “All you goddamn niggers ought to be shipped back to Africa.”

Well, I was upset! And I understand why the Society of Friends is called Quakers, because I began to quake with my rage. And I left the study hall, and went to the principal’s office, and asked to see her. And she did make time for me, and I told her what happened. And we were called by our last name: “Miss So-and-So;” it was never a first name. Well, Miss Royster,” she said—she named the teacher as “One of my best teachers. What do you expect me to do about it?” And I said, “Well, what she did wasn’t right. You need to address that with her.” And it never was, and not only was it not, but my homeroom teacher was the housemate of this teacher that was doing the study hall, that said that. And so word got back to her, and they gave me the lowest grade possible that would still allow me to graduate. So I graduated by the skin of my teeth.

WC: A grade for any particular subject?

JC: Yes, because the homeroom teacher was also the social science or social studies teacher, so they got together and lowered my grade, so that I just made it out of Girls High. So Girls High, the quality of education was phenomenal, because when I was talking with friends who were going to Germantown High, they weren’t studying *Beowulf*, they weren’t getting trigonometry. They weren’t getting many of the things that I got, or at the level that I got them. And then that made them resent—some of them made fun of me, and some of them resented it, but there was that level of difference, also.

So I went on to Cheyney after that, and because I was a graduate of Girls High and they knew about the chemistry curriculum, when my Chemistry teacher at Cheyney had to be away, she would ask me to conduct the class, because she felt that I was capable of doing that. And that happened two or three times. But I had to drop out of Cheyney, because by then my mother was a single parent, and things were very, very—

WC: Your father had died?

JC: No, he just left. They separated, and I had to testify at their divorce trial, and that was a whole other thing, because what had gone on with my father in the Post Office—he began to drink, and the drinking just got worse and worse and worse, until he became an alcoholic. And he lost his job, and everything just went downhill after that.

WC: How old were you when this happened?

JC: I was fourteen, I think. Testifying at the trial happened the same year I came down with polio. I think I was fourteen.

WC: Forty-three, 1943.

JC: Fourteen, fifteen, somewhere in there, mm-hm. And so I didn’t enroll in time to get a campus room, so I roomed in West Chester with some other students who—we would commute by train, and so I would come home Friday nights—Friday afternoons, and return Sunday night. And it got to be winter, and the house was awfully cold, and there wasn’t much food in the refrigerator. And as I—

WC: This was your mother’s house?

JC: Mm-hm. And as I walked past the Chew Street house—and as I walked past my mother’s bedroom into the bathroom, I saw her putting cardboard in her shoes, and I realized this is the sacrifices she’s making for my education, and this can’t happen. So I dropped out. And what I did then—my grandfather, my mother’s father, paid for my tuition at the Philadelphia Stenotype Institute. And I graduated from there, and became the first black, full-time female stenotypist in the city—court reporter. And wound up working for Hobson Reynolds at the workmen’s compensation court on South Penn Square.

Now, while I was in school, I was heartbroken at having to drop out of Cheyney, because I really wanted to teach, and so I tried to not lose it altogether. So I was in stenotype school in the daytime, I had a part-time job after the stenotype school—because I think it was four or six hours, something like that—and then I enrolled in Temple University at night, in their education program. And after three and a half or four months of that, I had a nervous breakdown. I wasn’t able to read, and I couldn’t think. I couldn’t remember or reason well. And so I tried to get my act together. I stayed in the Stenotype Institute, and had to drop out of Temple. And so I worked for Hobson Reynolds, and married while I was there, until I became pregnant, and went home and had three children, and was a stay-at-home mom.

WC: When did you get married?

JC: Well, I was 21, so—

WC: So in 1950 or—?

JC: Yes, that’s it. Mm-hm, mm-hm.

WC: When you were growing up, did your parents go to church?

JC: [Laughs] Rarely. What would happen was my father was Presbyterian and my mother was an Episcopalian, and they would begin arguing Saturday night and into Sunday morning about where we would go to Sunday school. And so we would be bathed and dressed and shoved out the door, and we wound up going to St. Barnabas; that was on Rittenhouse Street, and E. Sydnor Thomas was the rector there. When I went to St. Barnabas, [laughs] I remember distinctly, in the summertime, it was very, very hot, and in the wintertime, it was very, very cold. I can remember walking onto the grounds and seeing Mrs. Thomas hanging clothes on the line before church, wearing gloves with the fingers cut out so that she could fasten the clothespins on the line. And it would be so cold, the clothes would freeze before she got the second pin in—you see, it was that cold. St. Barnabas was a mission of St. Luke’s, and E. Sydnor Thomas brought St. Barnabas to independent status at the height of the Depression. And one of the ways that—

WC: As a parish?

JC: As a parish, mm-hm. We would have sock hops, and various functions. And there was no running water in the kitchen, in the parish hall; there was a spigot by the stairs, and in order to have a function, women would have to bring buckets, and fill them with water, and carry them up the stairs, into the kitchen, to do whatever. And children, youth, teenagers from other denominations would come to our sock hops, from Mount Zion down—that was diagonally down the street, and some of the other churches—the Presbyterian church at Tulpehocken and Green. We would have a variety of interdenominational youth at our sock hops and . . . that they would be allowed to do things that they couldn’t do in their own places. Nothing illegal, I mean, but just have more—have fun at a level that wasn’t allowed where they were.

WC: Dancing, for example?

JC: [Laughs] Much dancing! Yes, that’s right. So I watched E. Sydnor Thomas, and then there was a [phone rings]—excuse me.

[End Part 1/Begin Part 2]

WC: Okay, well, we’re back now, and you were talking about St. Barnabas and Reverend Thomas.

JC: E. Sydnor Thomas, yes, mm-hm. And there was an Archdeacon Phillips that was in the diocese then, and Archdeacon Phillips and Father Thomas would walk the street to Germantown, east to west and north to south, getting to know the people in the community, and encouraging them to send their children to Sunday school, which they did, and then of course, if they stayed long enough, then the parents came, and that’s how the parish grew at St. Barnabas. And I can remember one very hot day in July, it was St. Barnabas Day, and the air was heavy, hot, and humid, and we were “smells and bells,” like most black parishes are.

And the acolytes were infamous for running in and out—not running, but going in and out, going in and out, and there was a particular floorboard that was part of the floor, and many of them would hit that floorboard, and it would squeak. And I can remember Father Thomas saying that, “The next person that walks out is going to be in serious trouble.” Well, this particular year—and it has never happened since—the incense got to me, and I felt nauseous. And I didn’t want to heave there in the church, because I was in the choir, so I was trying to get out and hit that floorboard, and he turned around saw me, and I knew I was in for it. And I was terrified of him anyway, and so—

WC: This was Reverend Sydnor . . . ?

JC: E. Sydnor Thomas, mm-hm.

WC: Yes.

JC: And I think—how old was I then? Sixteen, seventeen, something like that. So the way my rearing was, you just don’t do anything to get scolded for, you see? You just always stay above that. And so this was disgrace, the likes of which I had never known before, to have him turn around and say that to me. So I stopped going for a while. I didn’t have the courage to go back and face that, as if nothing had happened.

WC: What did he say to you?

JC: Well, he said it before me. He said woe would be to the person, the next person to walk out.

WC: Ah. So he had addressed this to everyone, and then you just happened to be that person?

JC: So that I didn’t want to heave right there in the choir loft, you see. So, and that was back in the days, too, that I used to look so longingly at the acolytes. We still had part of the service—some of the prayers were in Latin then; it was that far back. And I used to look at the acolytes and envy them.

WC: Who were all boys, of course!

JC: Oh, of course. That girls weren’t allowed to do what they did, you see. And so that was the first tug at me, at wanting to be at the altar. I didn’t recognize it as a tug to be a priest, but I did recognize it to want to be at the altar, mm-hm.

WC: You’ve encountered some gender discrimination in your life?

JC: Oh, yes.

WC: I’m sure.

JC: Oh, yes.

WC: This is an example of your being sensitive to gender discrimination. Were there other examples that you can remember from that period?

JC: Not really, no, just the fact that if I wanted to be near the altar, I would sing in the choir, and that would be it for me—for all of us. And the boys just seemed to be a special group unto themselves, you see, and so there was much jollying about that, but it was never mean-mean. It was just there. It was part of life. You saw it, and you accepted it.

WC: Now, when you were going to St. Barnabas, did your mother come with you at times, or were you there basically on your own?

JC: I was there basically on my own. I think my mother came the day that I was confirmed. Bishop Hart confirmed me. I think she came for that. But the breakup in the family, and the family condition, was pretty dire, and my mother was easily affected by things. And so I tried to be the—although I wouldn’t have used the word then, but the stability in the family, to be there, you see. She knew she had to get out and get a job, and she didn’t have skills that would allow her to earn very much. And between her jobs and working for my grandfather—you need to know that my maternal grandfather was the superintendent at 234 South 15th Street, on the corner of 15th and Locust, the apartment.

WC: He was building superintendent?

JC: Mm-hm. And he had been boys, and sat side-by-side in elementary school, with A.M. Greenfield—

WC: Oh, yes.

JC: —who was the real estate baron here in the city. When my grandfather got that job, Greenfield owned that building, and wanted my grandfather to be well schooled in electrical things. So my grandfather went to the University of Pennsylvania, or somewhere. He wanted to enroll in engineering school in Pennsylvania, and he couldn’t get in. Penn wouldn’t let him in. But somehow, he was educated enough to take exams that he needed to pass, because he had to keep the elevators going.

And I can remember in the summertime, spending summers as a small child with my grandparents—who had an apartment in the basement there, and the elevator tower was on the 13th floor—standing at my grandfather’s shoulder, behind him, and watching him work on those—they were Otis elevators—work on those contacts while they were still running. He knew how to get his fingers in and out between the movements. And I was in awe, just in awe, of what my grandfather could do! And yet he called Mr. Greenfield “sir.” And even as a small child, I couldn’t understand it. They had been boys together. And this wasn’t told to me as a story. It was conversation that I heard amongst the adults, that I was able to put that picture together. Why do you call somebody “sir” that you went to school with? And so that stuck with me for a long time.

WC: They were in elementary school together?

JC: That’s right, in the city of Philadelphia. Mm-hm, mm-hm.

WC: Interesting.

JC: Very.

WC: So you became a stenographer?

JC: Stenotype court reporter, yes.

WC: Court reporter. And you also worked for United Engineers?

JC: Later. Oh, that was later. Yes, that was after I went back to work. My children were wonderful, beautiful, healthy children, but they all had size problems—very tall, or very broad, or very large feet, or whatever, and my husband’s job wasn’t enough to do all the things that needed doing adequately.

WC: What did he do?

JC: My husband worked for the Water Department for the City of Philadelphia, and, interestingly enough, as with my father, took examinations to be promoted to be either the assistant water commissioner or the commissioner. And he passed all those exams, came out first, and was told, “We’re keeping [you] where you are, because it’s your work that makes us look good, and these men aren’t going to take directions from a nigger.” So that’s two generations of that, you see, my father, my grandfather—three: my grandfather calling A.M. Greenfield “sir,” my father being told that the men wouldn’t take direction, and my husband. So that’s three generations of that. And so he worked until he was 62, and trained men that would become his supervisor, who didn’t give a whit about that job because they were somebody’s relative, you see? And it got to him.

WC: How did you meet your husband?

JC: I was invited by a family friend, who was a member of St. Thomas Church. It was at 52nd and Parish then.

WC: We’re talking about African Episcopal St. Thomas?

JC: Yeah, that’s it. To a Christmas party after mass, at his house. So he came and got me, and I went to church with him, and I went to his house. And there was this young man there, and he and I began to talk, and we talked and talked, danced a few times, but really wound up spending the whole evening together. And afterward, then there were a few dates, and then all of a sudden, it stopped. And three years later, he’s back on the scene. Because I was eighteen when I met him. And what I learned later was that when he met me, he knew that I was the girl he was going to marry, he said, and that he had to finish sewing his wild oats before we started seriously dating.

WC: Was he older than you?

JC: Eight years, mm-hm, eight years. And he was a member of Mount Zion, on Rittenhouse Street, Mount Zion Baptist Church. I tried to bring him over after we were married, but he wouldn’t budge, and he sang in the choir. And so having lived through what I did with my own birthright family, I had made a promise to God that if I married somebody that wasn’t what I was, I wouldn’t do to my children what we had experienced. And I couldn’t bring him over to me, so I went to his pastor, J. Quinton Jackson, and had a conversation with him, and said I wanted my children reared under one Christian roof, and if when he gave the altar call one Sunday, if I came forward, would he be able to accept me? And he said that he had accepted people on much less.

And so one Sunday, I did. I went forward, and without ever having resigned from the Episcopal Church, withdrawn, I was baptized in the pool, and became a member of the church. And my husband sang in the choir, and I like to sing, and I had a fairly good voice, so I sang in the choir, too. And when my husband was ordained a deacon, then I became a deaconess, and I did all the things there in the church to support him, and rear—the children came up through the Sunday school, until my children were old enough to make their own decisions about where they were going. And I said to my husband one day, “I’ve kept my promise to God. I’m going home now.” And so I went.

WC: This was after your children were grown?

JC: Mm-hm. I went one Sunday back to—by then, St. Barnabas has merged with St. Luke’s, and so I went to St. Luke’s, and I’ve been there ever since.

WC: And you were living in Germantown.

JC: Living on Washington Lane, between McCallum and Green, in the 100 block, and when the weather was bad, I could walk to church. And so, yeah, I’ve been back ever since. And “back” meant being as involved as I could be, in a variety of things.

WC: Were you married in the Presbyterian Church, or in the Episcopal Church?

JC: I was married at the Church of the Enunciation, with Bob Harris, when it was at 12th and Diamond.

WC: So you were married in the Episcopal Church?

JC: Yes, mm-hm.

WC: Even though your husband was a Baptist?

JC: Mm-hm.

WC: He agreed to that.

JC: He did agree to that. Yes. And when Bob Harris married us—I have never seen that done before, because we were married during Lent, so it had to be a Sunday, he said, because, “We can’t have celebrations in the church during Lent,” but he could have a small, quiet ceremony during Lent. And so it was my mother and stepfather, and my husband’s mother and father—were the only ones there. And he took his stole with our joined hands, and wrapped his stole around our hands. I had never seen that done before.

WC: And you remember that? It was—

JC: I remember, because I had asked to be married at St. Barnabas, and Father Thomas wouldn’t do it. He wouldn’t do it. He was so adherent to the rules, as he understood them, that I had to find someplace. I was determined to be married in the Episcopal Church. I wasn’t going to be married anywhere else. And Bob Harris was a friend of my mother’s, and I asked him would he do it, and he said yes, in the manner that I described to you: very small ceremony, after church, just the parents; no celebration.

WC: Now, when you say that the rector at St. Barnabas was adhering to the rules—?

JC: As he understood them.

WC: What rules are we talking about?

JC: No celebrations during Lent. He considered a wedding a celebration.

WC: Oh, so it was a matter of timing, not the fact that your bridegroom, your fiancé—

JC: Yes. Yes.

WC: —was not an Episcopalian?

JC: Well, he wasn’t thrilled about it. He wasn’t thrilled. But I was determined to do it, so I did it.

WC: Who wasn’t thrilled?

JC: Father Thomas wasn’t thrilled. No.

WC: He wasn’t thrilled about the fact your husband—?

JC: Husband was Baptist, mm-hm.

WC: So there was still, in those days, some divisions among the—

JC: Oh, yeah. Yes.

WC: —denominations?

JC: That’s right.

WC: Feeling that, well, you’re marrying outside the church.

JC: And beneath me, really, he felt.

WC: Really?

JC: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

WC: Now, you were married at the age of 21, you had children fairly quickly?

JC: Well, the first child came three years after, and then thirteen months later. The first one was a son, and thirteen months, eight days and fifteen minutes later, I had a daughter. And then three years after that, I had another son.

WC: And where did they go to school?

JC: The children went to Lingelbach Elementary, brand-new school there on Wayne Avenue. And the older two made it through fairly well. The younger one didn’t, because in that time span, then, I got involved in the Home and School Association, and the kinds of things that I was saying and doing were not well received.

WC: Such as?

JC: I joined the people who were advocating for sensitivity training for teachers, to be able to deal with poor children, especially poor black children, and the inclusion of black history in the history curriculum—two of the main things. And everybody downtown, the group of us that were involved in it, were well known, and then people at Lingelbach knew about me, and some of the teachers were intimidated, and they took their resentment out on my youngest son, Paul. Paul was—

WC: You should have been minding your own business?

JC: I should have, exactly. Or accepting what they were doing. Yes, minding my—so things got so bad that Paul wasn’t sleeping well at night; he wasn’t eating. He was getting sick physically. So I went to Bea Chernock, at Henry, and—

WC: She was the—?

JC: The principal.

WC: Principal.

JC: Because I was also involved, at that time, in a group called the Panel of Philadelphia Women, and we were interdenominational, interracial, and spoke about race and education, and race and religion, and education. So because of that I knew Bea, because we had been up there at Henry. So I said to Bea, “I’d like to ask you to do”—

WC: Your children went to Henry at some point?

JC: I’m going to—yeah.

WC: Okay.

JC: I said, “Bea, my activity is taking its toll on my youngest child, so I’m going to ask you if you will allow me to transfer him into Henry, and I promise you I will never come to a Home and School Association, or set foot in this school, unless you send for me. I’ve got to do something to save my child.” And she agreed to that. And so my youngest son, Paul, walked back and forth every day to Henry School. And academically, that was a good thing to do for him, except that there were some youngsters up there that, for some reason or another, resented him. I don’t know why. And so he had a couple of difficult periods there at Henry, but he did finish at Henry School, and went on to Saul.

WC: Oh, yes?

JC: Mm-hm. He went to Saul.

WC: In Roxborough?

JC: In Roxborough, and was very happy there. Oh, I know! He had gone to Friends Select. Bill Cosby, believe it or not, offered to have Paul go to Friends Select, because Paul’s brilliant. He’s just brilliant. That’s what’s wrong with him now, his brilliance in his middle years. Because Paul had been in Saul, and there was a teachers’ strike, and they were putting sugar in the gas tanks of the faculty up there, and it was really—that strike was really ugly. And so Bill Cosby heard about it, and wanted to know where Paul was in school, and what was happening to him, and I told him. And he said, “Pick a school, and I’ll pay the tuition.” So he went to Friends Select. And I’ve always been grateful to him for that.

WC: Well, how did Bill Cosby know about Paul?

JC: Well, my husband and Bill’s father were brothers, and so we had a relationship in those days. And I don’t know why he called, but one day the phone rang, and Bill said he’d heard about the strike, and what was going on, how were things? And I told him about the strike, and how ugly things were, because he had heard about it. I gave him more details. And that’s when he offered to put Paul in private school, so he went to Friends Select.

WC: And he outlasted—stayed there how long?

JC: Almost until graduation, and what I didn’t realize then was that Paul was badly depressed. I didn’t recognize it. And he dropped out of school, almost at graduation. He did well in school with most of his classes, but he had a couple of teachers that he didn’t relate well to. They didn’t relate well to each other. And that was a problem. Plus the fact that there were difficulties in my own house, in the marriage, and while we didn’t separate or divorce, my children have told me, each separately, that they wish that I had.

And so the sum total of all of that was that Paul was badly depressed, and I didn’t recognize it. And he dropped out. And because my rearing had been what it was, I said to him, “Well, you’re not going to sit around the house. You’re going to get out of here and get a job,” which he did. And he began getting—working at a Wawa, and he worked at the movie theater there in Chestnut Hill, next to where the PNC bank is. Where Verizon is based was a movie theater, next to the bank. And he worked up there, and had the police stopping, because “What are you up doing up here?” when he was the one that had to close the theater at night, and here’s this young black man in Chestnut Hill, so.

WC: “What’s he doing here?”

JC: Yes, exactly. “Why are you here? What are you doing?” And fortunately, he still had his Eric Theater green jacket on, so he could open his coat and see. And when he opened his coat, they didn’t shoot him, you see, so I’m grateful for that. And, interesting—oh, here’s another thing. When the two boys were in the Philadelphia Boys Choir, they were going to a rehearsal, and some young black male did something he shouldn’t have, ran into the subway, got onto a subway train. Somebody had called the police. And this kid ran through the car that my boys were in, and off the car, but when the police came through, my two boys were the only blacks in the car. So the police took my boys off the subway train, and took them to the police station. And my husband and I had to go down there and get them.

WC: Your work for the Home and School Association, at your boys’ school—did that lead to participation in other activities having to do with what was wrong with or what was right with the Philadelphia public schools?

JC: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. We had an association, several of us—nothing organized, but a loose group of folk, and we tried to work for changes in [the] school system, and wrote documents and went to school board meetings and testified, and all of that. And it was the kind of thing that when I would go down there, I heard after the fact that they would say, “She’s here.” I was “that woman.” And so everybody—Mark Shedd was the superintendent—

WC: Oh, now we’re talking about the ’60s?

JC: Yeah, mm-hm.

WC: Okay.

JC: And so, oh, yes, yes.

WC: Did you ever encounter Floyd Logan?

JC: Minimally, yes.

WC: Minimally?

JC: Minimally, mm-hm.

WC: Well known, of course, as an advocate for reform, integration, black studies.

JC: Yeah. I worked very hard for integration back in those days, in a variety of ways—in terms of housing, and in terms of faculty appointments, and supervisors in the school system, and, as I said, the inclusion of black history, and fairness for the treatment of black children. I really did.

WC: And your work included going to school board meetings?

JC: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. There, for a while, I hardly missed a meeting. [Laughs]

WC: Who else would you run into at those meetings? Do you remember?

JC: Well, there was a man named Lee Montgomery. Matty Humphrey. Let me stop and think. Bertha Brown. Oh, it was a whole group of us. They’re all dead. All those names of people that I’ve called to you, they’ve all gone. Cathy Baxter was a white woman who was very involved with us. I don’t know whether Cathy’s still living or not. What’s some other names of people?

WC: Did you ever run across a woman named Lois Stalvey?

JC: Oh, Lois Stalvey. Oh, yes. Lois was the one that created the Panel of Philadelphia Women that I mentioned earlier, this interracial, interreligious group of women. The panel would be five people—a Roman Catholic, a Jew, a Protestant, and a moderator—four of us, I guess. And sometimes I got to be both—I couldn’t be the black panelist. I had to be the moderator. There had to be somebody else black to take that role. And we each had a prepared script that we gave, describing our lives as it related to race, and spoke to encourage people to begin to think differently and behave differently. And we were—

WC: Who would be the audience for this?

JC: These were people—congregations, churches. We were in suburbia a great deal, got as far as Uniontown, Pennsylvania, I think, was our furthest away invitation—and churches locally here, too, and schools. That’s how I got to know Bea, because she was heavily involved in West Mt. Airy Neighbors, Bea Chernock. And the Panel of Philadelphia Women lasted for, goodness, nine, ten, eleven, twelve years. Mm-hm.

WC: Lois Stalvey wrote a book. I wonder, have you ever read it? *Getting Ready*.

JC: I don’t think I have.

WC: It was about her experiences dealing with racism at Henry School.

JC: Mm-hm.

WC: I’ll share it with you sometime.

JC: Well, that’s interesting that you should mention that, because I participated in a presentation at the Lovett Library. What is this, July?

WC: With Abby Perkiss.

JC: Yes. And we talked about integration into Mt. Airy, and the approach to integration in Mt. Airy was pretty much like the school district. As long as you were 33 percent or below, it was okay, but when you got past that 33 percent mark, then there was a problem. And if it got to be 50 percent, that was a big problem. So integration in Mt. Airy was fine, as long as the numbers of blacks stayed small, and the quality of the blacks that came were the same or better, so that you had judges and doctors and lawyers. That was fine. But when the integration got to be ordinary, everyday Joes and Janes, whose income may not have been equal to, and the numbers got past 50 percent, then there was a problem.

WC: Did you belong to one of the Mt. Airy Neighbors Associations?

JC: Not officially, no. I would attend the meetings sometimes, but I didn’t belong, no.

WC: But you knew Eversley Vaughan?

JC: Oh, I knew Eversley Vaughan, yes, mm-hm, mm-hm. Oh, yes. And interestingly enough, early on, many of the blacks, including me, because that was still in my days when I was [an] advocate for integration—I went along with that theory. My thinking hadn’t gotten to the point yet where I began to really look at that and see what it meant. And when that happened—

WC: What did it mean?

JC: Well, early on, I wanted blacks to be able to live wherever they wanted to live, and if blacks could afford to come to Mt. Airy, fine. And they needed to take good care of their houses, and good care of their grounds, and do all the things that people did to be present in that fashion. And then I began to realize that there wasn’t any real sense of justice anymore. People began complaining because there were too many of “them.” “The crime rate is going up. “ “This isn’t right; that’s not right.” I began to take a longer, deeper, harder look, and think, “Ooh, what’s going on here?”

And so I had to start checking myself out first, to see where my head was, and realize that integration meant more than what I had originally recognized and worked for. And my own mindset began moving from one of working for integration to one of working for justice for black folk, because other things were happening by then, too, and blacks were becoming more in the news. In fact, there used to be—Channel 3, the fact that they do their investigative reporting now isn’t the only time they did it. They started it years ago, and it was stopped by a black man who was influential in the city, and because I want to call his name now, I’m not able to call it. But he stopped Channel 3 from doing investigative—because they were focusing on black people, only. It seemed as if they were focused—

WC: This was a black man?

JC: Mm-hm.

WC: Whose name slips your mind right now?

JC: And whose name has slipped—yes, because I wound up working for him for three years, and it was a difficult three years, because while he appeared to be pro-black, he started education systems for black students, and was getting black people jobs, but his relationships with these people that he was helping was difficult. And I’m having trouble remembering his name.

WC: Not Leon [unclear]?

JC: Sam Evans.

WC: Sam Evans.

JC: Sam Evans. Mm-hm.

WC: And he was a businessman?

JC: Well, yes, he fancied himself a businessman. He had a relationship with a woman who was related to the Marriott Hotel chain, and he and she were very close, and they were instrumental, she was, in helping black people buy homes in Mt. Airy. They would front, and have a white person buy it, and then turn right around and sell it to a black person. And then, you see, the neighborhood association couldn’t stop it, and the person who lived there wouldn’t get blamed for it. They would sell it to a white person, but this new person, who didn’t live there, would turn right around and sell it to a black person. And that caused a tremendous amount of tension for a while in the West Mt. Airy area.

WC: When you went back to worshiping in the Episcopal Church, where did you end up?

JC: St. Luke’s, because St. Barnabas had—

WC: Merged.

JC: Had merged with St. Luke’s by then.

WC: What was the congregation in St. Luke’s like at that time?

JC: St. Luke’s was 70, 75, 78 percent black. There were still numbers of white people there. When the merger took place, there were co-rectors. Charles Poindexter and Bob Hill were co-rectors, and it stayed that way until Bob Hill died from brain cancer.

WC: Now, why were there co-rectors?

JC: There was a sense that they should be equal, rather than one over the other, because—

WC: These were rectors from the two separate churches?

JC: The two, yeah. Charles Poindexter was the priest at St. Barnabas, and Bob Hill was the priest at St. Luke’s.

WC: And he was white?

JC: Uh-huh. And St. Luke’s bought—St. Barnabas bought into St. Luke’s. They didn’t come hat in hand. They came and paid their way, so the decision was made that they would be equal, co-rectors. Now, there are those who say that that really didn’t happen, but I wasn’t close enough in to be able to see for myself what went on. But when I went back, Bob Hill was still there. But as I said, he had brain cancer, and he sickened and died, and then Charles Poindexter became the rector of St. Luke’s. And he started a school, and that school was called St. Barnabas School there, to keep the St. Barnabas name alive.

WC: So tell me about St. Luke’s. It was an integrated, but predominantly black congregation.

JC: And we had the Sisters of St. Margaret on the property, in St. Margaret’s House. It was thriving. The church was—when you look at the way they used to grade churches, St. Luke’s was a corporate-size church, meaning 300 members or more. We had an active ECW. Our St. Luke’s people were active in various committees and commissions in the diocese. Our choir was—oh, we had 28, 30, 35 people in the choir. In fact, the closest my husband came to being an Episcopalian—my husband had beautiful bass/baritone voice, and so when we gave concerts, they would allow him to come sing, fill up the men’s section to come sing, at Christmas and Easter, and special events. Because he had a good voice, and men would be hard to come by sometimes in the choir. So St. Luke’s was thriving. Now, there were people who didn’t come when the merger—there were St. Luke’s—St. Barnabas members that refused to come to St. Luke’s. And they either went somewhere else, or they stopped going to the Episcopal Church altogether, but what number of them, I’m not able to say.

WC: The merger, which was apparently mutual—who initiated it? Do you know?

JC: No, I don’t, but what I heard was that St. Barnabas was bulging at the seams with people, because of the work that had been done, started by E. Sydnor Thomas and carried on by succeeding rectors, and St. Luke’s was just a little knot of people worshipping on a Sunday morning. And so I don’t know whether it was initiated by the two rectors themselves, or whether it happened from Church House. All I know is that the merger took place, and one Sunday morning, flags, and banners, and vestments, and all of that—the St. Barnabas people marched down the street to Germantown Avenue, and down Germantown Avenue, and into St. Luke’s as full members of the congregation.

WC: Did blacks and whites participate equally in management of the church, on the vestry?

JC: I’m not sure about the vestry. That’s some of what I was alluding to earlier—not sure whether they really were equal, because I would hear things. But because I wasn’t heavily involved at that point, I just let what I heard go by. But these conversations that I’m having with you now is making me remember the fact that I heard little glimmerings here and there about dominance. I don’t know that—I know that blacks gradually were voted onto the vestry, but I think it was slow coming. But then, eventually, when Bob left and the whites left, then the vestry is all black now.

WC: Right. That would happen as a matter of course.

JC: Mm-hm, mm-hm. And I do remember, too, now that we’re talking about it, after Bob Hill died, for a while, Charles Poindexter was pretty focused on race in his sermons, some of his sermons—not every sermon, but with some frequency. And the white folk didn’t like that.

WC: How about the liturgy? Did that change?

JC: Oh, no, no, no, no. No, because what you had is, as I said, maybe not so much now, but in those days—if the church was black, it was what we call “smells and bells,” and St. Luke’s is still “smells and bells.”

WC: But had it been “smells and bells” before the merger?

JC: I don’t know whether it was, but I know St. Barnabas was, so I can only assume that it might have been, because I didn’t go to St. Luke’s before it merged, before the merger took place.

WC: But after you were there, after the merger, it definitely was a—

JC: Oh, indeed.

WC: —high church

JC: Oh, gosh, yes. Anglo-Catholic. Yeah, mm-hm. And we still are.

WC: That’s not unusual, but I think the church at that time was sort of moving away from that.

JC: Well, John Cooper was our organist/choir director, and what he would do would be to play some of the old hymns that I heard sung as a child during communion, and some of them were out of the Baptist Hymnal. And there were people in the congregation who knew that, and didn’t like it. They thought that we were going in the wrong direction. I loved it, because to have heard those hymns as a—when I was a child, the women did the laundry with the scrub board, you see, in the big sink, and so they were the hymns that they would hum and sing while they were scrubbing clothes. So for me to hear those hymns during communion, it was just wonderful!

WC: Was this before the 1979 Hymnal was introduced?

JC: Before and after, mm-hm, mm-hm. But I thought it was really, really keen of John to be able to just—and he didn’t play with any drama. It was just a lovely, soft kind of thing, but they were the hymns, you see, and the older people in the congregation—a number of them recognized that, and didn’t like it. But John Cooper was an extraordinary musician! John Dangerfield Cooper, he liked to be called. [Laughs]

WC: Did you start getting active in diocesan affairs then?

JC: Yes, I did. What did I do? I was President of the ECW at St. Luke’s, and that got me exposed to other committees and commissions, and a female priest named Mary Adabonojo invited me to become a member of the Evangelism Committee. And I did that, and right after I joined, she left. She—

WC: Now, this would have been after 1974, when women first were ordained?

JC: Yes, mm-hm. Oh, yes, and I remember that, too. Oh, yes. Then I mentioned the Sisters of St. Margaret. Adele Marie was the head sister, and she went to seminary and was ordained, and I remember always taking communion from the hand of a man, you see? That was that gender thing again. And I heard grumbling from the people in the congregation that they weren’t going to take communion from her, that women—“That’s not what a woman should do,” whether she was a sister or not. And when I went to the rail, she was on the side where I was going to take communion. And I thought, “Ooh, what am I going to do?” And there was real reticence when I knelt at the rail?

And I held my hand and took the wafer from her, and had the wine, and went back to my seat, and I thought, “Well, gee whiz! What’s all the fuss about?” And so that was my introduction to women’s ordination, and serving communion. And I thought, “Well, gee whiz! Wow! Why are you so upset? It doesn’t hurt.” [Laughs] And so that was my next benchmark of growth in my journey in life—working for integration, and realizing what happens when integration is fully happening. Having come up under the old auspices of men only doing certain things in the church, and now we’ve got a woman doing it, so that when the eleven were ordained at Advocate while I wasn’t there, I’m thinking, “Yay for them!” you see, only to realize later on that I was—there was a tug within me, but that’s a story for later.

WC: Well, at this point, you went to classes—I think EFM, is that right?

JC: Yes. I took—I studied—yes, I took EFM and finished it, and then three times I was trained to be an EFM mentor, but I never—I was supposed to co-lead a class with Ann Holland, and that never—we never were able to pull that off.

WC: Ann Holland?

JC: Bud Holland’s wife.

WC: Ah.

JC: Uh-huh. We were never able to pull that off.

WC: Tell me a little bit about Episcopal Faith Ministry. Is that what it stands for?

JC: Education for Ministry.

WC: Education for Ministry, right, right.

JC: Education for Ministry. And it’s a wonderful course. I really would recommend that everybody do it, as part of being an Episcopalian, because what it has you do is study scripture, and look at life, and your own life, to be able to recognize the gifts that you’ve been given, and what your area of ministry might be. Because each of us can have an area, and should have an area, of ministry, according to the gifts given us. Some of us don’t recognize what our gifts are; we’ve never had the opportunity to explore that. And I would really like to be able to help people do that. And I had hoped that clergy would do that, as part of their ministry. The numbers of clergy who do that easily are few and far between, I’m sorry to say.

WC: Some are good at some things, and some are good at others.

JC: At others—that’s right.

WC: Now, at this point in your life—this was in the ’70s and ’80s—I guess you began to work for the diocese as the evangelism officer?

JC: Well, yes, that’s a story in itself. As I said, Mary invited me to join, and I did.

WC: Mary?

JC: Adabonojo. She was a priest in the diocese, who, right after I joined, she relocated; she moved away. I was really pleased and thrilled to be part of that committee, because here again was the possibility of helping people be able to tell the good news, but my approach was, from their understanding of God’s action in their lives. So that was a way of doing teaching for me that would help lay people have a better sense of who they are, and whose they are. And I really enjoyed it. And then our staff—we had a staff person, and his name was Bill Paddock. And he was a church army trained person, and so—

WC: He was a staff person at the diocese?

JC: For evangelism.

WC: For evangelism.

JC: For evangelism, mm-hm. And then after several years, Bill Paddock announced that he was going to retire, and that set the committee in consternation. And he was retiring because his wife had two terminal illnesses simultaneously, and he wanted to spend her last days with her. And doing evangelism work, if you do it the way I think it ought to be done, you’re not spending much time in the office; you’re out in the parishes. And he didn’t want to be away from her, especially at night or on the weekends. And I had just been laid off from work at United Engineers, and so they asked me—they saw how much I loved it—if I would be willing to come into the office every day, and be there to keep us a line item in the budget.

WC: This would have been the diocesan office?

JC: The diocesan office, yes. And I said, “Okay, I’ll do that.” And so what I did for his last month was come into the office every day, and shadow Bill Paddock. I went everywhere with him except into the men’s room, whether he was in the office, or in a meeting, or out in a parish—wherever he went, I was with him—and learned from him as best I could in that month. And then he was gone, and I was on my own. And by that time, we were at Fourth and Locust, and I had my little corner office, which was very cold in the winter, and I decided that I needed to build—if I was going to—they asked me to do what I could, and I decided, well, if I was going to function, I needed a library, so I began getting the kinds of books that would allow me to do the kinds of things that—helping people understand God’s action in their lives through scripture study, and exegesis, and discussion, and prayer. And so you need resources for that, to help me know how to do it better.

And I did build a library, and one of the things that I—because then they began to ask me to preach on Sunday mornings, and I thought, “Good grief!” So I ordered a set of *The Interpreter’s Bible*, and maybe that didn’t set up a flurry in the diocese! Who is this middle-aged black lay woman ordering *The Interpreter’s Bible*, that twelve-volume—? But if you’re going to do the work, then you’ve got to—I’ve got to be able to turn around, and grab this book, and that book, and that book. And so Lyman Ogilby was the Bishop ending his days, and what Lyman would say to the clergy when he met with them was, “Have you had Jane out?” And so the expectation was that they would do that. And so they did, and that’s how I got to know so many of the clergy in the diocese, and go to so many places—not so much in the city, but out in the suburbs. There were the invitations. And I began to see, “Oh, this is wonderful, wonderful work!” And while I was a little frightened at being adequate, because remember, I was to excel? I loved it. I just loved it! And the committee had said to me, well—

WC: What committee is this?

JC: The Evangelism Committee. “When we’re ready to put the call out for a new staff person, you can apply if you want to.”

WC: To be the evangelism officer?

JC: Officer. And I decided that I did! It felt to me as if everything in my life had brought me to that particular point—only to discover, then, that when they said it, they didn’t really mean it. And so I went to Lyman, and I told him that they had offered, and I said, “I feel as if I’m being cut off at the pass.”

WC: How did you know that they really didn’t mean it?

JC: When I began talking about, “When are you going to set up the call, and what is the application process, and what should I do?” they began pushing back. I couldn’t get responses. I couldn’t get the information that I needed. Lyman came to a meeting unannounced one night, and said, “I want you, the committee, to write a mission statement of purpose, and I want you to develop a plan to implement the mission statement, and you have until”—and he gave them nearly eighteen months.

WC: Now, where was Bill Paddock in all of this?

JC: He had gone.

WC: He’d gone.

JC: Oh, he had gone. I was on my own.

WC: And you were acting?

JC: Yes.

WC: But you were not the appointed person?

JC: No, no, no. I was acting, keeping them a line item in the budget by being in the office. But if I’m going to be asked to do something, I’m going to do it; I’m going to give it my all. And so that’s what I did. And in that time, that allowed me to build a history of experience. And so when the call went out for the staff person, there were 40 applicants, 35 of them male, 39 of them clergy.

WC: And you?

JC: Five of them female, and me. And by this time, Lyman has retired, and Allen Bartlett is in as the bishop. And Allen interviewed me, and I got the appointment. And that was just about the biggest miracle in my life, it was my thought, that out of all those people, they chose me. And so I really buckled in, and for the next six years, I was out—oh, I put in 50-, 60-hour weeks, because I was in the office daytimes, or out meeting—when an invitation would come from the clergy, I would go meet with the clergy first, and spend as much time as they could give me, to get to know them, and then learn about the parish, and what they were doing, and how and why they were doing it. And then I would come back and create a design, an outline, for the work that they had asked me to do. I would take it back to the clergy, and ask them to approve it. And the one stipulation I had of the clergy was: if you’re going to be in the room with your people, you’re to observe. I’m going to ask you not to participate. Because once the clergy begin talking, lay people just lay back and let the clergy do it all. I said, “And this is work for the lay people to do, so please”—

WC: In a particular parish?

JC: In a particular parish. So, “Please, if you’re going to come to the sessions,” because I developed curriculum for learning how to tell your story; I developed curriculum for welcoming visitors, and keeping them afterward, until they become members of the church, and then walking with them after they became members of the church, or just introducing them to evangelism, the term.

And here again, I would have thought that that was something that clergy would do, but it didn’t seem like it was happening in the manner that it might, and so I guess we did need an evangelism staff person. Since I retired, that role has never been filled, all these years. I don’t know why they didn’t hire somebody else, but it didn’t happen. Because it was a wonderful . . . it was miraculous to be able to see, when you first arrived, lay people so afraid of the term, they almost couldn’t sit together. There would be this obvious dynamic separation, and as the weeks would ensue, them becoming more and more comfortable, so that by the time the series was ended, they were so enthused with the work, they wouldn’t go home at night. Now, here I am, maybe out at Route 10, or in some place in Chester County, or way out in Montgomery County, and I’ve got to drive home at night. And these people are so pleased, they wouldn’t go home! I loved seeing it, and so when I would pray my way there, “Please, Lord, help me see and hear well and deeply,” I would go home at night saying, “Thank you, God, for letting me see the miracle,” because there would literally be a light come on in people’s eyes as they learned not to be afraid of evangelism.

It’s telling the good news, your good news—who you are, and whose you are, and how God acts in your life, and how you respond to that. And so you do it over coffee, or tea, or in some meeting with friends, out to lunch. And what a wonderful thing that is, you see. And I just loved it. And I was so thrilled, as a layperson, to be doing that! I was all for lay ministry. But something happened somewhere along the way, and there was this tug. I was working in the office at Calvary, Northern Liberties, with—oh, gosh, I’m trying to think of his name. Mm, I’m blocking his name now. And he asked—he invited me to consider becoming a deacon.

WC: He was the priest there?

JC: Mm-hm, and I’m blocking his name. I hope it’ll come while I’m talking. And I said, “Oh, no, I couldn’t do that. I haven’t studied; I haven’t been to school, and I’m an impatient person, and a deacon would need lots of patience, and no, no, no.” He said, “No, you”—well, it took me two and a half years. And of course, in that time, I’m getting older and older, you see.

WC: Two and a half years to do what?

JC: To give him an answer.

WC: Okay.

JC: I kept putting him off. And so one of the former members of the Evangelism Committee, Jim Byrum, who had been in Bluebell, St. Dunstan’s Bluebell, took a parish out, way out on Long Island somewhere. And he was going to be installed, and I went to his institution. I went the night before, and we had breakfast. He took me out to breakfast that morning. And in catching up, I told him what was happening to me, and he said—because I told him I thought I would say yes to the deaconate. And he said, “Well, you’re able to distinguish between priesthood and deaconate, so that you said no to the priesthood and yes to the deaconate, yes?” And I said, “No, I just considered the deaconate.” “No, no,” he said, “then your work isn’t done. You’ve got to be able to say no to the one, so that you can say yes to the other. You’ve got to consider both.” “Well,” I said, “I haven’t done that.” He said, “Then go back and do it.”

And so I did. And as part of the consideration, I had conversations with clergy, male and female—not a lot, but I picked six or eight—male, female, newly ordained, longtime ordained. And the sum total of all that was I realized, it was a call to the priesthood; that that was that tug that I’d been feeling since I was a teenager and couldn’t be an acolyte. I just had ignored it. I wasn’t worthy. I wasn’t good enough. I wasn’t prepared. And they all said to me, in one manner or another, “Well, what took you so long?” And when I went back to Martin—his name was Martin, last name was Martin, D. Antonio Martin—it turned out that he wanted me as a deacon. He didn’t want me to go on to the priesthood, because Jim Byrum had said, “It sounds to me like he wants you there as an indentured servant.” [Laughs] They were the words he used.

And sure enough, when I tried to talk to Father Martin about setting up the PACM, and getting the process going, he just wouldn’t do anything at all. And what happened instead was he began talking in the vestry about me in a manner that sent them the message that I had no respect for clerical authority. And it began to divide the vestry and the congregation, the people who were pro-Jane and the people who were anti-Jane, because they were pro-Tony Martin. And I looked at that, and said, “This isn’t what this process is supposed to be doing.”

WC: So he would have wanted you to be a deacon at his church?

JC: Mm-hm.

WC: But you would have had to go through a training regimen to achieve that.

JC: Yes.

WC: And then he was hoping you would come work?

JC: For him, and stay there as a deacon, you see.

WC: Calvary is a black congregation?

JC: Black parish. Forty-second and Parish, ten blocks from St. Thomas, you see.

WC: Where it was, yes.

JC: Yeah, uh-huh.

WC: At 52nd.

JC: And so that was happening at about the time I had finished EFM, as well. And what my ministry was to be—a Eucharistic minister and the chalicer. That was what came out of that. And, oh, I’m getting—my timing is off. When I finished EFM, I was still at St. Luke’s, and I had—and Charles Poindexter wouldn’t let me do that. He wouldn’t me be a L[ay] E[ucharistic] M[inister]. And so I had transferred to Calvary. I had been working in Calvary’s office when—

WC: And you were worshipping there, as well?

JC: Worshipping there and working there, both. I was doing the Sunday bulletin. I was doing everything. And in the winter, when Tony Martin couldn’t get there, I would do Morning Prayer, because he lived way out in the suburbs somewhere, and sometimes the roads just weren’t passable. And that’s when I knew—when I would deliver the sermon and lift the offering, that’s when I knew. That’s when I could no longer ignore that tugging that had been happening with me. And to have him tell me no—no, in terms of not being willing to set the process in place. I considered that telling me no. And so I was devastated. I was just devastated. And when I left there, I left there, and I stopped going to church altogether, and cried every Sunday for months and months and months. And then, the year that we had that three-foot snow, I put on my boots and my heaviest coat, and I walked to St. Luke’s, and I’ve been back ever since.

WC: That would have been about 1994.

JC: Mm-hm.

WC: Now, you were no longer the evangelism officer?

JC: Oh, no, no, I had worked for six years. My husband had retired, and like I said, as the evangelism officer, I was putting in 50-, 60-hour weeks, because it was nine-to-five, and then evenings at some parish, and Saturdays working with some vestry, and Sundays preaching somewhere. And my husband said that I was so tired, I couldn’t walk a straight line on the sidewalk. And since he had retired, he said, “Why don’t you stop now?” And so I retired, after six years, and recognized after a little while that while it was nice to be able to not have to get up early in the morning and go downtown, [but] my checkbook was starving. And so I began getting part-time jobs, one of them for West Mt. Airy Neighbors, and one of them—no, before that I worked for Delores Tucker. She was in the state legislature, and I ran her campaign office when she ran for governor. I think she ran, yeah.

WC: She was out of North Philadelphia.

JC: Uh-huh, mm-hm. But her office was there on Germantown Avenue in Mt. Airy, and she lived in Mt. Airy. So I ran her office, and then I went to work for West Mt. Airy Neighbors. When we talked about the culture in West Mt. Airy Neighbors, they saw themselves, in my view, as a southern extension of Chestnut Hill, and I saw West Mt. Airy Neighbors as an advocate—not only keep going the good things that are happening, but also being advocate for the people in the lower part of Mt. Airy, who didn’t have an advocate, from maybe Hortter Street down to Johnson, and Germantown Avenue back to Wissahickon Avenue, there.

So then there was an opening at East Mt. Airy Neighbors, so I went from West to East Mt. Airy Neighbors, and worked in that office for several years—in fact, moved it. I’m the one who moved East Mt. Airy Neighbors into the Lutheran Seminary. They were in the same building with the library, and I’m the one that one year at—

WC: Lovett Library.

JC: Hm?

WC: Lovett Library.

JC: No, no, no—the library in the seminary.

WC: Oh, okay.

JC: Mm-hm. I saw—oh, now I’m forgetting his name—the head of the seminary. I saw him at Mt. Airy Day one day, and I said—because we were thinking about moving, and I said, “You don’t happen to have any space there at the seminary, do you? Where we could go?” So I’m the one that got East Mt. Airy moved into the Lutheran seminary.

WC: But where had they been before?

JC: On the corner of Germantown Avenue, across from Able Plumbing.

WC: Okay.

JC: Not Pelham Road—Slocum. Slocum, right across the street from Able Plumbing, on the same side of the street. So we moved from there to the seminary. And they’ve just moved out of the seminary. They couldn’t afford it, and so they’ve got a virtual office now, I think, online.

WC: You remember Mt. Airy Day. Did you often go to Mt. Airy Day?

JC: I helped set it up! [Laughs] Between Janet Amato and me, we’re the ones who arranged it. Oh, yes. Oh, yes, uh-huh. Ordering the Porta-Potties, filling out the application to have Germantown Avenue shut off from Cliveden to Upsal. Oh, I did all of that.

WC: Penny worked on that, too, my wife.

JC: Uh-huh.

WC: When we lived in Mt. Airy, she was active in East Mt. Airy Neighbors, and helped to put together Mt. Airy Days in various years, so I remember those days very well.

JC: Working in the secular world, and being part of the Panel of Philadelphia Women, and going around in clubs, and churches, and schools sent me the message that if there’s going to be a difference made, if there’s going to be a change, we’ve got to start with the religious community. And that’s what made me, then, begin to totally focus on race in the church. I’ve chaired the Diocesan Anti-racism Commission twice, years ago, in the early days of Allen Bartlett’s time as bishop. I’ve done it twice.

And I’m grateful for where we are with it now, in comparison to where we were then, because we couldn’t say the kinds—the kinds of things that have happened that have helped free us to be able to be a little less polite and a little more truthful. I need to be able to distinguish between opinion and truth, and we’re better able to do that now. Back in the days when I first chaired the committee, it was more opinion, and there was reticence—there was more reticence about offending. And while I’m certainly not advocating being a steamroller, I am saying that it’s necessary to be—to take more risks, so that truth can be known, so that people can change.

WC: So you need to speak your mind, in other words, and be honest about what you see and feel?

JC: Yes. Yes. In the best possible manner. Yes. Yes, mm-hm.

WC: Now, you worked for Allen Bartlett. How would you characterize his time in the diocese as the—?

JC: As one of growth and movement. In Allen’s time, we also had a training program that our clergy would go to, that was based pretty much in this area, and so in Allen’s time, the quality of thinking and perceiving, and doing, was a good time. I mean, Allen ordained the first known gay deacon, which got him sued, but I was so proud of him for doing that! I’ve always been so proud of Allen for taking—there was a course that we took one year during Lent called, “If You Want to Walk on Water, well, You’ve Got to Get Out of the Boat.” Allen got out of the boat. [Laughs] He got out of the boat, on that one.

WC: He did?

JC: Yeah.

WC: Because he wasn’t there when he started as the bishop.

JC: That’s right. That’s right. So I saw the beginnings of real growth. And we couldn’t have been where—we couldn’t be where we are today if Allen hadn’t done what he did then. Of course, there were still differences, the kinds of differences that—I came to the diocese with a master’s degree in counseling education, and they labeled me a technician, and not a professional.

WC: You got that at Temple, is that right? Or somewhere else?

JC: Antioch.

WC: Antioch.

JC: When they had a campus here, in the city.

WC: You told me, right, Antioch.

JC: Mm-hm. And so as a technician, I was never paid as a professional, and so they were some of the underlying things that—

WC: Did Allen change that?

JC: No.

WC: No.

JC: No. In fact, the Hay system was put in while Allen was in place, which made it possible for them to label me a technician.

WC: That’s the management system that Hay Associates—

JC: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

WC: —often sold to nonprofits.

JC: That’s right. That’s right. So, no, Allen—I didn’t press for it. I was still busy being grateful to have the job, and being able to do the work. I decided I wasn’t going to—even though deep, deep down, there was frustration, but I decided I wasn’t going to respond to that, and so that’s the way it was. And then there began to be a cloud in the diocese, as some of the clergy—some of them, even, that had been members of the committee—decided that they didn’t like this middle-aged black lay woman doing that ministry. And I began hearing things.

WC: This was the evangelism ministry?

JC: Mm-hm. Coming back to me in the diocese . . . that made it easier for me to tell Allen, “I’m going to stop now.”

WC: Frank Turner was in the diocese by that time?

JC: Oh, yes! Mm-hm. After I had left the office.

WC: After you left the office?

JC: Uh-huh.

WC: Did you have association with—?

JC: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Because he would come to Union of Black Episcopalian meetings, too. I’ve been president of the Philadelphia chapter of UBE twice, and so he would come, not all the time, but come occasionally. And he and I—I loved Frank dearly, loved him to pieces, loved everything he said and did when he was in that role. And when he would visit a parish, I would try to be there where he was some Sundays, just to hear him preach, and watch him confirm. Yeah. He was wonderful.

WC: He was the Suffragan for many years.

JC: Yeah, mm-hm. Yes.

WC: And if I’m not mistaken, actually did some evangelism work himself.

JC: Yes, he did, and that was something else that made me love him so, because I don’t see how we can call ourselves Christians and not be doing it as a natural part of our living. It makes no sense to me hat evangelism has to be separated out. I still don’t understand it. But I can’t change it. This is the way we’re organized, so all I can do is keep trying to do that kind of work, whether it’s even called evangelism or not—getting people to know themselves, and who they are, and whose they are, and being able to share that. I’ll do that work any way I can do it. So the fact that he did it the way he was doing it, I just loved him for it.

WC: Frank was a very big presence in the diocese, I think.

JC: Yeah.

WC: Through several episcopacies.

JC: Yes.

WC: Bartlett’s, and then Charles Bennison’s. Now, by the time Allen decided to step down, you were no longer working for the diocese.

JC: No, no, no.

WC: But when the process to search for a replacement began, were you—

JC: No.

WC: —involved with that?

JC: No, no, I was not.

WC: You were just an observer.

JC: Just, yes, mm-hm.

WC: And what did you observe?

JC: [Sighs] What I observed, or what I came to see was in bits and pieces here and there, and what began to come to me was that underlying all of it was really a very political process. And one of the things that we as Episcopalians aren’t willing to look at is our polity—the scope of it, the depth of it, the course of it. And I began hearing there were factions for Gerdeau, there were factions for Charles, there were factions for John. I was a John Midwood person. I wanted to see John Midwood elected bishop of the diocese. And if John couldn’t get it, I wanted to see Carl Gerdeau get it.

And I was not thrilled with what I was hearing about Charles. And I heard about the dinner parties, and the cocktail parties, and the politicking, and that was like chalk on a blackboard for me. And when he was elected, I tried to be pleased, because he was elected, so okay, this is where we are. And for a while, that lasted. And then I began hearing other things. And . . .

WC: Such as?

JC: Well, your bishop is your chief pastor, and so when you go to your chief pastor with a problem, that’s between you and the chief pastor, and whatever transpires should stay there. And I began hearing that that didn’t always happen.

WC: And that came to you from friends, or—?

JC: Just in conversations, bits and pieces that I would hear here and there. Sometimes hearing it didn’t have any meaning until later on, a month later, I heard something else, and then [gasps] I was reminded of something else I had heard. And I tried to push it away, because that was just that one person, and then this is just another person, and so you push it away. And then—and then, in my last tenure as president of UBE here in the diocese—

WC: You were president of UBE?

JC: Yeah, this last time. Twice I was president. Two or three times I was president—twice. I had a new vice president, because the way we’re structured, you elect a president one year and a vice-president the next.

WC: The vice president then becomes the president?

JC: Mm-hm, yes, unless they don’t want to. I said to this new vice president, “We need to strengthen the relationship between UBE and the black clergy, so let’s get ourselves invited to a meeting, so that we can do that.” The meeting that we attended was the first meeting after the black clergy had met with Bishop Bennison in Wapiti, and they had an agenda, because when John Midwood was not elected, his role was never filled. He was the—they didn’t call him that, but he was the urban missioner. And so that left the black clergy sort of like flotsam and jetsam floating in the sea. And so they went to this meeting at Wapiti with their own agenda, and what we learned at the meeting that he and I attended was that that agenda was never addressed, and when they returned home, immediately after they returned home, they got a communication from Bishop Bennison laying out new rules for their existence.

WC: We’re talking about, now, the DCMM program, Diocesan Commission for Mission and Ministry.

JC: That’s right, that’s right. And part of the new process would be that they would have to apply for their salaries, as part of the money to run the parish. And so this was the first meeting, after they’ve been with him with their agenda that was not addressed—return home, and you get this information from Charles. The pain, and the anger, and the anguish in that room was palpable. When you’ve got these two non-clergy people with you, you see, there was nothing done to hide it. It was just—I could have cut it like slices of cake.

WC: So you were one of the non-clergy people who witnessed this?

JC: Yeah, my vice president and I were the two non-clergy people present at the Black Clergy Association meeting, this first meeting after meeting with Charles, and getting this information from him. And in that, he named in the process what the—he described what the process would be, and named the person who would head this process, who himself was clergy new to [the] diocese. I didn’t sleep for two or three nights after that meeting. I was in so much pain, because of their pain. And so I wrote a letter, and had my vice-chair read the letter, and add to it, and we took the letter to the next UBE meeting.

WC: This was a letter to the bishop?

JC: Uh-huh. And the meeting happened to be at St. Thomas’s, where they are now. Lionel and I described the situation to them, what we heard, what we experienced, and I read the letter, and I said, “Now, what do you want to do with this letter? Should it get sent, or should it go in the round file?” There were 40-some people in the room, 46, 48 people in the room. All but two said, “Send it.” And so I signed the letter, and put it in an envelope, and addressed the envelope, and one of the clergy people left the meeting, and took the envelope to 30th Street.

WC: This was a letter to Charles?

JC: Mm-hm. Asking him not to do what he was going to do, and describing to him what the impact would be if that plan were implemented. And then the advices were, “Well, you need to send a copy of that to standing committee, you need to send a copy to diocesan counsel, and you need to send a copy to the deans.” And so we did send copies to those organizations. And from that, a group, a little knot of folk, five of us, began to meet, to discuss, “Well, what’s going on here? Where are we? What’s happening?”

And as a result of a series of those meetings, and some questions being raised, and some feelers being put out to get answers to those first questions, what we discovered was that this really wasn’t a black issue. This was a diocesan financial issue. And so the more answers we got to questions, the more questions arose. And this little knot of people began meeting every other week, and we began bringing in other people with us, and we met and grew, and met and grew, and we became Concerned Pennsylvania Episcopalians.

WC: Now, when you say it was a financial issue, what do you mean?

JC: We began recognizing that there were monies being spent differently than they were meant to be spent, and that they were using not only undesignated funds, but designated funds. And so the monies that used to be there for the DCMM parishes to apply to, for various reasons, was no longer there. And then we’re buying Wapiti, and the apartments on Chestnut Street, in the 3700 block.

WC: Near the cathedral.

JC: Mm-hm, mm-hm. And that information was devastating. It was just devastating! And Concerned Pennsylvania Episcopalians grew to the point that sometimes at those meetings we’d have 50, 60-some people. And we met from place to place, because we didn’t want it to be a target, at all. But we knew that we had to have a communication system, process, network, and that it was going to take a number of people to be aware of what was—

WC: Who were some of the other leaders of Concerned Pennsylvania Episcopalians? With whom did you talk and work?

JC: Mary Laney, Carl Metzger, Ike Miller. [Sighs] Oh, the number of clergy who aren’t here anymore; they’ve died, and I’m trying to think of their names now. Hm.

WC: This was an integrated group? I mean, Ike—?

JC: Oh, gosh, yes!

WC: Ike is black, but Mary—

JC: Oh, yeah. Oh, there were many more whites. The black clergy were reticent to get involved, because their survival was at stake, you see? Whatever the system was that was in place, they needed to be able to use it, and benefit from it. So that didn’t mean—oh, indeed, the black clergy just went off the radar altogether, because if I were in their shoes, I’d be scared you-know-what-less. [Laughs] Okay? And so, no, these were white, urban and suburban, clergy from Delaware County, and Chester County, and all of the outlying—oh, yeah. I can’t think of the names of all of them now.

WC: No, but you’ve given me an idea.

JC: Uh-huh. Yeah. Uh-huh.

WC: I talked to Ike. Ike has been one of the interviewees in this oral history project, and he reflected on, particularly, the appointment of Elliott Waters as—

JC: That’s who! That’s who it was.

WC: As the go-between—

JC: Yes.

WC: —between the bishop’s office—

JC: Mm-hm, that’s right, for this new process.

WC: Right.

JC: And I said in that letter to him, “You’re putting him in the position”—I don’t think I used those words, but he would have been similar to an overseer, a slave-master overseer. He would have been analogous to that, you see, I said. It was a page-and-a-half letter, single-spaced. I said, “In some respects, you could be viewed as being racist for doing what you’re doing.” Yes, that’s right. Elliott had just come in. Elliott was an ex-military man turned priest, you see, who didn’t know anything about us, didn’t know anything about the history. I couldn’t think of his name. Yes, Elliott Waters. Yeah.

WC: He had a church.

JC: Annunciation. He was there on Lincoln Drive.

WC: Right.

JC: Yeah. He had no idea what he was walking into!

WC: So what was the outcome of this? Was there an outcome? Did you get a response from—?

JC: Oh, yes, Charles wrote me back, and described all of the best intentions, and that wasn’t the purpose for doing what he did. But then, later, some time later, we get the word that there’s this lawsuit against Charles’ brother. So that’s happening over here, and over here, we’re looking at what’s happening to the diocesan money. And what became apparent was that the records that we would need to get legal with Charles about money were incomplete, because there was renovation going on at Church House then, and there was a dumpster outside, and we learned that files and boxes of records were missing, out of file drawers, and boxes out of closets, and that sort of thing. And so the effort to deal with the legal situation and Charles failed, but the case against the brother went forward. That really wasn’t our issue, you see? Charles was implicated, being older than the brother, and the supervisor of—but that really wasn’t our issue. The money was our issue. And of course, you know what happened with all of that, so I don’t need to go into it.

WC: No, it’s a story that has not been fully told, and will take time to fully tell. But yes, I do know what happened.

JC: Mm-hm. I’m trying to think of the names of the—what I found interesting was, when I named the numbers of people present, three-fourths of those people present, whatever number attended, were clergy, not lay people. For some reason or another, the lay people didn’t come out in the numbers that the clergy came out for these meetings, because—

WC: Of the Concerned Episcopalians?

JC: Uh-huh, uh-uh. I couldn’t get—because I chaired that for a good while, and then I turned it over to—oh, Judith Beck’s another person. Judith Beck, Carl Metzger, Mary Laney, Ike Miller, me. Oh! When there’s pain involved in a situation, I usually bury it, and then I have a hard time resurrecting it. [Laughs] Because I saw—I saw the diocese in the light of illness and death, with what was going on, instead of flourishing the way we had at one time, back in the days when Allen Bartlett was involved.

And I’m trying to think—isn’t that awful? I’m blocking the name of—MATC, the Mid-Atlantic Training and Consulting, was in place, and our clergy were going to it, and laypeople were going to it. The MATC training allowed people to be more self-assured, more spiritually aware, more capable of seeing and hearing and responding to changes—not easily, but responding—than we have the quality now. Because MATC died.

WC: This was an outside consulting organization that was brought into the diocese?

JC: Yes, and largely of—Allen Bartlett was involved, and Bud Holland, and I’m trying to think who else. There were six levels of training that you would go through—the self-awareness, group development, group interaction, and—

WC: Was this for lay, or—?

JC: Both.

WC: Both lay and clergy.

JC: Clergy. Mostly clergy-inhabited, but laypeople, because I went. I took all six levels, and became a member of the MATC board. And MATC trained—and many of the people who went through MATC training then, themselves, began doing similar kinds of training, so that there were fewer people to come to MATC, because they were all going to these other trainings. As a result, MATC got into serious financial trouble, serious trouble, and they had to end it.

WC: So who brought MATC into the diocese? Was that during Charles’ time?

JC: Before Charles.

WC: Before—oh.

JC: Alan. Lyman. Lyman, Alan—back in there.

WC: So it goes back quite a few years?

JC: Oh, yes. Oh, yes! Mm-hm. And it was the MATC trained people that made it possible to be able to respond positively to the ordination of women, and to the whole business of gay, of homosexuals’ presence and participation, and all of that, you see. Mm-hm.

WC: So that sort of outside intervention, invited in by the diocese, goes back many years?

JC: It was very heavily Episcopal, yeah. Alban Institute and, mm, mm—the thing in Maine—mm—blocking the name of it. The organization in Maine still exists. Alban has just gone out of business, but it was that caliber, you see, but heavily Episcopal-oriented, and people from all over the east coast came. For years, MATC was in existence, and it was—

WC: Where were they based? Here in Philadelphia, or somewhere else?

JC: Somewhere else. DC, I think.

WC: Okay.

JC: D.C. The last trainings that I went to were held at Elizabethtown College.

WC: Okay.

JC: Mm-hm. They were based in DC, yeah. Mm-hm. I’m trying to think. Roland—Mary and Owen Roland were the organizers then. These names of these people I’m calling, they’re all dead! [Laughs] Owen and Mary Roland were the—and there was a trainer named Sue, and I can’t think of Sue’s last name, and some of the others. And it was intense training, and you were there anywhere from four to six days. Intense. And the advice was, when you leave, take your time going home, because you’ve been away from home six days, in a totally different atmosphere, and you can’t expect to, number one, jump into the family right away when you’ve been gone six days, or have them be aware of and sensitive to where you are, because you’re not the same person going home that you were when you came. And that was true. That was true. I used to meander down Route 30, and there was a basket store that was somewhere on Route 30 that I loved, so I would always go into that basket store and roam around, and buy baskets on the way home! [Laughs]

WC: Coming back from DC?

JC: No, Elizabethtown College, on Route 30.

WC: Oh, right, right, of course.

JC: No, mm-hm, mm-hm. In fact, that artificial fruit that I’ve got in that bowl, I bought at various times from that basket store.

WC: [Laughs] Okay. You needed to decompress?

JC: That’s it. That’s exactly what needed to happen. Otherwise, it would be difficult, mm-hm. But it had tremendous impact. Vince Little was one of the people that I knew had gone through the MATC training, and was doing training himself at one point. And I’m trying to think who—I think Don Graff went to MATC. Nearly all of our clergy, back in those days, at some point or another, went through some level of MATC training.

WC: Well, Don would have been part of the Concerned Episcopalians—

JC: Yes.

WC: —would he not?

JC: Yeah, mm-hm. Isn’t it awful I’m blocking the names of the clergy? I used to know nearly all of them. Now, I don’t hardly know the clergy now.

WC: Well, the diocese has changed a bit.

JC: Yeah, mm-hm.

WC: And we’re on the cusp of more change, still. What’s your perception of the state of affairs in the Diocese of Pennsylvania now?

JC: I think we’ve bottomed out, and we’re on the way back up to another place of being. I don’t know where that’s going to be. It’ll depend on the work that we do now, while we’re in the process of a call. If we’re the way we’ve always been, polite to a fault, we might not be on the kind of solid ground I’d like to see us on if we’re a little less polite, and a little more truthful.

WC: Well, this diocese has had its moments. I’m not sure we’ve always been polite.

JC: Well, most of the time. We might not always have been polite in every issue, but the diocese is always polite—always. What I find hopeful is that this bishop has been a healing presence, and has been a pastor, when we haven’t had one for so long—a real pastor. And I’m grateful for that. I’m really, really grateful. I would be happier if the Organization of Black Clergy and UBE were stronger than they are at the moment, and that holds true nationally as well as locally. Looking at General Convention this time, because I was an observer, not a participant, I happen to know that nationally, the Union of Black Episcopalians have no impact on that convention at all. And when I first began getting involved, and when I went to my very first General Convention, and I saw the influence that UBE had then.

WC: Which was when?

JC: Well, I’ve been to eleven. This was my tenth.

WC: So we’re talking about 30 years ago?

JC: Yeah, mm-hm.

WC: Thirty-three years ago.

JC: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

WC: Back in the ’80s sometime.

JC: Yes, yes, yes, when there would be caucuses, and people identified to carry messages, or to get to the microphone and say this or that, or whatever, you see. There was none of that this time.

WC: General met in Philadelphia in 1997.

JC: Yes.

WC: Were you a part of that?

JC: Yes.

WC: How?

JC: Well, I was a deputy to General Convention, and I was there when Frank [Griswold] was elected and presented. And I thought—this is pretty superficial, but the way the worship space looks is important to me, and in some of these places where General Convention is held, it’s almost like a warehouse. And I thought that the worship space, when it was here, was the most beautiful I have ever seen. And so the combination of the worship space, and the worship, and the music, just—my heart almost burst with gladness; I thought it was so beautiful. Never anywhere else has the worship space been as beautiful as it was here in Philadelphia. And Helen White was heavily involved in that. Mm-hm, mm-hm.

WC: So we’ve covered a lot of ground. Have we left anything out that we should have touched upon?

JC: [Sighs] In terms of changes in the church, I’ve seen more black folk involved locally and nationally. The fact that Michael Curry is now our presiding bishop-elect is monumental, but I’m seeing pushback, too, at the same time. There are people criticizing him because he’s too evangelistic. And looking where you and I started in this conversation, I find that almost ludicrous, that that kind of criticism is being made of him. One person who rotated off executive council last triennium wrote a piece online, and said that, “It isn’t the way of Episcopalians to mention Jesus’ name so often.”

WC: That seems a bit odd.

JC: Yes. Thank you for that [laughs] because that’s how I feel. Episcopalians are quieter, and we’re not so—I can’t think of the word I want, meaning “lots of energy”—and we don’t talk about Jesus all the time. Well, what are we doing, then, if we’re not doing that? I will be grateful if, at some point during Michael Curry’s cure, that Episcopalians are able to think about the fact that maybe our three-legged stool needs a fourth leg. We have scripture, and tradition, and reason—or scripture, tradition and history. We need a fourth leg, and the fourth leg is faith. And it’s my hope that during Michael’s cure, that can become obviously needed and adopted, because it’s the faith that has us say and do whatever we say and do, in response to the baptismal queries. Why not hold it up as something to be treasured?

WC: So perhaps we should be talking more about the Holy Spirit, who inspires faith?

JC: Exactly so. And it’s my hope that during Michael’s time, that can happen. And what I’m concerned about is, I’ve just rotated off executive council. I’ll be off standing committee in 18 months. I’m not going to be formally present to help that happen.

WC: You’ve been on standing committee for how long?

JC: It’ll be six years when I rotate off.

WC: And what has that experience been like?

JC: It’s been an education.

WC: In what sense?

JC: Seeing how much the polity and how the business of the church is run, and the values that we operate or don’t operate on—the fact that sometimes difficult issues can be sidestepped politely. I’m back to the politeness again. Everybody’s very polite, but sometimes you just need to openly deal with and own some issues.

WC: Now, you would have taken a role or place on standing committee about the time Charles was inhibited?

JC: Mm-hm.

WC: So you’ve been on standing committee for Rodney Michaels’ time as the sort of acting—

JC: Yes.

WC: —bishop, and then Charles’ return, and now Bishop Dan’s leadership?

JC: Mm-hm.

WC: Has standing committee changed over that time? Has the role or the work of that committee been affected by all of the turmoil at the top?

JC: Yes and no, because people rotate off every year, and so there’s been a substantial change. I came in after—mm, the president of standing committee before Ledlie [Laughlin], and I heard a good bit of criticism about his style. Well, he was at the helm at a very difficult time, and he did the best he could, under the circumstances. And so I’m grateful that he got us to where he did before he rotated off, and I don’t know why I’m blocking his name—because I’m very fond of him. So I’ve heard—you hear criticisms of each leader. I had hoped that Ledlie would be here, because I wanted to see Ledlie run. I wanted to see Ledlie’s name put forward as a possibility. Well, that isn’t going to happen now, and I’m sorry about that, because Ledlie picked up, and again, took us through—

WC: Glenn Matis, is that who—?

JC: That’s it, Glenn. Yeah. I’ve heard criticisms of Glenn, and I don’t know if those criticisms were fair. I wasn’t on standing committee. But I know that I wouldn’t have been in Glenn’s shoes for anything in this world, in that time period. And he did it. He did the best he could. And then Ledlie came in, you see, and I’m there with Ledlie, and now it’s Frank Allen. So each of the people have done the best that they could. I just wish that—they’ve done the best they could. I’m going to leave it there. It’s up to us now. Now we’re here, and the ball’s in our court, to use a secular term, and so we need to really own who we are now, and how we got here, so that we don’t make the same mistakes.

And it’s my hope that the search committee really probes the people that are going to wind up on the short list. We need to know what their ethics are. We need to know what their spiritual underpinnings are. We need to know what they consider conflict, and how they handle it. We need to know, for them, what is a worst-case scenario. We need to do a better job than we did last time around.

WC: Which was quite a while ago?

JC: Yeah.

WC: Nineteen-ninety-seven, 1998.

JC: Well, if the search committee had gone one more cure back, they would have learned, okay? One more cure back. So we need to go at least three experiences back to be able to get a better picture of—not this one, not the one before this one—three back.

WC: In the diocese?

JC: Mm-hm. To find out—or in the parish—to find out who these people really are.

WC: You go back to Lyman Ogilby’s time, then?

JC: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

WC: That goes back to the ’70s. That’s a long time.

JC: Well, we don’t know the age of the people that we’re going to be dealing with, to look at, so we don’t know how far back. But what I’m saying, whether the candidates are local or not, we need to probe the person, as much as their parish or diocesan administrative skills, you see? We need to probe the person in a better manner than we did before. And I don’t mean Bishop Dan or Allen. I’m going back to Charles.

WC: Okay, I see. When you say—

JC: That’s what I’m talking about.

WC: —three back, you’re meaning that as far back as Charles?

JC: That’s right. Yeah. Mm-hm. And again, you see, it’s a matter of asking the right questions. We need to ask different questions this time, more probing questions, more open-ended, probing questions. We don’t need yes’s or no’s. We need stories from them.

WC: Like the questions I’ve been asking you. [Laughs]

JC: Yes. That’s right. That’s right.

WC: All right. Anything else you want to add?

JC: Only that I hope that this hasn’t been a waste of time.

WC: It’s not a waste of time at all.

JC: And that I hope that various aspects of this will be usable.

WC: You never know. I think it’s fair to say that someone looking at this five years from now, ten years from now—they might bring two different perspectives.

JC: Mm.

WC: So everything is valuable, but you just don’t know exactly to whom, and under what circumstances.

JC: Mm-hm, mm-hm. Well, as someone who grew up in a container the color that this is, in an era that I did, under the circumstances that I did, there was nowhere to go but to God and to Jesus. That was the only place I had to go. And that’s why this church is so important to me. And while I realize that the Episcopal Church isn’t for everyone, it needs to be for those who can be exposed to it, who can choose it. And we’re not doing a good enough job yet of doing that.

WC: It’s a two-way street, isn’t it? I mean, we can reach out, but those who come to it have to be ready.

JC: We can reach out, but how do we reach out? And for how long do we stay when we’re reaching out, so that people can—so that there’s consistency? And people can decide not to go, not to go, not to go, not to go, but one Sunday, I’m going to go, you see? And so I guess what I’m leading up to saying is, what I’m hoping can change is the manner in which we respond to the queries in the baptismal covenant, because for me, along with the scriptures, the baptismal covenant is the be-all and the end-all of the Episcopal Church. And so while it is important, it’s necessary to help people survive in a difficult situation, so that if they’re hungry, we feed them; if they’re cold, we clothe them; if they’re homeless, we house them. It’s time now for us, as church people—not alone, but as church people—to confront the principalities and the powers that create the problems in the first place.

WC: And that’s a lay as well as a clerical responsibility.

JC: Exactly. Oh, indeed! I’m not laying this on the hands—at the feet of the clergy only. No, I’m talking lay. I’m talking lay. It’s lay people. You see, for me, to whom much is given, much is expected. Well, we’re all that, you see? Well, then, what are we doing? What kinds of influences are we having, locally, and statewide, and nationally, to confront the principalities and the powers of the people that create the problems? So that we join forces with Presbyterians, and Methodists, and Baptists, and Roman Catholics, and whoever else—Muslims—whoever else is out there to—[telephone rings].

[End of Interview]