

Delois Burney Ward Oral History, Interview Two: Transcript



African American Episcopal Historical Collection

Virginia Theological Seminary Archives

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Published on January 15, 2015

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Interviewer: Dr. Joseph Downing Thompson, Jr., Assistant Archivist for the African American Episcopal Historical Collection

Location: The Virginia Theological Seminary, Alexandria, Virginia

Date of Interview: June 9, 2014

Length of Recorded Interview: 1 hour 29 minutes

Abstract:

In this interview, prominent Episcopal laywoman Delois Burney Ward discusses her participation in various organizations in the Episcopal Church, including the Coalition for Human Needs, the Black Women's Task Force, the National Commission for Social and Specialized Ministries, and the Board of Directors of the Kanuga Conference Center.

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Transcribed: September 2014

Repository: African American Episcopal Historical Collection, Virginia Theological Seminary Archives, Bishop Payne Library, 3737 Seminary Road, Alexandria, Virginia 22304-5201, 703-461-1850, <http://www.vts.edu/library/archives>

Collection Number: RG A59

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Preferred Citation: Delois Burney Ward Oral History, RG A59, Interview Two Transcript, June 9, 2014, Minute XX:XX:XX, Page X, African American Episcopal Historical Collection, Virginia Theological Seminary Archives.

Key:

[] = Note or addition of transcriber, narrator, or interviewer

Time stamps are noted in red and bold for ease of identification and citation.

Processing and Content Notes:

A recording of the interview was sent to a professional transcriptionist who transcribed the conversation using a “light edit” method. This entails the omission of most verbal pauses and false starts. The initial transcript was then sent to the narrator who suggested further revisions, including minor deletions, additions, and substitutions (e.g., giving an individual’s full name and title), for the sake of clarity and accuracy. The interviewer incorporated those revisions, as well as minor revisions of his own. This transcript is thus an acceptable rendition of the recorded interview. However, the audio, as well as the written edits of the narrator, are also available to researchers. The written edits are kept in the collection control file.

Finding Aid: There is a thorough finding aid that includes information about all of the individual interviews in the Delois Burney Ward Oral History, RG A59. It may be found on this page: <http://www.vts.edu/podium/default.aspx?t=131182>

Access Points:

Ward, Delois Burney, 1937-
African American Episcopalians
Black Episcopalians
Blacks -- History
Blacks -- Religion
Episcopal Church
Episcopal Church. Diocese of Washington
Episcopalians -- Biography
Church of the Atonement (Washington, D.C.)
Saint Augustine’s College (Raleigh, N.C.)
Harris, Barbara C. (Barbara Clementine)
Neil, Earl
Nelson, Mandela, 1918-2013

Walker, John, 1925-1989
Africare (Organization)
TransAfrica (Organization)
Diocese of North Carolina
Diocese of Washington
Coalition for Human Needs
Black Women's Task Force
National Commission for Social and Specialized Ministries
Kanuga Conference Center
Thompson, Joseph Downing

TRANSCRIPT

THOMPSON: Today is June 9th, 2014. This is Joseph Thompson, Assistant Archivist for the African American Episcopal Historical Collection, the AAEHC. I'm here today once again with Ms. Delois Burney Ward who has done one interview with us and has returned for a second interview to discuss her life and particularly her dedicated service to the Episcopal Church. So thank you again for being with us. I'm glad that the first interview didn't scare you off. And you contacted us this time so this is fantastic. We're so glad that you're here.

WARD: Thank you.

THOMPSON: In a previous interview, we discussed your background, as well as your service to the Church of the Atonement in the District of Columbia and to the broader Diocese of Washington. And so today, we're going to focus on your involvement in the Episcopal [00:01:00] Church on the national level. You've worked with numerous Episcopal organizations that have a national scope, such as the Coalition for Human Needs and the National Commission for Social and Specialized Ministries, and we'll talk about those specifically. But I wanted to ask you, to begin, how and when did you first become involved in the Episcopal Church on the national scale?

WARD: Actually, I need to start with the beginning of the progression. I've always had a desire to understand the polity of the Church. And so when I was confirmed in Atonement in 1956, it was important [00:02:00] for me to know what the Episcopal Church is and what happens. And so I spent a lot of time at Diocesan House in the Diocese of Washington and wanted to know what happened outside the church. And I learned that the structure—and this is my own description—is kind of like a wagon wheel with each church being one of the spokes that strengthens the Church. And so that thirst for knowledge started with me being busy at Atonement. And the fact that I was elected to the vestry fairly early—early in my membership—and a deputy to the diocesan convention brought my interest and activity to the attention of the [00:03:00] diocese. And working in the diocese on the council and the standing committee brought my involvement with those outside of the diocese. And so, specifically, friends that I was very close to in the Church outside of the diocese were part of a group called the Black Women's Task Force. And the Black Women's Task Force was actually appointed by the then Reverend Franklin Turner who was the staff officer for the black ministry at "815." And he wanted to have a sort of kitchen cabinet that he could bounce things off of [00:04:00] and get

some grassroots feedback. And so parts of that group were the Right Reverend Barbara Harris, Dr. Deborah Harmon-Hines, Nell Braxton Gibson, Vicki Reed who was from Ohio, Myrtle Gordon, and me. So I think there were six of us. And so I probably had less involvement in the national Church at that time than they did, and so they kind of decided that I was going to be a mole. People wouldn't be as offended by me because I didn't have known baggage. And so that's how I got appointed to the Coalition for Human Needs.

THOMPSON: Now, do you [00:05:00] remember any of the specific years or roughly the timeline that we're talking about?

WARD: Yes, we're talking mid to late 70's, and I remained connected with the Coalition for Human Needs when it merged into—it's a financial group that did funding—because Coalition for Human Needs had two wings. One was Coalition for Human Needs the funding arm for national social ministry. I was on Coalition because I was the chair of Social and Specialized Ministries. So I was the social rep on CHN. Actually, I was a "four for." I was [00:06:00] female, I was black, I was recommending social ministry and children. So that's how I was appointed to CHN, but CHN reviewed applications for grants twice a year, and we had a budget of about \$800,000. So we expended about \$400,000 at each meeting. One of the things that were discovered fairly early is that sometimes the goals of the organizations overlapped. Folks were asking for money to do something that was being done already, or at least in part. And after a while we built up a library of who was doing what where and so [00:07:00] the second arm of CHN was something called CLAD, which I was Chair of. And CLAD's function was under the direction of Howard Quander, who has since left us. But CLAD's role was to connect similar ministries and to also recommend training. If there was someone in Cincinnati who was doing essentially what an application was describing that we had received, we put those together so that we weren't reinventing the wheel. And so with CHN...

THOMPSON: A quick question for you: what does CLAD stand for?

WARD: Collaboration, Leadership, and Development.

THOMPSON: Okay.

WARD: [00:08:00] Collaboration, Leadership, and Development, yeah. And so when we would go through an application—and for that \$400,000, we may have 200 applications to read and determine what to recommend before the meeting. There's a lot of homework. And those that had a CLAD implication would go to the CLAD group prior to the BEATT group meeting. And rarely did they get a lot of funding because we wanted to maximize what we had. The other aspect of CHN that was very—two things I thought was really good—every application [00:09:00] that was considered had to be shared with the bishop of the diocese. We could not—I mean that was the position of Earl and the committee that you cannot go into someone's diocese and finance uprisings because this was at a period where some of the ministries being funded were cutting edge and not necessarily approved. For example, integrated child care in Mississippi. TransAfrica, who was fighting to get Nelson Mandela released from Robin's Island. Some of those were not smiled on favorably. And so that was one of the safeguards for the presiding bishop [00:10:00] is to make sure that no bishop was going to come to him and say, "What are you doing in my diocese?" So, in that sense, we had a wonderful working relationship

with all of the bishops in the Episcopal Church. Didn't know all faces, but I sure know their name and where they were. So that was one of the safeguards.

Another part of it was that we held our meetings outside of "815." So we got to go to places where we had put money to see how it had actually met the goals that was part of the grant applications. And that was just so gratifying—to go say to the coal mines in West Virginia and those hollers [00:11:00] and put some money in feeding and see the health improving of the kids who were able to benefit from that and feeding programs and med programs, transportation to get people to doctors and to get medicine to treat whatever they were being treated for. And that was really wonderful. So when the Coalition for Human Needs had lived its purpose according to the powers that be most of us grieved terribly because we felt that this was such an example of the Church being present in the world. [00:12:00] But you know, 25 years later, nothing stays forever but...

THOMPSON: **Do you know much about the background of how it came to be? Was it sort of an initiative of the presiding bishop or...**

WARD: That kind of precedes me, but I've heard some talk. There was a special allocations for minorities that General Convention was terminating the funding for it, and there was a special convention in the Midwest, and there was a search for ways to continue the work without the obvious reaction to terminating that funding. And one of the outgrowths [00:13:00] of that was something called—the Coalition? Not the Coalition. It meets as part of the Episcopal Urban Caucus earlier. And what it is is the social ministries hubs come together—and it's kind of political—to look at who may be running for a position at General Convention that has a heart and an ear to the needs of the folks with less of a voice.

The consultant—that's not quite right. Anyway, the Coalition for Human Needs grew out of that kind of coalition. It wasn't specific to African Americans. It wasn't specific to gay/lesbian [00:14:00]. It wasn't specific to any one minority, but it was a collection that the Coalition grew out of. And Earl was part of the design team for the Coalition for Human Needs, and he became the staff officer for the Coalition for Human Needs. I mean, he went on to do other things, but he was fantastic in training people to do it. Another part of the process of the grant application that the Coalition used was on-site visits before. If there was four applications from the Diocese of Washington/Northern Virginia area, [00:15:00] I would get those because I lived in DC—to go to the actual site and see what set-up they had to actually meet the goals that they had listed in the application. And that became part of the input when the group met to consider funding the application. So there were a lot of safeguards built in to make sure that someone who had just gotten their doctorate and wanted to write an application to get them a salary. And we strove to make sure that this was actually going to hit the targeted population. And so there was a real involvement in it, yes.

THOMPSON: **So how did you then evaluate, you know, after? So the money would get sent, and there would be a program. Did you all, as members of the committee, then go back and [00:16:00] evaluate what had happened? Or was it more you kind of did it and then let it go?**

WARD: We did as much initially as we can because of course all of us were volunteers, and nobody had the resources to actually go back and actually do the evaluation. But part of the

application was—that was a question on the application—what is your process for evaluating the effectiveness of this? So we had that piece of information, and as I said, we didn't go to all of them, but we, in setting up our meetings for twice a year, we would go to sites where we had funded so that we could look at them. One of the sites we visited was down in the Hampton Roads area. We visited a site in Miami. It was fascinating to see [00:17:00] what they could do with such a small amount of money because one of the processes for funding was—what's the name for it?—I'll give you \$50 if you can raise \$50...

THOMPSON: **Like a matching...**

WARD: Matching.

THOMPSON: **Yeah.**

WARD: Matching, lost the word for it. We did a lot of matching, and sometimes we did matching at a 2:1 ratio. So we'll give you \$25 if you can raise \$50. So we did everything we could to maximize the amount of money that we had. And when the Coalition for Human Needs was in effect, it was actually the funding arm for social ministries in the United States. At that time, we did not have [00:18:00] research and development. We had the Presiding Bishop Fund for World Relief. That was its original name. And they basically did out of the country, or international, funding. But now, it has kind of collapsed into—but I don't know—I don't think there is an arm for national ministry. It's just international funding for catastrophes, like in India and various places.

THOMPSON: **And this question is sort of related to the background question I asked you before. But the actual funding—you know the money, the budget—that you had, did that come from the presiding bishop or...**

WARD: It came from the national Church.

THOMPSON: **Okay, okay.**

WARD: It was part of the national Church's budget.

THOMPSON: **I see, okay.**

WARD: Yeah, yeah.

THOMPSON: **And do you remember [00:19:00] any of the—I mean, I'm sure you do. You've spoken about Canon Neil, Canon Earl Neil, and I would like to ask you about him specifically, but who are some of the other people who were on the committee with you, and what were some of their particular interests that you recall?**

WARD: Betty Jo Harris is still a wonderful friend. She lives in Hawaii. Oahu. She's originally from Arkansas. She met her husband at the University of Arkansas. Dr. Harris is an epidemiologist with a specialty in how disease is spread by way of the fruit fly. And so he was asked to go to the University of Hawaii. And so Betty and her husband moved to Kaneohe, which is the western side of the island. [00:20:00]1962. She ran an organization that works with immigrants to get them—socialized is not quite the right word—but to get them integrated into American life. Basically, Asians in Hawaii, a lot of Japanese. And so she's African American

and Ernest too, Dr. Harris. But she represented Hawaii at General Convention several times. She was appointed to the Coalition for Human Needs. So that's one that comes [00:21:00] to mind. The Right Reverend Herbert Thompson who later became the Bishop of Southern Ohio, in Cincinnati, was on the Coalition for Human Needs before he was bishop. So after he became bishop. He was a convert from I believe Presbyterian and had a really big church in Jamaica, Long Island, New York. And we got to be such wonderful friends with his wife that he invited me to speak from his pulpit. I was blown away. I said, "I can't do that!" He said, "Yeah, yeah, yeah you can!" I didn't, but several years later, I had another friend that I met on the Coalition for Human Needs, the Reverend Ramon Aymerich [00:22:00] who is Cuban born. When he celebrated 25 years of being ordained, he says, "I want you to speak at my celebration." So I did. I finally got enough nerve to do it.

So, Herb, Betty,—what is his name—the chaplain from the University of Tennessee in Knoxville. I can't remember his name [the Rev. Al Minge]. And Ben Pau. Ben Pau was a Chinese Episcopal priest from Southern California, the Los Angeles area. So we tried to get a real diverse group so every group had somebody represented on the Coalition. And Jose [00:23:00] from L.A., Hispanic. He was from Puerto Rico and probably seven feet tall and just sort of covered the crowd. He was Hispanic, and I remember when we would go to meetings. We actually met in Puerto Rico once right after a horrible hurricane that had just completely covered one side of the hotel, the hotel we were scheduled to stay in. The side that was next to the beach nobody could stay in it because the sand was six inches deep in the rooms. But getting back to the membership of the Coalition. The guy who was the chaplain from Knoxville, we met in Rapid City, South Dakota, and we went to the [00:24:00] Sioux reservations. And Joe, my heart ached as I looked at those structures that we called Episcopal churches. They are absolutely an insult to have people call them churches. And despite the poverty, how Father Two Bulls' [the Rev. Robert Two Bulls] family had us in for lunch. It was so clear they could not afford it, but they were so thankful to have us there, that we were a part of the national Church. And his ancient aunt was part of the Church Army. And, I mean, because we were the Church who had come to them. And so we were out on the reservations and—why did I think about that? [00:25:05] But those were the kinds of contacts that was as meaningful to us as it was to the people who received a small amount of money but really maximized because we had a priest who was Native American from Minnesota who was on the committee. Name is blowing past me right now. So it was for me a good time to be reinforced to be a part of a living ministry that made a difference, that made a true difference.

And so going back to the Black Women's Task Force, [00:26:00] by the time Bishop Harris was elected bishop in 1988, we were a pretty solid group at that point. And so at some point, Barbara nicknamed us ROPE: Royal Order Princesses of Ethiopia. So when she was elected, the six of us got together and hired a jewelry designer to design her pectoral cross. And it looks like a twisted rope, and hers, of course, has an amethyst stone in the center. But the six of us have the same miniature cross with a little diamond in the center. So we have copies of Bishop Harris's cross so [00:27:00] that was just a little aside. That was really nice. We've lost one member out of that group, but the other five of us still get together. If we happen to be in the city where one or more of the others live, we always make sure that's where we're staying.

THOMPSON: And would you mind naming the individuals who were a part of that group?

WARD: Barbara Harris, Deborah Harmon Hines, Vicki Reed. She has since married again and I'm not sure of [00:27:40] her last name. Mattie Hopkins who was from Chicago. And she's dead. She got killed quite some time ago. Myrtle Gordon who's in Atlanta. Her husband was the first rector at Atonement [the Rev. Canon Quinland Reeves Gordon]. [00:28:00]. Okay. Nell Braxton Gibson, who is in New York, and me.

THOMPSON: Excellent. Thank you. And so it sounds like groups like that, and also the Coalition for Human Needs, in some way met your need for a certain kind of camaraderie with persons of color, with women, etc. So this was really a way that you, being a part of a predominately white church on a national level—Atonement of course is predominantly an African American parish. But to be involved in the larger structure, these kinds of groups gave you that connection with your heritage and your roots and your identity.

WARD: Yes.

THOMPSON: So that's wonderful. Thank you for sharing.

WARD: You're welcome [00:29:00].

THOMPSON: Going back to Canon Earl Neil, the collection actually houses his papers, and as you said, he was the staff officer for the Coalition for Human Needs. What are some of your memories of him as an individual? And I ask that just because it's helpful for us to have more information.

WARD: First and foremost, he was a handsome block. But he was knowledgeable. He had a sense of humility, and I have adopted something that I first heard from him. And that is Isaiah 4: "The spirit of the Lord is upon me. He has called me." It's the clarion call for social ministry that we are [00:30:00] our brothers' keepers. I stole that from him because it so fit what's very much my thinking, and I find that it's grounding for whatever it is that you want to follow in a ministry of service. Whatever it is you want to do.

And having been involved with service professionally, as well as in the Church, it was just an anchor. First, as a public health nurse for 12 years or so, and then after going back to school and furthering my education as a clinician in mental health, there's always been an element of helping. [00:31:00]. And so that grounding that I adopted for myself has always been really, really significant for me, and whatever I'm doing in the Church as a volunteer, that's my anchor. That's where I start. And I fully acknowledge it was the interpretation that Earl used. And he was the one that taught each one of us, as we came on the Coalition, how to do a visit to evaluate where the person or the group was who was requesting a grant and where the loopholes were. And how to get underneath what was being said. If it was written very glibly, how to get under that and to get to what the real purpose of the grant is, and who are the people that are going to [00:32:00] benefit. So he was very methodical. Religious-based but very methodical in his teaching. I don't know if the Church could have had a person who was more capable than him, and having known him for, I guess, for ten years before I had ever seen him in a collar. At the time when I finally saw him in a collar, I said, "You really are a priest, aren't you?" He was so easily a part of the group that he was helping, and it made the transition great because while we had some bishops and canons on the Coalition, he was sort of in the middle and the bridge that

pulled it all together. So I just [00:33:00] admired him tremendously and respected him even more.

THOMPSON: Now, did you meet him as part of your work for the coalition or did you know him before that?

WARD: Well, I met him through the Church. Before I went on the Coalition, I probably had attended four or five General Conventions from the Diocese of Washington. So, like you so astutely pointed out that these groups formed for mutual support, and when you're at General Convention, you don't go to General Convention to sleep. You go to General Convention to politick. So the last committee meeting [00:34:00] ended at 11. Then you went to the UBE [Union of Black Episcopalians] Caucus room, and you met everybody who was anybody who was at General Convention. And I think that's where I first got to know him. That's where I first met Bishop Tutu. I think it was New Orleans, 1981. I was at the General Convention, and I know you said we'll talk about this later, but I love to take pictures. I'm running around with my camera. "That's Bishop Tutu!" And Bishop Walker said, "Delois, put that camera down and come over here. Let me introduce you to my friend." And that's the picture that you have of the two of us. So I looked around and told someone, "Here, take my picture!" So I went over, and Bishop Walker said, "Desmond, let me introduce you to one of my real backbones in my diocese. This is Delois [00:35:00] Ward." And Bishop Tutu goes, "My God, man! Where you find such pretty girls?" That's when I was young! But it's where the networking starts. It's where you get the visibility for—okay, as I said, when I was appointed to the Black Women's Task Force, Barbara and Debbie had been there before and said, "Okay, let's put Dee in this. They won't be as defendant against her." And so it's that kind of connection that sort of propels you along. So I had met Earl probably in New Orleans in '81, and it was probably four or five years later that I was appointed [00:36:00] to the Coalition for Human needs.

THOMPSON: So speaking of your involvement with General Convention, that isn't one of the things that's on our list, but do you want to say more of your memories of being involved at General Convention and how that was for you?

WARD: I was at General Convention in a number of different capacities. As Chair of Social and Specialized Ministries, we had a theme called "crisis and compassion." We had three convention dinners on that theme with various speakers. One year, we had Andrew Young from Atlanta. One year, we had Bishop Harris. I'm blocking on the third, [00:37:00] but we had three. And so as the chair of CHN, I was at General Convention for that. We had anywhere from 800 to 1,000 people to come to that on the theme of "crisis and compassion." I'm not sure, but I believe it was Herb Thompson that came up with that theme to really push "crisis and compassion." Some of the time, it wasn't representing the diocese. It was representing other work I was doing in the Church. Sometimes, now I went a few times as an alternate deputy to the General Convention from the Diocese of Washington, and Bishop Walker had a practice that if the diocese, the Washington [00:38:00] convention, elected you as an alternate, he paid your way. He paid your airfare and your hotel. And because of that, he saw the alternates as being in training to be the deputy. And therefore, everyone who was a deputy had to give up some time so that the alternates could sit on the floor and make sure enough decisions, and generally, the deputies didn't give up time the first three days because it was too new, and they were enjoying the power. But after about the fourth day, they were ready to go sightseeing. So they were just happy to have you come on. So to get to be a part of that bicameral body that makes decisions is

[00:39:00] intoxicating, to say the least. And at the time, the president of the House of Deputies was Dr. Charles Lawrence, and he was an older version of Byron Rushing. You don't know Byron?

THOMPSON: No.

WARD: Byron Rushing is a state senator in the Diocese of Massachusetts. And Mr. Episcopalian. And was just elected at the last General Convention as the—. The president of the House of Deputies is a white female priest. Byron is the co to her. But he's been a deputy in the Massachusetts [00:40:00] General Assembly probably for 25 years he's been elected. You have probably seen him, and you just don't know. He has this beard that comes down to here, and the hair that's just flying off the back of his head. Actually, he's in one of the pictures I sent you when he was younger.

THOMPSON: I believe he participated recently in the "State of Racism" in Mississippi?

WARD: Yes.

THOMPSON: Okay. Okay, yes, I know who you're talking about. The name didn't immediately come to me.

WARD: Well, he is Mr. Episcopalian, black or white. Yeah, he is just a delightful person. And I've probably known him personally for 30 years and knew who he was just from a distance for a while. But—what was the question? I'm rambling.

THOMPSON: No, you were just speaking about different individuals who [00:41:00] you knew through General Convention.

WARD: Okay.

THOMPSON: And you were speaking about Lawrence, Mr. Lawrence. You said that he was...

WARD: Dr. Lawrence. And it's amazing how very small our black Episcopal Church is. I have a cousin that I've known about but didn't really know at all. He has a girlfriend from Massachusetts, and at a family reunion two years ago, she was there, and she said something about living in Massachusetts. And I said, "Well, I've got a couple of friends in Massachusetts." As it turned out, my cousin's girlfriend was best friends with Dr. Lawrence's daughter. So it's just so close, and I was at dinner last night with the book club, and [00:42:00] the discussion started about the Delaney sisters. And Dr. Delany, their daddy, was at St. Augustine's College. That's where they grew up, on the campus. He was an Episcopal priest. There are just so many strings that overlap and weave together, and that's one of the things that just really gives me fuel is to just try to put those pieces together and to understand who we are and what we have done. And I love being in Raleigh. St. Augustine's, I hope, is on a positive path. They've just come through the wilderness, and I don't know how much you've read, but [00:43:00] they had a president, the last president, was not a good fit for a lot of us. But she was obviously enough of a fit that the Board of Trustees was comfortable in hiring her. And she was there for like ten years. But one of the things that just astounded me and angered me to be perfectly honest. I went to St.

Augustine's Chapel for Ash Wednesday service about four years ago. The chaplain was the Reverend Dr. Cliff Coles. As he's preparing the elements for communion, Dr. Suber, St. Augustine's president, gets up and goes up to tell him what to do as he is consecrating the elements. [00:44:00] If I had an electric arm, I would have—. I just found it so disrespectful. She wasn't Episcopalian, and really railed against the college being Episcopal. "Well, why does it have to have a church affiliation?" She's Roman. And so she never really quite fit.

In 2007, Bishop Curry asked me if I would coordinate the Episcopal Urban Caucus's meeting that was meeting in the Diocese of North Carolina. And so one of the things that we do at the Episcopal Urban Caucus is look at what kind of outreach ministries are going on in a specific diocese. And we plan site visits to show those off. And so I had been working with the [00:45:00] vice president at St. Augustine's to see if we could arrange a visit to St. Augustine's. Our apple of the three colleges. And the person that I was working with and I had it all set up. Father Coles being one of them because he was the chaplain. About three days before the conference started, I got a call from Dr. Suber, wanting to know, "Well, what's going on? What's this? What's this?" I mean, this is three months of planning, and she's ready to put it in the trash can. Well, we rescued it, and we did have a site visit with about 50 people. Hired a bus. Took the people to various social ministries. After the conference was over, my little political being cropped [00:46:00] up, and I sat down, and I wrote Dr. Suber a letter, and I thanked her so immensely for being such a facilitating part of the conference. And how impressed the visitors were and that we never know what seeds are planted. It may be that new students will be referred as an outgrowth of this visit. So, within the last two months, she fired two members of her finance team at the college. And it hit the *News and Observer*, which is Raleigh's paper, and one of the [00:47:00] reporters was he like he smelled blood, and he did his research. And it turned out that the college is being investigated because of grant irregularities. It's being investigated around accreditations. I mean, it got ugly. That was like Monday.

I was on the Board of Directors meeting at Kanuga, and the Presiding Bishop had 200 people there for a meeting. And it was arranged for the Presiding—and Byron was there and the President of the House of Deputies, so the PB [00:48:00] from the House of Bishops and the two people from the House of Deputies. So it was arranged for them to meet with the Board of Directors. So a small group just kind of intimately talking. And so I go over to speak to the Presiding Bishop, and she said, "Well, how is Michael [Bishop Michael Curry]?" And I said, "Michael's fine! Michael's great!" Then, she says, "I'm going to be in your diocese in two weeks." I said, "Really?" I said, "Where are you going to be?" She said, "I'm going to be at St. Ambrose on the 31st of March." This is two weeks away. So one of the people attending the Presiding Bishop's meeting was the rector of St. Ambrose. So I see Father Taylor, Jemonde Taylor, and I said, "So why is the PB coming to your church?" "If you want to know, you ask." And he goes, "I don't know." And I'm like, "You don't know why the PB is coming to your church?" He said, "She just told me she's coming."

Well, she went to [00:49:00] St. Ambrose the 31st of March. Three days later, the Board of Trustees at St. Aug's—no, a week later because she was there on a Sunday—they called her Saturday and told her, "Your office is closed. You don't go back in it." The chairman of the Board of Trustees fired her. Well, we then found out that the Presiding Bishop and the Bishop of North Carolina went to have a visit with her. So, just nickling around the edges and being nosy. So that's been cleaned up, and they now have an interim president who everyone raves about.

He's a graduate of St. Augustine's, and [00:50:00] the *N and O* did their job. They got the lady out, and they went and interviewed Dr. Everett Ward is his name. And I was in Bible study a couple of weeks ago, and one of the persons in my church, among others, is the chief judge of the appellate court. And we've become chatty at church. And she goes, "Dee, do you know Dr. Ward?" I said, "What Ward?" "Dr. Everett Ward at St. Augustine's?" I said, "No, I don't." She said, "He's good people. He is good people." And so the *N and O* article detailed that this man's roots run deep. His father was a masonry and poured the streets on campus that he was walking. So I think the future could be bright. I think it could be bright, and I'm happy because my youngest son is an alumnus of undergrad there so I've got an investment.

THOMPSON: [00:51:00] Well, we wanted to also talk about the National Commission for Social and Specialized Ministries. So would you describe the work of that organization and your role?

WARD: The National Commission for Social and Specialized Ministries was charged with raising ministries up that the Church—identified ministries—that the Church ought to be involved with as a Christian body caring about the human condition. And so we did that. We also met around the country twice a year. The most famous ministry that we raised was AIDS ministry. We were responsible for the Church taking on an AIDS ministry, which now turns into a whole convention [00:52:00] all by itself, a conference all by itself. But that's one of the things that I am very, very proud that we were able to lift up. As Christians, all of us are God's children because, originally, there was this homophobic position that you're being punished because you're outside the love of God and the realm of God. In fact, we had a member that was, bless his heart, he was as homophobic as they come. A really successful man in his own right. In fact, he died recently, a very good friend. He was president of something called Interfaith in Atlanta, and as such, built over I think it was 3,000 units of affordable housing. Very, very successful in what he did. [00:53:00]. Well, we were meeting in New Orleans, will never forget it, in the big church down there. Is it Christ Church? Anyway, downtown New Orleans. And the person in charge of social ministry for the diocese, and I can see his face. He was at the [National] Cathedral for a while [The Rev. Canon William Barnwell]. Anyway, he came, and he presented to us as a group about what the diocese was doing to combat the needs of those, the neediest in the community. And he went down ministry after ministry after ministry, and we were all just so impressed that they were doing so much in the community. And then he got to AIDS ministry, and Gene went, "Oh shit!" [00:54:00]. I mean, he just could not contain himself. Well, that was 30 years ago, 25, 30 years ago. And he came through, and he worked himself through it, but he was one of those that "We don't need to waste the Church's ministry on this," but we overrode it, reported to General Convention, and it did become one of the ministries that they did.

And it was the Commission for Social and Specialized Ministries that used the vehicle of the convention dinners to raise the need to care about others. It was the NCSSM that had a models fair at Kanuga that got me involved at Kanuga. What we did was invite [00:55:00] a number of folks who were doing ministries. Outreach ministries. Respite for elder care. After school care. Transportation for medical care. People who actually went to get mediation for seniors and people who were unable to get out. And so we had about ten people that presented their ministry in a verbal way with all of their supports. And then we had an area where we had posters and information tables of about 25 other ministries that people could just walk and look at, and the

goal was for people to get an idea of what they could do back at home. [00:56:00] That models fair was at Kanuga, and one of the members on NCSSM was the Rev. Charles A. Taylor, who was a priest at St. James in Hendersonville, which is where Kanuga is, and so he recommended Kanuga because he knew about the conference center. It was probably Charles who named me to work on some committee at Kanuga and so just one thing leading to another. That was part of, that was the design for NCSSM was to raise up and integrate and encourage a caring of folks that needs to be cared for by the Church, under the Church's umbrella.

THOMPSON: So that didn't necessarily involve [00:57:00] dispersal of funds? It was more about awareness and...

WARD: Yeah, it was more awareness raising.

THOMPSON: And do you happen to remember roughly the time frame that you served...?

WARD: The same as CHN.

THOMPSON: Okay, it was the same time.

WARD: The same as CHN.

THOMPSON: Okay.

WARD: In fact, my presence on CHN was because I was Chair of NCSSM.

THOMPSON: Okay.

WARD: So I was representing Social Ministries on CHN.

THOMPSON: Okay, okay. Well, you mentioned Kanuga so I wanted to ask you a little bit about the Transformation and Renewal conferences, which that was related to Kanuga somehow or...?

WARD: Okay, let me give you a little background on Kanuga.

THOMPSON: Okay.

WARD: Kanuga is a conference center very near Asheville. It's now approaching 100 years old. [00:58:00] It started out as a gentleman's center for rich white men, and it expanded to rich white families. And it was pulled into shape by a Bishop Finley. And for 75 years—it was more than 75 years, it's more like 90 years old now—for a bishop 90 years ago, he was pretty liberal to be a Southern gentleman. And at the time that the Black Women's Task Force urged me to accept the appointment, Barbara referred to Kanuga as the last plantation in the Church. So "Dee, they don't know you yet." [00:59:00] So Kanuga was supported by the Diocese of North Carolina, the Diocese of East Carolina, the Diocese of West North Carolina, the Diocese of South Carolina, and the Diocese of Upper South Carolina. They were the supported dioceses when it became a conference center for family. Well, it was a meeting place. It wasn't a conference center originally. It was a place that they went in the summer because it was cooler

up in the mountains than it was down at the foothills, and folks could leave their homes and go up and be a little bit cooler because of the altitude.

About 30 years ago, the president was Albert Gooch [01:00:00] who had been the admissions office for Sewanee. Albert was a consummate fundraiser. He was a fundraiser *par excellence*. He raised enough money that Kanuga became independent and did not need to have the dioceses do anything. Currently, each bishop of those five dioceses are on the Board of Directors, whether they come or not, because they are the founding dioceses. If for some reason Kanuga were to become no longer financially viable, it would revert back to those five dioceses. But the chances of that coming are like a snowball in hell. Because they are quite solvent now. [01:01:00] So, currently, Kanuga has 1400 acres of land. Use maybe a quarter of that. One of the services it has is an outdoor campus. So a lot of that ground is used for camping. The outdoor school uses that. It has a conference center inn that holds about 400 people, and then it has some cabins. Some of them are over 100 years old that people donated, and they've been renovated so they can be used year round. And then we have some—we put different names on things—guest houses. [01:02:00] Now, those were built in the last 20 years. So they are a lot more comfortable, but the cottages and the guest houses are rugged. And they are all on the hills.

In terms of service. Kanuga has two kinds of conferences. One is called a client conference, and the other is a Kanuga conference. A client conference, Kanuga provides the facility and board but no program. A Kanuga conference, Kanuga provides the program content as well as boarding and food. From the Board of Directors, there are a number of subcommittees that work. Bishop Herbert Thompson, who was in southern Ohio, and myself and Gene Bowen from Atlanta [01:03:00] and a couple other people was on the, some kind of development [diversity] group. In other words, it was the group that was going to work towards integrating the attendance and participation at Kanuga. And it was Herb Thompson, Bishop Thompson that came up with Transformation and Renewal, and his genesis was that we have some churches that are struggling, and we have some churches that are doing quite well. Wouldn't it be great if we could get them together and so some could learn from others and others could learn? And so that was the genesis of Transformation and Renewal. I was asked to pull that together and coordinate it. I think the first one was 1999. [01:04:00] So '99 is how long ago, 20 years?

THOMPSON: 15.

WARD: 15 years ago, okay. They had never had a conference where African Americans were identified as the targeted population. So they didn't know what to expect and so the program people kept pumping me, "Dee, do you think we can do this? You think we can do this?" About a month out, I think we had 20 people registered. And the program and finance people had said, "For this to go, we've got to have at least 50 people." I'm getting calls every other day, "Dee, we only have 20 people. Dee, we only have 20 people." Well, I'm talking to everybody that I know that I have known in this Church for the last 40 years trying to—. The bottom line [01:05:00] Kanuga was so anxious about selling this conference that they booked another conference so that the conference center wouldn't be empty. We had 317 people registered. Some people came and went to hotels to get space to come in. And the structure of the conference was workshops in evangelism. Workshops in Christian education. Workshops in lay ministry. That's three. We had six. So the workshops were set up so everybody that was there, the 317 people, got to go through [01:06:00]. The conference, Transformation and Renewal was every two years. So I was involved with it for six years. At two of those

conferences, our musician was Dr. Horace Clarence Boyer. [The last scheduled T and R conference 2 years ago was canceled due to low interest and registrations after a long run.]

THOMPSON: **Wow.**

WARD: We have lost a jewel.

THOMPSON: **Yeah.**

WARD: We have lost a jewel.

THOMPSON: **Absolutely.**

WARD: He was so wonderful, just—I know I’m wandering. I was going through some papers recently, and I pulled out this little note card. When Horace would write me a note, it was HRH Dee Ward [Her Royal Highness]. It took me the longest time to figure out what he was saying. When I finally figured it out, I said, “Wait a minute! Don’t do HRH Dee Ward. If you’re going to put HRH, make it Delois!” When he started, as brilliant as he was, as an illustrious career as he has had, he came to me, [01:07:00] and he said, “Dee, I thank you for giving me this opportunity. I have, for all the teaching I’ve done, for all the workshops I’ve done, I have never presented to my people.” I couldn’t believe it. I could not believe it.

And as an aside, Horace died in July of 2009. Three weeks after he died, I was at my home in southeastern North Carolina. There’s an Episcopal church that is struggling so that they share the building with the Lutherans. The Episcopal Church owns it. And for 40 years, I never set my foot in that church because I wasn’t sure— [01:08:00] I grew up there, okay, so I wasn’t sure that I was going to be welcomed. And so maybe six years ago, I said, “Hell with it. I’m going.” I stepped in. You would have thought the presiding bishop had just arrived. I was blown away. So this is like two years later that Horace died. And I walk in, and I think my ears are just deceiving me. The guy is at the piano practicing the choir, and they are singing one of Horace’s arrangements. Joe, I sat down, and the tears just trickled down my face. One, I didn’t expect that there, and two, to see him honored [01:09:00] like that three weeks after he has left us. I was just blown away. And when the service was over, I went over, and I thanked the pianist. I said, “Not only was I shocked and appreciative, but you did a good job! You did a fantastic job!” *It is Well with My Soul*. And I said, “Dr. Boyer was a friend of mine for a lot of years, and he just died.” He said, “You knew Dr. Boyer?” And I could hardly get away from him. This is a young white man, and he was the organist at the church in Wilmington [St. James], which is about 45, 50 miles from where this little church was. [01:10:00] Well, he told them if they had service at 9 o’clock, he would come over and do it because he had to get back to Wilmington by 11. And so he was doing this, and I just, I was just so blown away, and I just said, “Thank you, God. You are in place. You are doing your thing. You are in charge! And you are doing your thing.”

But back to Kanuga conferences. Horace would pull together what he called a pickup choir. There would be so many people in the choir than there would be in the congregation. And the whole idea, the goal for the music was to give them music [gospel and spirituals] that they could take home for their congregation. And Horace did too. We would do evaluations after every Transformation and Renewal and [01:11:00] ask for suggestions, and it was always, “Dr. Boyer, Dr. Boyer. We want Dr. Boyer!” So I’d call Horace: “Horace, can you come and do—?” And he’d say, “Dee, surely, there are other people!”

And I'll never forget, during one of his sessions, because we would have a session in the morning where he led a music workshop. He was such a historian. He was a teacher. He was a musician. He was a comedian. And it was all wrapped up into this glorious package. And someone said, "Dr. Boyer." He said, "Yes." "Do you ever do other music?" Horace said, "Well, I figure there are enough other people doing that. I do mine." He was just, he was just [01:12:00] a little piece of heaven that was on earth. I mean, something I heard the former President Clinton say at Maya Angelou's funeral Saturday. I missed it, but that's another story. Some of the clips they were playing, he was referring to Dr. Angelou having been raped at five. And how she was an elective mute for the next five years. And Bill Clinton said, "And then she got her voice. God gave her his voice and man did she use it. And when God wanted it back, he brought her home." And I thought that's neat. That's neat, that's neat.

THOMPSON: So as far as Kanuga is concerned, you were on the board. Are you still on the board or...?

WARD: I was on the Board of Directors. I was elected to the Board of Directors [01:13:00], I'm trying to get the years right. After the Coalition, after NCSSM. Gene Bowen the guy that I was telling you did Interfaith in Atlanta was the first African American to be on the Board of Directors. Now, they had some African Americans on subcommittees but not really on the board. So Gene was the first African American, and Gene was on for six years. And one of the persons is someone that's on the board here, Lee Marston. I think Lee is on the Board of Trustees here? Or he has been.

THOMPSON: I think so.

WARD: Yeah, okay, well, he was on [01:14:00] the committee that was working really, really hard to get more black involvement. And it was a lot of Lee's input that got the Kanuga Board enlarged by three people, and those three people were to be African Americans. And so Gene was one of those. When Gene's tenure was coming to an end—I will never forget it—one Saturday afternoon, my phone rang. Gene is on one line, and Lloyd Cason is on the other line to convince me that I needed to replace Gene because I had the stamina to keep the forward movement going. "We don't want anybody who is just going to be a figurehead." That's the kind of networking [01:15:00] that we've done for years in this Church to move. It's not enough just to get my feet under the door, but who is it that we can bring in to solidify and support.

So I went on the Board of Directors to replace Gene. And I did six years because you do three years, and you can be re-elected for three years. And then I came off. I probably came off 10 years ago to 12 years ago. I finished with the board. Before I could get my calendar out to decide if I had some free time, I get a call, "Dee, this is Albert [01:16:00]. We want to know if you can sit on the program committee." That decides which conferences that are going to be kind of. Well, I go on for the conference committee. I finished three years of that. "Dee, Albert is going to retire. We need you on the search committee for the new president." Okay. I did that. That's finished. Then, I get a call from the new president. "Dee, this is Stan [Stanley Hubbard, President of Kanuga]. We're pulling together a long-range planning task force. We want to know if you would serve on it." Three years of that, so I did that. Finished that. And now, [01:17:00] I don't remember what was next. But I have never been away from Kanuga for a year since I was on the Board of Directors. Stan said, when we interviewed him, that he would stay for ten years. He got eight and a half years. "Dee, I need you to come back on the Board of

Directors because we need some experience on the transitional committee for the new president.” Okay. All right. So that’s this tenure I’m in now.

And my good friend, the Reverend Dr. Barney Hawkins, says, “Dee, we need to get together. We need to talk. If Stan is going to leave, I need to be on the committee. And I need you to know I need to be on that committee.” So [01:18:00] we finally gotten the plans from the long-range planning task force are being implemented, and it is ambitious. \$15,000,000 is the capital campaign for the inn only. Just the inn. Our chairs and co-chairs—it’s public knowledge now so—we’re kind of finishing up the quiet phase, but it’s public knowledge now that the co-chairs are former Archbishop Frank Griswold and his wife. And Archbishop Carey. They, in the quiet phase, they’re probably two-thirds of the inn in pledges [01:19:00]. Now, that’s just for the inn. That’s not the whole thing. In fact, last week, I just finally got the booklet for all of the renovations, and it is going to be glorious. I hope I’m around to see it when it’s finished. But we were so into the capital campaign that we really cried on Stan’s shoulder, the president, and prevailed upon him not to leave. And so he has given us three years. So he’s getting me to come back for the transition. But yes, I am still on the Board of Directors.

THOMPSON: Okay.

WARD: Yes.

THOMPSON: Well, as we kind of begin to conclude this second interview, [01:20:00] I want to thank you for all the wonderful service that you have given to the Church over these years. And for all of the knowledge and experience that you have brought to bear. And in the last interview, we talked a little bit about why, or what kept you going through all the years of being involved in the politics and so on of the Church. And you mentioned “the spirit of the Lord is upon me.” That that idea from scripture was so powerful and important. As we talk this time, it occurs to me that there is a part of you that really enjoys just the social aspect and the networking aspect of being involved in the Episcopal Church. [01:21:00]

WARD: Absolutely.

THOMPSON: Would you talk a little bit about that aspect of it? You know where does that come from?

WARD: I’m nosy. But I’ve always really wanted to understand the workings and impact it anyway that I can. I firmly believe that you’re part of the problem or you’re part of the solution. And I want to be a part of the solution. And I don’t mean just rattling off, but the understanding of what it takes to impact [01:22:00] the decision making. It was my absolute honor to sit through three General Conventions and listen to the debate on whether or not folks would be included in the ordination process if they were women. And in another three years, to hear them debate whether or not same-sex gender folks could be included and so after listening, I’m really a convention junkie. And so, after hearing all of that at the horse’s mouth, at the table as it were, and Barbara gets elected to be bishop, and all this furor comes up in opposition, I thought it was the funniest thing I’d ever heard. I mean, I’m just falling out laughing [01:23:01]. If you didn’t want them to get to the top, you shouldn’t have let them in the door.

THOMPSON: Right. Right.

WARD: I mean, this has already been decided. For Barbara's consecration, she's saying to us, the Black Women's Task Force, I want you all sitting beside Aunt B, that's her mama. Mama's going to be here, and I want you all sitting beside her. I want you girls to be in white trimmed in purple. And I want you on the front row. We're sitting up there on the front row. And at the point when Bishop Browning said, "Is there anyone who opposes this?"—and this was all planned, we knew it was going to happen.—these two men come forward. And they had ten minutes, five minutes a piece, to state their case. Which for us was weak. It was water weak, but they had [01:24:00] the opportunity to speak. And after ten minutes, Bishop Browning stood up, and he said, "We have heard the objections. I need to announce that we have a majority consensus, and we will proceed. These hands are ready!" There was a thundering applause. Just thundering. I mean, they had to get the Marshalls to quiet it down. And I looked up, and Barbara is crying so her little shoulders were just going, and she's just crying. And Aunt B had said to her, "It's going to be all right, daughter. It's going to be all right."

And she is consecrated. That's what keeps me going. It is not just the political process. Empty. [01:25:00]. But the fact that God's hand is in it. As Bishop Curry said to me, "Not a soul knew that Katharine Jefferts Schori was going to be elected." There was no politicking. There was nothing. But she's Presiding Bishop. So I have just been reinforced to see God is working through us. Regardless of how full of hell we are, or how full of resistance we are, God is there, and he is working through.

And that's not to say that there haven't been some down times, but the big picture is he is there. And it keeps me going. It's why every morning when I open my eyes, and I drop down on my knees and say, "Thank you." It's what keeps [01:26:00] me going. That it's better than it was, but not as good as it will be. I won't see it all, but that's where I am. Don't get me preaching.

THOMPSON: I don't think we could find a better note to end upon than that one. So I want to thank you again for this interview, for a wonderful interview. You've done it again. You've given us a very rich interview, and I just wish you all of the best, and we'll look forward to other interviews in the future.

WARD: Well, thank you, Joe. As you know, I wasn't quite sure what this was all going to be about, and because it's my life and I've lived it, I haven't lived it with a whole sense of a great deal of importance. It's just kind of being and doing, and it's [01:27:00] just been wonderful. And in addition, we haven't talked about this yet, but as a member of the Commission on Ministry in the Diocese of North Carolina, I take seriously the roles of laying hands and interacting with folk who are in the process. Not just the minutia of it. But, just sort of touching them. I serve as a contact for a young lady who, like you, already has a Ph.D. I think she's a clinical psychologist, I think. But not in the Episcopal Church. And so the first time [01:28:00] I met with her, I do a little lightweight introduction about having enough experience in the Church to do this. And when we first talked about meeting, she says, "Well, if you give me your phone number, I will call you, and we can have a conversation." And I said to her, "This really is about a relationship." I said, "You've got three years to do this, and my assignment is to assist you so I'd really like to get to know you." I said, "If the time comes when our schedules just can't accommodate it and we want to have a phone conversation, that's fine." I said, "But I really think my preference would be that we sit down." And, well, we met. I don't think she got home before she sent me an email thanking me for the meeting. [01:29:00]

But again, she said, “Have you written your book?” I said, “What book?” It’s not what it’s all about as far as I’m concerned. So you write your book.

THOMPSON: Well, you have definitely given a lot of information for somebody to write a book so thank you again and Godspeed.

WARD: You’re welcome, you’re welcome.