

072 Christine Duffield

Please note that any items that were difficult to transcribe are marked with an [indiscernible] tag.

[0:00:00]

Interviewer: The date today is the 6th of September, and I'm sitting in my kitchen with Chris Duffield. She's coming with a story that's different from the rest of ours. Chris and her family – you were Christened at the church on Lippincott and College. What I'd like you to – which means that we're talking right from the first day of your life.
[0:00:30] [Laughs] Okay. So what I'd like you to do is tell us the name of the church, the location of the church, and some of your story with the church going back to day one for you in 1956.

Respondent: Okay. So it's St. George's Church. It's on 410 College, which is at the corner of College and Lippincott. Now did you want me to go back to the origins of the church before we moved?

Interviewer: [0:01:00] Please do.

Respondent: Because it's kind of an interesting story.

Interviewer: Yes. Definitely.

Respondent: Anyways, a minister came over from Germany. A lot of people, obviously, with that whole post-war immigration into Canada, a lot of people came into Canada, and one minister, he wanted to set up a German congregation, which he did in 1954. And they started by renting other churches, one of them being St. George's Church on John Street. So my parents had a rooming house [0:01:30] across the street from that St. George's United Church, and my mom came home from work one day and her German singing, which kind of surprised her, so she went to investigate and found out there was a German congregation, so that's how they joined that church. And that United Church was very, very good to them. I mean many of them were immigrants, and they needed a lot of help. But unfortunately there was a fire at that church, [0:02:00] and because of that they had to relocate. And so I think they rented St. Stephen's

for a while, but they decided they really didn't want to rent. They were at a point where they wanted to buy, and because the people at St. George's United had been so good when they bought the church, they also named it St. George's. Now what was really interesting is I mean they didn't have a lot of money. They had saved up so much, and there were a lot of people that [0:02:30] in addition to sort of fundraising, there were a lot of people that actually put up their personal cash in the hopes that they would get paid back at some point in time. So it was a real community effort, and it was a real – it wasn't just a church, and it still isn't a church. It's really like a German community centre. They had some of the first German schools in Toronto there. They used to bring over, like in the '50s when you had a much larger German population, I believe they had [0:03:00] poets coming over, they had, like, musical groups, they had theatre groups, just a lot of activities went on at that church. The other thing, I guess that the church did, and many generations – I think numerous weddings in the earliest years. There's some stats in this, which is kind of interesting, and then for Germans or Lutherans, confirmation is important. It's like a bat mitzvah. [0:03:30] It's like a coming of age.

Interviewer: At what age?

Respondent: Typically around fourteen.

Interviewer: Oh, it's similar. You're right.

Respondent: So it's not like the Catholics. We really don't do the holy communion thing, but you know, for your confirmation even back in Germany, you were given gifts. It was almost like a dowry, but you were considered an adult at that point in time. So you have really generations of, you know, German-Canadians that have been confirmed at [0:04:00] that church. So for many people, I know a lot of people I think went to the church, not only for the religious part, but they would, you know, meet a lot of people who were in similar circumstances. They helped each other get jobs, and it was a place where they were just, you know, very, very comfortable. You know, one of the challenges over the years, as many of them lived in the area – I mean we lived on John Street, so it's still a walking distance to the church, but then people [0:04:30] move out, and

that demographic ages. So right now it's really a struggle for the church in the sense that, you know, you have fewer and fewer people going, and obviously it's expensive to run. In my case, I guess I was part of the demographic that, you know, we moved out of the city over to Scarborough, and the reason that we moved was – I don't know if you remember back in the '60s. I mean the [0:05:00] developers really control the city, and there was the whole block of houses sort of on John, Stephanie, Beverly, and then – what's the street on the north side? Just before the Grange Park. You know, the one I mean anyways.

Interviewer: I don't remember.

Respondent: Anyways, what happened was the developers wanted to buy that block of land to put an apartment building, and [0:05:30] at that time, if you didn't sell out to the developers, the city could expropriate your land at less than market value because they had to pay you, I think it was one thousand per running foot of frontage. Well those houses didn't have a lot of frontage, so you know, many of the people there – I mean that was everything that they had. I mean these were not wealthy people, and you were scared that if you didn't sell out, you know, what would happen to you is what happened in Jamestown, [0:06:00] St. Jamestown where there's that one house standing, and you'd have big apartment buildings around you. So many people were really sort of forced out of that community. And because of that, my parents then moved out to Scarborough.

Interviewer: So how old were you at that time?

Respondent: I was going into grade four, so about eight or nine years old. And what's very interesting about that though is that whole street – I mean nobody had families, so everybody had to look after [0:06:30] each other. So my best friend today is still from John Street. And many of us have kept in touch, and you're talking how many years later? Like over forty, forty-five years later, and the ones that are still alive still keep in touch.

Interviewer: So you became, like, family. Like good family. Like chosen family with each other.

Respondent: Well I mean I can tell you some stories that are really interesting because, you know, we had a semi-detached house, and my mother's **[0:07:00]** best friend was the lady that lived next door, and when she gave birth to her third child, you know, she was very, very ill and they had to perform a hysterectomy right away. So because in those days you didn't have public health insurance, so literally her husband brought home this newborn, and my mother looked after him, you know, until she was better. Just the way things were done. Or if Steffen would come home, he was a bartender **[0:07:30]** and so my parents were working, and the houselights were on, he'd come at two in the morning and then helped them wallpaper. So it was a very, very strong sense of community.

Interviewer: And that community, you lived in the neighbourhood around John Street.

Respondent: Mm-hm.

Interviewer: And you all went to the same church.

Respondent: No. Actually we went to different churches, so a lot of the people there were more Ukrainian than – they spoke German, but they were more Ukrainian, so they would have gone to the churches on Bathurst. **[0:08:00]** There was one just south of College.

Interviewer: Yes. Yeah.

Respondent: My father would sometimes go to Trinity-Bellwoods. He would go to that one, and because my dad was Ukrainian, my mom was German, my mother wanted – she negotiated that I would be raised as a Lutheran. But I kind of went to whoever had the best party, or whatever. [Laughs] You know? It was very flexible. We celebrated two Christmases, two Easters, that kind of thing.

Interviewer: Yeah. So you had **[0:08:30]** the best of both worlds.

Respondent: Absolutely. Yeah. But I was more affiliated with the St. George's Church because I was confirmed there, I went to Sunday school there. Often in those days, we – my parents never had a car, so we

would go to church and then some friends would have a car, so then we'd go after church, like for a drive in the countryside, or I have pictures – like we went to Riverdale Zoo.

Interviewer: So you described that it was a church and it was a community centre, and it was a very supportive [0:09:00] place for a lot of new immigrants who were looking for jobs, who didn't necessarily have a lot of extended family, so that was 1956, '58. You left around 1964.

Respondent: Mm-hm. Now we still went to that church. Like with my mother, when I was younger, we would still come down...

Interviewer: From Scarborough.

Respondent: ...by TTC, you know? But then I guess my – I stopped going probably before my mom, but then you know, my mother – [0:09:30] my father got quite ill, my mother got ill, and then it just becomes, you know, a major, major problem.

Interviewer: Yeah. I mean it's far enough if you're travelling by car and you were travelling by TTC.

Respondent: Yeah, exactly.

Interviewer: So that made it felt even farther because it would be such a long trip. Okay. So in 1956 you were born. That's the church your family went to, and this was 2012. What's your situation in terms of church?

Respondent: Well what happened is I mean I [0:10:00] didn't go to church, you know, for years, and then my mother died. I think it was 2008. I just lose track of time. And it was important to me that she – you know, her funeral service be bilingual, you know, with the German component because I knew that that was very important to her, and so I contacted the minister, and she gave me a bit of a hard time. "Well you know, you haven't come to the church." But she said, "Why don't you come to [0:10:30] my house and let's talk." So I did, and we really hit it off. And so she did the service, and then I stopped going and they have something called Totensonntag. So

it's a day that you remember all the dead people, so there was a service and she invited me back for that, and I took my daughter, and my daughter felt very welcome there. She said it...

Interviewer: So this was 2008.

Respondent: Eight.

Interviewer: And your daughter was how old at that time?

Respondent: She was born [0:11:00] in 1993, so she would have been, what? About fifteen? Something like that. And then she also decided that she wanted to be confirmed, which was very, very interesting. And the minister there is – she's not one to push religion on people. She would only do it if Catherine genuinely wanted to do it. She didn't want her to do it because I wanted her to do it or anything like that. It had to really be of her own free will, [0:11:30] so my daughter went through that whole process as well.

Interviewer: Wow.

Respondent: And for her it's been – it sounds odd, but it's been a tremendous experience for her. The minister – for Lutherans that can get married – she has three children of her own, so she's very understanding of children and even some of the kids on the confirmation class. More like a social worker, [0:12:00] if you want to consider it maybe that way because I know there was one boy, his father had been killed in a car accident, and he really didn't want to go, and he had, like, attitude just oozing out of him. But you know, she just kind of ignored it, and it worked with him, and it sort of brought him along. In my daughter's case, she has Asperger's, and so the minister, like, would get her to speak at [0:12:30] things at church. It really built up her confidence, and then also I think because my – one of the reasons why I moved to Scarborough is because my parents actually looked after my children, and...

Interviewer: While you went to work?

Respondent: While I went to work. I'm a single parent so it was, you know, it really worked out well. And so she felt that -- "oma" means

grandmother in German, so she felt when she was there she was surrounded by a whole bunch of omas that she used to say because she really [0:13:00] missed – my kids were very, very close to their grandparents.

Interviewer: So you went to work and your parents, your mother in particular, raised your children.

Respondent: Yeah. My father was pretty active in it as well, so going there, it sort of, I guess, gave her a sense of that connection to the culture, maybe, that she had grown up with just here in Germany, even though she doesn't understand it very well. She just felt at home there.

Interviewer: What a lovely story. What a lovely story, that your daughter felt [0:13:30] connected and comfortable in that place, and that was 2008.

Respondent: Right.

Interviewer: So what's happening now, between 2008 and 2012?

Respondent: Well...

Interviewer: With your daughter, and you, and the church?

Respondent: So actually I've gotten more involved. I mean obviously they have a lot of financial challenges, so they asked me to be on their council, which is effectively their board of directors.

Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Respondent: And so I've gotten involved, you know, that way. I also feel very [0:14:00] comfortable there. I mean for me, the big thing is Christmas Eve. Germans – Christmas Day isn't as big of a deal as Christmas Eve, so going there, the services haven't changed, you know, from when you were very, very little.

Interviewer: Oh lovely.

- Respondent:** Which is kind of interesting. And you know, sometimes it's really nice. I mean I'm all pro-change. I don't resist change, but sometimes it's nice to have a bit of a connection with the past and to have those traditions.
- Interviewer:** Yeah. And it's very [0:14:30] familiar, therefore comfortable.
- Respondent:** Absolutely. You know? And so I always thought because a lot of people walked by the church and really don't know what's in there, I came up with the idea of getting involved in Doors Open, and part of it too for me, which would force me to research the church a little bit more and understand its social history because that's just something that I happen to be interested in. So actually my daughter did a lot of the research as well, and that's [0:15:00] basically how we got involved in Doors Open. We learned a lot, we put together this PowerPoint presentation, and it also helped us meet a lot of people in the community. I think what's really interesting about the church is, you know, in 1956 it sort of started helping German-Canadians and really – the Minister that we have today really spends a lot of her time as a social worker in the sense of visiting, you know, a lot of people who are elderly, alone, [0:15:30] and I think immigrants are really vulnerable to that because, you know, they don't have any family. A lot of them are single, never-married, and there's really nobody, you know, to help them.
- Interviewer:** What's the composition of the population there now? Ages? And is it still mainly people who are originally from Germany, or parents or grandparents from Germany? Who's there now?
- Respondent:** So what she's trying to do is start an [0:16:00] English congregation as well. It's very small. So you've got a real mix. So you've got a few people that were there from, like, day one.
- Interviewer:** Whoa.
- Respondent:** So you've got a number of Germans, and they don't like anything changed, you know? And they don't want anything German. They're not even so fussy about this bilingual thing. And you would have some people like myself whose parents died or whatever, and

through that made a connection back. Or people who want [0:16:30] their children to be confirmed or want that connection, I guess with maybe German culture. I mean German's assimilated pretty well into Canada, but still it's nice to have some kind of connection. And then we also have – not a lot, but a number of students from U of T who are here from Germany, and that's kind of their connection as well. And sometimes we have one [0:17:00] individual – he's Buddhist, but his father was a Lutheran minister, and his mother spoke German, and you know, so he comes usually every Sunday, and he grew up in the area. So it's a real diverse group.

Interviewer: Yeah. It is. And there are services every Sunday.

Respondent: Right.

Interviewer: Right.

Respondent: Typically there's two – one English, and one in German, except one Sunday, I think it's the second Sunday of the month they have [0:17:30] a bilingual.

Interviewer: Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

Respondent: And then it's the way that the services work there is after each one, everyone meets downstairs for coffee and cake, and socializes. And for a lot of the elderly women it's like the highlight of their week. There's a German, you know, group, and they're able to do less and less, but like some of them are so ill, yet they find a way to come because I think it's probably their social outing of the week.

Interviewer: Well, [0:18:00] I'm going to come back to this. Are there still other activities happening there? There were so many things happening in 1956 and 1960. It was a community centre in addition. Did they have additional programs right now?

Respondent: Less and less. I mean there's still a Sunday school there. There's a confirmation class. There's a ladies' group. They do things, for example, for just before Christmas. They still do, [0:18:30] like, a Christmas play, but it's – they don't have the numbers to support

the activities that they used to have, but they're still – it's a fairly musical congregation.

Interviewer: Oh.

Respondent: So the minister's daughter is a graduate of Western, and her husband actually build organs, and he rebuilt that whole organ there in that church, and some of the church members, their daughters are in [0:19:00] – oh what is it? The Toronto Children's Choir? I don't know what it is.

Interviewer: Yes, yes.

Respondent: You know, so there's a lot of musical things happening there, but they try and integrate it into the services, or they'll have concerts maybe two times a year, but it isn't – clearly not on the same scale. I mean you just don't have the same kind of numbers of people.

Interviewer: And when people are in church, it sounds as if a lot of people are singing.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: [0:19:30] And are some of them harmonizing?

Respondent: Oh yeah. Well the ones that can are, so.

Interviewer: Right, right. So you have beautiful music.

Respondent: Yeah. It's important to everyone. I mean it was interesting. We had a wedding shower there, I guess two Sundays ago, and so Germans love to sing, and I never heard this before so she said, "Do you mind if we sing like a German sort of wedding song?" And they're, "Okay." Like okay, whatever. [Laughs] It makes you happy, you know? And [0:20:00] I was surprised. Like obviously it was well known because you have all these German women singing these

songs that I had never heard of before. I mean I think Europeans, when it comes to weddings, they have more of a program. A lot of poetry and singing as part of their thing. So that was kind of interesting for me.

Interviewer: And does your daughter go to church most Sundays now?

Respondent: We try. Like what I like about this minister, I mean life is busy for everybody, so she's not one like, "You have to be there every Sunday." Her **[0:20:30]** thing is like, "Come when you can." So we try every second week, you know? But you don't sweat it if you can't.

Interviewer: Yeah. So she doesn't kind of give you a look or make you feel guilty and...

Respondent: I think that would probably drive people away.

Interviewer: I agree with you. Yeah. Now you said they have a group for women. Is this elderly women? Or?

Respondent: Yeah. They're primarily elderly. The minister would go and she – but they're primarily older women. **[0:21:00]** And they're responsible. They take care of making sure that there's coffee and tea, and the baking for, you know, after the Sunday services. The other thing that the minister does, which I think is nice, is she tries to reach out to different groups. I know she's been involved with **[indiscernible 0:21:22]**. You know, they have the building on Lippincott, and she's been in touch with them and invites not only people, but **[0:21:30]** sometimes like we'll have garage sales and things, and she'll say, you know, for things that haven't been taken up or people have – just tell the people to come take whatever it is that they want. She also – because there's a number of Germans in old age homes, there's I think the **[indiscernible 0:21:48]** and there's one up at the **[indiscernible 0:21:50]**. It's at McCowan and Ellesmere, so she will go there and have services there...

Interviewer: Oh, she's amazing.

- Respondent:** ...and bring, like potluck [0:22:00] because for a lot of people it's getting more and more difficult, you know, to come downtown.
- Interviewer:** And you said after each service there's people gather and have cake. The members bring the cake? Or is it bought? And does somebody set it up? How does all that work?
- Respondent:** The women's group kind of takes care of it, and most of it is donations and then they just kind of freeze it to make it easy, right?
- Interviewer:** And how long do people usually hang around?
- Respondent:** Depends on the week. [0:22:30] How busy people are. About at least, I would say, half an hour or so. And you've got a real – I mean I'm quite impressed. You have a real core group of people that are very, very dedicated and, you know, give a lot of their time. And many cases, probably because they know it's so important to – like their mothers. Like this one guy drives his mother who must be eighty-six, eighty-seven, you know, down every week. Again, they don't live downtown anymore, but that's an important part of their life.
- Interviewer:** [0:23:00] It sounds quite lovely. I mean I think when we're talking about the music, the beautiful music and people singing, and then having this gathering after, it is – as somebody who's a social worker, which I am, I think that that is vital, the sense of community, and belonging, and anticipation, as you say, for some of these elderly women. It's probably the highlight of their week.
- Respondent:** Yeah. [0:23:30] For me, I connected with some people and, you know, when you have a cultural connection, like you grew up sort of the same way with the same values, you know, it turns out like Andrea, she's actually a pharmacist at St. Mike's.
- Interviewer:** Andrea is?
- Respondent:** She's a member of the church, and her and her husband made a conscious decision that they wanted their daughters brought up sort of more in the German tradition. Her parents went to the church. She went there. She was married there, and you know, so she's

[0:24:00] become – you know, we just click, you know? And I think a lot of it is because you've grown up with sort of the same sort of background values, that kind of thing. So it's nice.

Interviewer: Are your other children interested at all? Do they...

Respondent: No. They will do it as a favour to me. [Laughter] Which is fine, and I've never been one to force the issue. I mean it works for me in the sense that my older son has lived around this area. **[0:24:30]** He's a musician and works at U of T as well. Now he's had to move out a little bit further because the rents are – right now, he's around Dufferin and Dupont, but so often I, like, will go to church and then afterwards we'll meet for brunch, so it's a way of keeping in touch. We just kind of work it into, you know, the day's activities.

Interviewer: Can you – you've described a little bit about some of the **[0:25:00]** changes because people have moved away, and you have an older population. Just in terms of changes, what else comes to your mind about what has happened between 1956? [Laughs] It's a very long time ago. What are some of the changes of not only of the population, but the physical structure of the building?

Respondent: Physical structure really has not changed much. I mean what's fascinating is when I did research on the church, and it was a James **[0:25:30]** Robertson. He wrote the book, "Landmarks of Toronto." I don't know if you're familiar...

Interviewer: No.

Respondent: ...with it or not, but – and I brought some of the stuff. He was, I think, the first publisher of the Toronto Telegram, and he visited so many places in the city and wrote very descriptive accounts of them, and it really provided a really good overview of some of the social history of Toronto. Well he actually visited the church back then, and he had someone do even, like a sketch of the inside. **[0:26:00]** And what's remarkable is it really hasn't changed, you know, in all of those years. I mean the other thing is they've kept it very neat, very clean, but there's not a lot of money. I think from the time that they took over the church, and obviously I would have been too young to remember. Like they built a stage downstairs

because they had like a theatre group, and they used to perform, you know, the Christmas plays and all of that [0:26:30] there. And also they wanted a church bell, so someone knew somebody that donated one from Germany, and then they actually, like, built the steeple, which I thought was kind of interesting. I mean they've always done things at minimal cost. Anyone who was able to help did, and...

Interviewer: Well and that's another way of people participating and feeling more invested. The more you put into something, the more you get out of it.

Respondent: I mean even recently we had [0:27:00] some water damage in part of the ceiling, and again there's not tons of money to make the repairs, but a number of people came together. We had one guy – it was a young – he just graduated from an engineering degree in Germany and did a sort of a – I guess you can come to Canada and work for – there's permits you can get, I guess, as a young student basically to work in Canada. You want to do a lot of work-travel-type [0:27:30] program, so in Germany, people tend to go to church a little bit more than here, so he was looking for a German church. He came, but he had worked as like a carpenter before, so he kind of, you know, helped us fix everything, you know, and like a lot of the men that used to help with the church. I mean they're in their seventies, eighties. You do not want them climbing up on ladders. But between all of them, you know, they made it work, and I think repaired all the damage for about, like, [0:28:00] seven hundred dollars or something like that, which was pretty amazing.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah. So it's not people from the outside just giving a couple of bucks. They rolled up their sleeves and they participate in everything.

Respondent: Yeah. Absolutely.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah. Including when you talked about baking.

Respondent: Oh yeah.

- Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah. So people are really participating because it's our church and our community.
- Respondent:** Well so many of them don't want to lose it, and they know that financially things are very touch-and-go, but that's just – [0:28:30] I guess one of the challenges, you know?
- Interviewer:** But they've obviously taken good care of the building.
- Respondent:** Yeah. They've done – you know, they haven't done anything like fancy, but they've kept it....
- Interviewer:** It has its original beauty, its original structure, and its original beauty.
- Respondent:** Yeah, it's quite nice inside. But it's interesting when you read Robertson's account, you know, he talks about the way it looked way back when in the 1870s saying, you know, it's not a very nice church from the outside, but when you go [0:29:00] in it's got a nice ambiance. I mean it's not a wealthy church, and it's a good size, and I mean I can, you know, show you some of the pictures. It's actually – I found it remarkable, the difference. Like I think in here there's – so this is what the – talks about the – actually what's interesting about that church too is the architect was Henry Langley, and I don't know if you know that name, but he was one of the first architects that was born and trained in Canada, and he was [0:29:30] involved in a number of major churches in Toronto. They must have just been churning, like having the same church design for so many churches. It's kind of interesting. So yeah. Robertson spoke about the church in 1887. He said the congregation wasn't composed of wealthy people, but rather persons of moderate circumstances. Mostly mechanics and labouring people, so those were the kind of people that lived in this area at the time.
- Interviewer:** Of course. Yes.
- Respondent:** Yet they contributed nearly [0:30:00] three thousand dollars yearly for local and benevolent church purposes.
- Interviewer:** That's a lot of money. 1887?

Respondent: Yeah. They had two hundred and seventy-four members, and their Sunday school in that time had four hundred and sixty-four children with forty-five officers in each. And when you think of it, like so many counts that are read, I mean there was really no public education, so the church kind of was it, and I mean there was no entertainment. So like the church was the highlight.

Interviewer: So was it constructed in **[0:30:30]** 1887? Is that when it was built?

Respondent: No, that's when he did the account. The church was built in 1872.

Interviewer: Whoa.

Respondent: And it was – yeah. So it was – and I have the original clippings from the newspaper. We were able to get it from the archives because they used to put it in the newspaper when things were built, and it started off – what's really confusing is it was the College Street Baptist Church. Now most people think of the College Street Baptist **[0:31:00]** Church at Palmerston and College, and what happened is they started it there, and then they grew out of it very quickly so then they sold it and they moved to Palmerston. So this started off as a Baptist Church. This Mr. Thomas Lelei – I can't find too much about him – but I gather he was maybe an up-and-coming sort of merchant type. He donated the land at four thousand dollars and it cost about sixteen hundred dollars to build it.

Interviewer: In 1887 that was...

Respondent: **[0:31:30]** Well in 1872, yeah.

Interviewer: 1872.

Respondent: Then this was sort of the account of the church in 1887, but this is what the church looked like in 1887 and it had sort of writing over here. And I don't know if I can put a picture of the church today.

Interviewer: What I definitely want to have are copies of the church as it looked like **[0:32:00]** at that time and how it looks now.

Respondent: I have a picture. I think my daughter put a – so that's what it looks like today. And that's what it – well maybe it looks a little bit different. I think it has a new verse written over here, but that's what it looked like, so it really hasn't changed very much. The only thing is the Baptist – in the older churches, they didn't have the centre aisle, so we – I guess we organized the benches a bit. But **[0:32:30]** it really hasn't changed.

Interviewer: So they've really worked very hard to keep the original nature of it.

Respondent: I would say maybe that, and they also didn't have the money. [Laughter] You know, it's one of those. But they kept it very, you know, clean and neat. I mean at one point, and I'm not so sure who did it, when that church was originally built, it was called **[indiscernible 0:32:48]**, I think. It was kind of like a stucco because there is a picture of it on the outside, and it's a little bit hard for me to – **[0:33:00]** I don't know if I have it in here.

Interviewer: But they changed the outer surface of it.

Respondent: Someone put the brick. Somebody put brick maybe because the stucco was starting to become a...

Interviewer: Maybe it's not durable for winter conditions.

Respondent: Yeah. But some of the interesting things – I think maybe I'll just go through this. This is just a little bit about the history of early Toronto.

Interviewer: Talk about some of the things that you're skimming over, because...

Respondent: Okay. So what I've had to do is put the church on **[0:33:30]** a context initially.

Interviewer: Yes.

Respondent: So I think in the 1870s, Toronto had about fifty-six thousand people, and part of this was, you know, for the Doors Open, the theme was the War of 1812, so 1812, Toronto had seven hundred people; by 1870 it had fifty-six thousand people, which is a pretty significant

growth. And churches were really dominant throughout the church. I mean at one point, there was I think a [0:34:00] competition to see which city should be the capital of Canada, because I think originally it was Kingston, and there was a battle between Kingston, Toronto, and Ottawa, and I know there's been sayings like, "Well you want to judge the character of a city by the number of churches." Well [laughs], you know, Toronto kind of takes the cake. And when you think of it, even – if you were to walk along College Street...

Interviewer: Oh yes.

Respondent: ...and count [0:34:30] the number of churches that were so close to it...

Interviewer: I can just picture it.

Respondent: It's amazing.

Interviewer: Yeah. Just starting here and walking west I can picture five immediately. Immediately.

Respondent: Which really doesn't make any sense.

Interviewer: Yeah. And this just goes from here maybe to Palmerston. Yeah. Yeah.

Respondent: You know? So in this case, what happened was this at the time was considered rural, you know, in 1870s. This was pretty well the wiles of Toronto, and churches were really in pretty intense [0:35:00] competition with each other, so the Baptist – because this was considered an emerging area of Toronto, they wanted to establish themselves here, and that's why, you know, he donated the land and they built the church. And I guess Henry Langley, I guess there weren't many architects that you could choose from, so they got the designs, you know, from him. So I mean this was a church in 1887. I think it's very, very interesting. I have an account here. [0:35:30] The – what was I think published in the Toronto Telegram, but you know, the way he experienced church in 1870 in the description, it wouldn't be much different from what you would

experience today. I mean again, the congregation, it was a congregation of immigrants. There's nobody there that's really, really wealthy, yet they still continued to be generous as they possibly can. Obviously numbers are down, but at one point there were a lot of people. I mean today, the building really isn't that [0:36:00] attractive [laughs], you know? That hasn't changed, but it's got a nice ambiance inside. It's quite nice. So...

Interviewer: You know, when I finally figured out which building you're talking about, I think it's a very nice building.

Respondent: Well from the outside. It's not like St. James, you know, or anything like that. But...

Interviewer: It's modest and very – I think it's a lovely-looking building.

Respondent: And what that is is [0:36:30] that's what was written over this part way back when in 1887, and I find it interesting that even today we have something written in German above here. Like they've kept up that kind of look. There was an article that the minister's wife gave me, and it was from the Toronto Star, and I have a copy of it somewhere. So these two profs, I think from York University, did a study [0:37:00] of churches in the area. I guess they must have grown up in the area, like be kind of interested in okay, I'm going here, so what's the story behind all of this? So apparently from 1889 to 1955, the home was church to six different congregations. So again, it's a reflection of the – it was an Episcopal Church, then a United Church, and this is the one that interested me is St. Paul's Italian United Church. I mean when I think of [0:37:30] Italian, I think of Catholic, not United. So that was kind of interesting, so it's gone through a lot of different congregations, so that's kind of what it looked like, I guess, once our congregation bought the church and I guess they painted it and they put in the centre aisle.

Interviewer: Now all the blue that I see, is that just the picture?

Respondent: It's actually white.

Interviewer: Okay. [Laughs]

Respondent: It's just – yeah. The flash. Someone gave that to me. And again, like as I mentioned, it was named in honour of St. George's the **[0:38:00]** Martyr Anglican Church on John Street, which hosted the congregation. It was the second home for many German immigrants who came to Canada after World War II, and it established the first German-language school in Canada. And what's interesting, our minister still goes. There is a German school in Toronto. Not just like a weekend thing, a full-time German school. I guess for people who are transferred to Toronto for Germany, that kind of thing, and I think she still goes and does a blessing there once a year or something **[0:38:30]** like that. And then it was a cultural hub. It had its own theatre group, choir, that kind of thing, so...

Interviewer: It was a very vital community and involved in activities.

Respondent: Yeah. I have some things here that even demonstrate that more. So that was a church, I guess what it looked like when they first got it. You can see it looked kind of dingy.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: And they painted it in that, so it's kind of interesting. The church bell from Germany. There are stained glass windows in the interior of the church, and I believe it was a lot of them were made by, like, **[0:39:00]** you know, craftsmen that came over from Germany, and we actually have a painting by a German prisoner of war in Canada. And the story behind that is kind of interesting because a lot of people didn't realize there were German prisoners of war in Canada. Many of them were sent to northern Ontario to clear lands for provincial parks, and there was one guy who was quite **[0:39:30]** a talented painter, and I can't remember the area that it's in now. And I guess he was a pretty clever guy too because he would offer to do portraits of the mayor of the town, and the camp commander, and all of that. And they were impressed by artistic abilities, so I guess the head of the camp would even – gave him a place to do his work and even sent down to Toronto for art supplies for this guy. [Laughs] And I guess, you know, after the war ended they went back **[0:40:00]** to Germany, everyone forgot about all of this stuff, and at some point they decided to tear down the barracks

that were there. They came across this painting, and I don't know how, but they contacted the minister of the church at that time and said, "We don't know what to do with this. Like, do you want it?" So he took it, and his daughter was actually like a tour guide, and she would [0:40:30] conduct tours of Germans visiting Toronto. So in one of her tours, you know, they have the opening cocktail reception. She just went around talking to people on tour. You know, "What are you hoping to get out of this tour? What would you like to see?" And this guy said, "Well I would like to go to this park, if it's possible." And I think it was near Thunder Bay, so it was not so possible. And she said, "Well why would you want to go there?" And he said, "Well I was here as a [0:41:00] German prisoner of war, and I was an artist, and all of this stuff."

Interviewer: Oh, he came.

Respondent: And he says, "I wonder if any of my artwork survived." And she said, "Like say no more. Like I know exactly where your painting is." And...

Interviewer: A remarkable story.

Respondent: I thought it's pretty incredible.

Interviewer: Oh my god.

Respondent: And he didn't finish it, I guess, because the war ended and he didn't have time and so they asked him, you know, "If you had to paint, would you like to finish it?" And he said, "No," because at that time he was very young. He was [0:41:30] very, very angry, and he would approach it differently, you know, with the benefit of age. But it was kind – it's a very interesting – it's an interesting story about life sometimes.

Interviewer: It's an absolutely remarkable – what a coincidence.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: That she would know about the painting and here it was.

- Respondent:** Well, that he would be in her group. I think he was in his sixties when he came back, so this is many, many years later. So...
- Interviewer:** [0:42:00] And where is that painting now?
- Respondent:** It's in the basement of the church. We brought it up for Doors Open, so...
- Interviewer:** Did anyone take a picture?
- Respondent:** Yeah. I mean I have some stuff that I – there's even – I don't know what I brought. Yeah. I've got a whole binder full of stuff. You can rifle through it, and I can give you what you want. This picture's kind of cool, if I could get the original of that, which I think my son has, but that's when they sort [0:42:30] of got the bell from Germany and they erected the steeple.
- Interviewer:** And do you know the date approximately?
- Respondent:** It's written here. June 1959, I think.
- Interviewer:** Yeah.
- Respondent:** And you have pictures of them sort of cleaning up the church. So in terms of what I've got in here, I'm just trying to flip through this. This is not particularly well organized. All of the [0:43:00] stuff that I – yeah. So these are the, like – there's, you know, the stained glasses in the inside of the church. Those were added later.
- Interviewer:** When would that have been?
- Respondent:** I'd have to ask the minister because she would probably know. What's interesting here is I don't know if you've seen. We went to the archives, so that's how this area looked back in [0:43:30] 1884. So probably your house is here somewhere.
- Interviewer:** Oh, and look at the small area and where there are homes and the rest is all empty.
- Respondent:** Yes.

- Interviewer:** That's a very long time ago. 18– yeah. My house would be there, because my house was 1881 on Borden Street.
- Respondent:** Yeah. There's Borden right here, see? So you would be up here somewhere? There's a...
- Interviewer:** Yeah. So I would be right here. You and I are right around here at this moment. [Laughs]
- Respondent:** So I think, like, the – we got that from, like, let's say the Toronto Archives. You can [0:44:00] have that if you want it, because I really have no use for it.
- Interviewer:** Oh, this is lovely. Yes, I'll keep it. I'm keeping it only because I don't return anything.
- Respondent:** No, no, no. That's fine. That's fine.
- Interviewer:** Thank you. Thank you.
- Respondent:** This was probably – yeah. What I found interesting too, these are too small but you know, snips from the newspapers because there's a Daily Globe, and then there was the Mail, and [0:44:30] my daughter got this from, again, the Archives, and they have some better things inside the church actually that my son did. I should ask him for the artwork that he did. He's an artist, so I – they do things for me sometimes. [Laughs] So he was able to put stuff on, like a phone core for me.
- Interviewer:** Do you have any idea how many families belong to the church now? Like fifty families?
- Respondent:** [0:45:00] I would say it might be more than that. Like there's a lot of people who don't come.
- Interviewer:** And on a regular service versus at Christmastime, how many people would be there on a Sunday and how many people would go during the major holidays?

Respondent: I have stats on the average services, so I think for the English one it's usually about twenty people.

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

Respondent: For the general, probably around fifty. But it was interesting on Christmas Eve. We had two services.

Interviewer: [0:45:30] Mm-hm.

Respondent: And I don't know where all these people came from. We ran out of programs. It was just – it was like a zoo. And I think maybe because – was Christmas this year on a Friday or Saturday or something? A lot of people came in like even from Barrie, and it was pretty amazing actually.

Interviewer: And are these people members? Or might they be people who aren't members, but they have such memories?

Respondent: I suspect there was a lot of that going on [0:46:00] as well, you know? I mean even for me as a child, it looks the same. It's a very nice memory because typically you would go to church on Christmas Eve, but not like the Catholics when they go at midnight. You would go around four, five o'clock, you would go home, have dinner, and you would be opening gifts already around seven, and that's pretty typical for Lutherans. Like my best friend, the one from John Street, they're Finnish. They have the same kind [0:46:30] of tradition.

Interviewer: Yeah. Well I guess it's a way of people hanging on to their traditions and not feeling so isolated. They come to your church, and you're doing it at four in the afternoon and then having dinner and opening gifts.

Respondent: Well I think here when it comes to traditions like that, people stick to those, you know? It's one constant in a real changing world. Even when we did the Doors Open, you know, we had a few people that sort of said, like, "Oh my god. Like, [0:47:00] I didn't go to this church, but I went to one like it and it brings back, you know, such nice memories," you know, when they were a child and things like

that. So yeah, so this was – my daughter blew this up, so I have to figure out what we've got there. But that's the next tracked from, I guess it would have been – there was the Globe and then there was the Mail before [0:47:30] they merged, so this may have been the Daily Mail. So it talks about the church, the size of it being erected at Lippincott, being Gothic, and the cost was – that's how we got the stats. The cost was sixteen hundred, the architect was Mr. Henry Langley, and the contractor was Mr. Yabbas, and my daughter's got the names somewhere. But I think it's fascinating that even today, I mean this was St. Patrick's ward, this area, right? That you can get so much history [0:48:00] from these old – it's all in, like, these...

Interviewer: And you have – I'd like to make some copies or have some copies of this.

Respondent: Sure. And I can even leave this with you to go through, or see what my – my daughter's at Trent right now, so it's a little more difficult for me to get stuff, but this was that one article that was so cool. I mean there's York University professors that grew up and they did a study on how the churches [0:48:30] had changed across...

Interviewer: How churches changed?

Respondent: ...changes new immigrants arrive.

Interviewer: And what's the point that they make?

Respondent: Well you know, that even the church that we had went through, like, so many different denominations, which sort of reflected the people that lived in the area at the time.

Interviewer: Mm-hm. Mm-hm. So the different waves of immigration...

Respondent: Immigration impacts.

Interviewer: ...to fill that...

Respondent: I mean it's kind of like Kensington Market, right? I mean did you grow up in this area? Or?

Interviewer: I grew up in Montreal.

Respondent: Okay. Because...

Interviewer: Yeah. A similar kind of area.

Respondent: You know, [0:49:00] because when I grew up, I mean and it's not intended to be derogatory, but it was known as the Jewish Market.

Interviewer: Yes.

Respondent: And everybody did their shopping there. And then it changed, I think, to like Portuguese, and you know, different waves of immigrants coming through. It just reflects society at that time.

Interviewer: So the church too changed depending...

Respondent: It has to, you know?

Interviewer: ...according to what your populations were [0:49:30] at that time.

Respondent: Yeah. So these are the professors. Roberto Perron and Gabe Scardilato. So they're two long-time friends and university professors who live in the west, and so they spent many – they did a study of the area. They considered this their neighbourhood, so they were intrigued by the diversity of their neighbourhood. Home to Portuguese, Italians, Chinese, Ukrainians, Chinese, Maltese, Caribbean people, Africans, and others, and so they did a study of that. One's like a professor of [0:50:00] history at York University.

Interviewer: And they studied what we now call Harbord Village.

Respondent: Well I...

Interviewer: Or a slightly larger area.

Respondent: Larger area.

Interviewer: Yeah, I'm sure it was larger. Yeah.

Respondent: But clearly they grew up in it, and there was a certain affection for the area. And you know, trying to understand what happened. I know when I went to university, social history really wasn't studied as a specialty. I think it's a relatively new phenomenon, but it's something that really fascinates, you know, me. You know, what people **[0:50:30]** have come, and what they've endured, and what they've made of it, and...

Interviewer: I think it's a much more interesting way of studying history. When I studied it, we learned dates and now we're talking about populations and how people lived. Much more human, and much more fascinating.

Respondent: Yeah. So this is actually from your Harbord Village area study, right? That's where I got some information.

Interviewer: And who wrote that?

Respondent: I have...

Interviewer: Doesn't say.

Respondent: ...no idea.

Interviewer: Okay. **[0:51:00]** Yeah. Well I'll look at that when we turn this machine off. Yeah.

Respondent: Yeah. So that's where – so this is like a – let's see what else is here. So this would have been – these are church bulletins that I bought, so this would have been all in German. And I tried to – because it was typed, I tried to get a program to translate it into English, but it really didn't work **[0:51:30]** very well. There's something here that has a history of a church being written by Germans, like a lot of stuff in here that I wouldn't have documented, like 1959 the new heating system was installed. [Laughter] You know, a little bit over the top, but...

Interviewer: Okay. So from all this reading that you have done, are there some topics that I have not asked about and we haven't talked about?

You've done a lot of reading because you like the church and then [0:52:00] we were going to be meeting with each other. So are there any aspects that we haven't come close to yet that would be interesting for us to know as we're gathering information about this neighbourhood?

Respondent: I think we've covered off, you know, pretty well, you know, everything. I think, you know, maybe the concerns for the future. You know, it's been an integral part of the community for [0:52:30] so many years, and on the one hand, you know, it's prime location in Toronto. It's a great location. But on the other hand, you know, there's a different demographic in the area now, and so what implications that has for the future...

Interviewer: And how much people are willing to travel. I mean you and your daughter do a long trip about twice a month.

Respondent: Well for me, I drive. I mean it's not a big deal. On a Sunday morning, down in twenty-five [0:53:00] minutes. But there's a lot of people who are elderly and just, you know, a lot of them are coming with Wheel-Trans. It's a big ordeal for them to come.

Interviewer: Yeah. So it's an aging population, aside from some of the young people who might come, like this young German man.

Respondent: Right.

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah.

Respondent: So that's – but that's a challenge that, you know, many churches in the area, you know, face including you go into St. Stephen's. Wrong side of College Street. But it's in quite a state [0:53:30] of disrepair. And there's no money to fix it, and yet you know, I know in Quebec, I mean they have, you know, very much the same situation, and actually the business I'm in, I'm in reinsurance, so we insure insurance companies.

Interviewer: Okay. Uh-huh.

- Respondent:** And so I have some clients in Quebec, and one of them is actually – they just – all they do is insure [0:54:00] churches. And so they have the same problem, you know? You've got a lot of churches in downtown Montreal, people aren't going anymore, it's expensive to keep them. What do you do with them? And I think to a certain extent, the Quebec government is stepping in a little bit more and saying, "Okay, this is part of our cultural heritage and trying to help people at least restore their buildings." But you know, with budgets being what they are...
- Interviewer:** Mm-hm. Mm-hm. And [0:54:30] taxes being what they are, and people not wanting to pay more...
- Respondent:** Exactly.
- Interviewer:** You know?
- Respondent:** It's not that people aren't generous or anything like that. The money's not there. So it will be interesting to see how that church kind of evolves going forward. So I mean that's all I can really, you know, say, and I don't know if there's any really good pictures in here of – some of these, there were – let me think. [0:55:00] There's one that was kind of interesting. So these are like the first church councils. I think that was the first school day for the German school. There's pictures of confirmations in here. I mean...
- Interviewer:** I just want to ask one question. You said that on an average Sunday, the German service has about fifty people, and the English service has about twenty [0:55:30] people. Is there a big age difference? I mean what I'm wondering is, the twenty – are those younger people, and the fifty, are those older people?
- Respondent:** Typically. Or you might get people like myself who have maybe gone away and coming back, so maybe were sort of the middle ground.
- Interviewer:** Mm-hm.
- Respondent:** We also – actually you asked about demographics, so there were a lot of people too of German heritage who don't speak, you know,

[0:56:00] German anymore. Like my parents spoke German at home, and I answered in English. There's the whole generation like that. And then we also – because of the connection with **[indiscernible 0:56:09]**, we do have some people from Africa, so it's a really eclectic kind of mix, but yeah. There is kind of that division. Or you may have in some cases younger people who will go with their German parent to the German service, that kind of thing. **[0:56:30]** But this would have been – I don't know when this would have been. 1984. I mean these were all the church members, so that gives you a...

Interviewer: 1984.

Respondent: ...1984.

Interviewer: So it has really – the numbers have declined drastically.

Respondent: Yeah. Well, many have died, right?

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent: So.

Interviewer: Well I think maybe we will bring the formal part of our discussion to an end, and I'll look at some of these articles and **[0:57:00]** pictures with you, and then we'll decide what I might make copies of.

Respondent: Or what I can do is I'll try to the best of my abilities to get my kids' time, and I know my son had a number of pictures. I'm not sure who's computer they're on. So – whether they're on hers, maybe they're even on my home computer, or whether my daughter has them, and I could flip those to you because I suspect that you probably would have **[0:57:30]** a pretty good selection there.

Interviewer: I'd certainly appreciate that. But I just find it wonderful when I listen to you talk about your daughter, your mother was so much a large part of her life because you worked and your mother was raising your children. And she likes to be in the church. She feels her grandmother's presence.

Respondent: Yeah. Even for me. I mean, you know? I think my mother would have died of shock if she saw that I was involved [laughs] with the church, but it's **[0:58:00]** a bit of a connection, you know, to the past.

Interviewer: Yeah. Well Chris, I just want to say thank you very much. It's extremely interesting, and you and I will continue to talk for a few minutes.

Respondent: Sure.

Interviewer: And I'll look at the information that you have and the pictures that you have, but you wondered when I asked you, you know...

Respondent: Like I was a bit nervous because I didn't actually grow up – you know, obviously I spent time in this area.

Interviewer: Yeah. But the church is – it's still there, and it's been there for a very long time.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: **[0:58:30]** So we do – all of us really appreciate your contribution, and thank you very much.

Respondent: Oh, you're welcome.

[00:58:36]

[End of recording]