Brent Hope
Narrator

Haley Carlton
Loyola University of Chicago
Interviewer

Brent Hope: BH
Haley Carlton: HC

Interviewed 29 April 2023

Abstract: Brent Hope has been a member of Christ Church of Chicago for over a decade. As an openly gay member of the congregation, Hope is prominent advocate for representation and activism on behalf of Tri-C. Hope agreed to participate in this oral history with Haley Carlton, a Loyola University graduate student, to discuss his experience with Christ Church of Chicago in contribution to a larger project titled *Gathering Places*. Carlton and Hope sat down in the lobby of Christ Church of Chicago at 10 AM just before the community karate lesson in the basement dojo of the church, and over the course of an hour, the two discuss Hope's early experience with religion, his experience joining and participating in Tri-C, and what the congregation may look like in the future. "The interview took place as part of the *Gathering Places* project at Loyola University of Chicago. For more information, see https://gatheringplaceschicago.com."

Haley Carlton (HC): My name is Haley Carlton and I am sitting with Brent Hope, member of Christ Church of Chicago on April 29th, 2023, at 10:02 a.m., to discuss their history with the organization which I will be referring to as Tri-C throughout this discussion. So, thanks for sitting down with me today!

Brent Hope (BH): No problem. Thank you for asking.

HC: So, I'd first love to get to know how long have you've lived in Chicago?

BH: Oh, gosh. I moved to Chicago in 1988. So, what's that? Is that 30? That can't be can it. (quietly in thought) No its three. So, what, 34 years? I can't forget it was 103 degrees and at that point, I was driving, from my grandfather, a 1967 Chevy Impala, (laughs) which was huge, a boat, and my parents were following behind in a U-Haul bringing my stuff. So, for quite a long time, I've now lived in Chicago much longer than I ever lived in Indiana, which is also kind of strange for me to think about. So now for a long time.

HC: Yeah. What brought you out to Chicago?

BH: Uh, it wasn't Indiana. (laughs) I knew I wanted to move to a big city. Had definitely been to Chicago a couple of times in my youth. I think at that time, again, these are little things. But, you know, I mean, Oprah Winfrey was just big about Chicago. I'd seen The Bob Newhart Show when much before your time, but a show of the seventies that was set here in Chicago and knew I just wanted to come to the big city. And actually, probably a little more proximate to that than when I was at college. I went to Indiana University in Bloomington for my undergrad. And there I met college friends who were here from Chicago. So, during those college years came up quite a bit. So, I was like, I'm going to try Chicago first to see if I can find a job. And if I didn't, then I was thinking maybe Saint Louis and then third was Indianapolis.

In those days, there was the Chicago Tribune, when it was actually a paper people read, right. It wasn't just an email. And the Sunday paper was huge. And back then there were usually about two and a half pages of that full newspaper on Sunday of usually B.A., bachelor level type, social service, jobs and psychology and things. So, I came up and actually stayed with my college roommates, parents. He was on an internship on the East Coast, but I came up and stayed with them and in a week, I found a job, found my first apartment down in Boystown and moved to Chicago.

HC: Oh, that's wonderful. And so, you were in Indiana originally growing up. What was your relationship with religion like if you don't mind me asking?

BH: Nope. I thought that might be a question, makes sense. Big picture, I would say I grew up in a very humanistic, non-religious family. When I was younger, kind of until the third grade before my biological mother died, did go to a few churches. My grandmother was a Baptist, so I did go to that church, went to a couple of Sunday schools. Then I think again before my mother died, I started going to a Methodist church. So definitely have some memories of going to a church. Not much that I can remember feeling, you know, much of a connection other than it was again, just another activity like most activities. And so, with organized religion, I would say that after my mother died, and then lived with my father and then he remarried a couple of years ago, but really from there, no organized activity of religion for the family level, let me still when I'm in my youth though say that now I just realized that I really was a big proponent, but a big consumer of one of the most famous child pastors that the nations ever knew. And that was Mister Rogers. Very few people know that Mister, right, was actually a Presbyterian minister.

His ministry, in a very nontraditional way was the work that he did with kids on his TV show. Gosh I'm getting a little emotional, just kind of talking about that, and seeing that connection. So, I was a huge kind of Mr. Rogers fan. So actually, I think that's going to be my new spin. First time I'm ever saying it that way, which is the nice thing about doing this. So yeah, to that extent. And I think ultimately as we go through the conversation, his style of ministry to call it that is very similar to Tri-C's, so in some ways it's not that surprising at all. Right. I would say kind of my next contact was that until high school. The town I grew up in is Wabash, Indiana, about 13, 14,000 people. You know, I would say big enough to have, just at that point, to have one of everything. One McDonald's, one Kroger, one this, one that. Um, so, you know, definitely in high school at that point, there were folks, both students and teachers who were a bit more on the evangelical side, the

more conservative Christianity. Um, and some of those kids and teachers were part of my social life at that point. I did have a teacher who was also a minister who was coach of our cross country junior high cross-country team. And he definitely, I think, walked a line. I don't know, I was going to say that was probably easier in the eighties than it is now, but now I'm already kind of questioning that in terms of I mean, I know we did a prayer before every cross-country meet. I think he probably quizzed me out a little bit on, you know, religion, are you a Christian? All kinds of questions. Um, you know, knew early on, I think between Mr. Rogers and Free to Be You and Me, which is was kind of a seventies fairly progressive album about being who you are and all things anyway that did I knew that was not a, I wouldn't call it theology then, but right bit of theology that either made sense to me or had issues with. Um. So that's there. You know, definitely was having some burgeoning awareness of being gay. And then, you know, also having a sense that that those two things are a more evangelical view of religion and Christianity and of being gay and being who you are. As again, I would reference probably now multiple times with Mr. Rogers being pretty incompatible. So yeah, so that was never really appealing to me, but definitely again was part of, I would say, you know, when you think about. (sighs) You know, religion kind of just entering my life right, kind of dealing with and being a part of you know, definitely more that evangelical strength was there. And now I'm a therapist by training, so I feel like I'm talking way too much. So, I'm remembering that's what I'm here for.

HC: Yes, exactly.

BH: Oh, let me also say that my high school cross-country coach and then my German teacher are both brethren. And there's a fairly large brethren component around where I live, actually, for three years while going to college. When I came back home to Wabash for the summers I painted at, it was then Manchester College, now Manchester University, which is a brethren affiliated college. And I guess again, let me go back to then specifically Mr. Horn, who was my high school cross-country coach, my drivers ed instructor. I took at least three sociology classes with him. He again, just the image that comes to mind, instead of desks, he had just a chair and he got a little table connected in a circle instead of, you know, kind of rigid lines. Mr. Horn, you know, introduced me definitely to the idea of sociology and thinking about groups and discrimination and all those pieces. We took a course called So-Par and Per-ville, as I remember, or social participation and personal values. So actually, a class right to kind of work through your values which I now bring to my work every day as a therapist and the theories that we use. And, he and I, I don't think I don't remember him being gay or homosexuality coming out at any point. And he had just such an accepting manner about him. And that, you know, was just so I guess I'm going to say, I'm going to question a little bit myself. I think I then had some other view of, oh, okay, you actually can be a religious person. Um, and same with Mr. Kreps, my German teacher. He actually was ordained, I believe, because I know he did at least one friend's wedding ceremony and come from again that more socially accepting, humanistic, you know, kind of more progressive background which again I and I feel well and brethren the brethren faith is very much comes from a pacifist point of view. So, it is kind of interesting. We are also not Mormon, [thinking] Mennonite. So, some sort of Mennonite faith,

which is also always kind of interesting to me because they are in some ways very literal Bible perspective and yet to have this social justice kind of spin on it as well. So, I will fast forward a little bit. So now that I have been going to church more often, I went back to my hometown, I think it was a year ago and thought, you know, I thought it would be nice to visit the church I know there and the UCC church, United Church of Christ, which we are in that denomination. I had a church on Wabash, but that's disbanded. So, I did do a little searching around of on the web of some other churches. And there was only one church that I could identify, had some sort of somewhat welcoming statement on the website, and that's where I went. And again, surprise, surprise, I say somewhat facetiously, that was the Brethren Church. And actually, it's just two, three blocks from where I was staying. So again, I get a little emotional being able to say this. It was so nice. So, you know, I didn't reach out to either of those two teachers, but it was nice to go in and this was, oh, gosh, maybe two years ago. So, this was probably just the restart of going back with COVID, but very much masked and things. Anyway, either last time, or the summer before. So, you know, that was even going into I we were I think, I don't even know we were meeting here or maybe very much with masks anyway. That's now a memory that pops back to go to. And it was very nice to see Mr. Horn there and then to be able to chat with him and to connect with that. So yeah, so, so again, that's, it's nice to kind of have this opportunity and think back to yes, definitely some of those seeds were there as well.

HC: Oh, that's wonderful. And I that's what I love doing these as well. Getting to reflect on my own [experience] as going through this. And so, the long-winded answers are the good ones.

BH: (laughs) That's right.

HC: All right. So, with that history, how did you come to find Tri-C?

BH: So, I live three blocks away on the other side of Peterson, which is kind of you know, it's a big major street as well as kind of, you know, a fairly kind of deep neighborhood defining piece. So, I hadn't been over on this side of Peterson as much as I am the other side, the south side of Peterson, rather than the north side where the church is one block from Peterson. Then I lived two of our blocks south of Peterson, so but it was so it was ten years ago. And I think I had bought my very first bicycle since being here in Chicago. And I had ran for let's see, I had run the Chicago marathon 12 years ago to kind of two years before that. And so, I was trying at that point to still continue to make sure I was getting some exercise and doing some things that are fun way to explore the city and all of that. So bought a bike and so you know started riding my bike and this so actually kind of coming up Granville actually so another block you know

HC: I live on Granville.

BH: Right. So that's kind of another well, I guess an official bike path. To get to the lakefront and back and then goes to Granville. And then again there's an official connection that's here on

Rockwell going back to my apartment, so, riding my bike, I guess let me then maybe take it back a year or two. So again, I'm a clinical social worker and at that point, for about five, six years, I was working for an insurance company, a for profit insurance company, as a clinical consultant for disability claims, um, which was interesting work, made nice money, and I feel good about the work I did there in terms of ethics and making sure to make good what I feel are good sound clinical judgments and ultimately you're there to, I guess I shouldn't say make the insurance company money, but to, you know, to be able to identify and to work with identifying cases where it may not meet the ultimate definition of disability or if they did, assisting with the return to work process. So I get work I feel good about making money with but was less right of what you would call a traditional social work justice or, you know, service. Definitely working in a direct treatment environment was not that so. So I was, you know, definitely thinking that I would like at that point be part of an organization where I could use some of my skills, both on the clinical side, but also putting together the PowerPoints, doing some organizational work, all of those pieces. And again, I think that's part of what helped me to work at an insurance company. Another background thing I'd say is as an undergraduate, I knew I was a business manager, a business major for the first two years until I was getting a C plus, an accounting and an A-plus in sociology. And that was part of what said to me, okay, yeah, maybe we need to rethink this. So, I ended up getting a double major in psychology and sociology. And that still again felt they had some of that administrative background and things I wanted to be part of doing some helping, so that I would say is the most conscious thought I had. And at that point I was 47. Again, not that old, especially looking back now from 57, you know, but wanting to [pause] You know, I again, not ponder life's meaning and things like that. But, you know, do a bit of exploration and pieces with that. So that was there and to be honest and vulnerable, I was also looking to, you know, make some social connections doing that and had by that point some idea of quote unquote what the lay of the land as far as churches and that there were more progressive, you know, definitely churches that were out there, you know, and had an idea of the range of that. So anyway, all of those I think were at least had the pre contemplation, pre thoughts that I had. So anyway, I think it was probably fairly early on after I got my bike and then had started to bike down to the lakefront that I rode by the church and in front of. It's a different banner than while we have an upfront because it's a little tattered and things. But there was a pride banner that's made by the UCC that says God is still speaking and then has the rainbow flag on it. Um, so drove by, rode by on my bike and I thought, okay, well if I'm going to start someplace, let's start at the place that's three blocks away. Knowing that that would also be a good facilitator for me to, you know, even start someplace. So, that was, it probably took a little more time to decide, you know, about coming for the first time, but ultimately walked those three blocks and came through the front door.

HC: So just kind of happened by coincidence, which is which is great. So, what was that first visit like for you?

BH: Um, it was interesting. Again, I think by the I mean I'm very much in my head right, which is interesting as a social worker. And another parenthesis, part of why I was also I think I've been

looking for and like is to explore a little bit the more emotional slash fuzzy parts of life. Right. Which faith, at least for me, kind of falls into that. Definitely though, I came in with, you know, I would say I'm not a major Trekkie, but a little bit of a Trekkie. So, you know, with shields up, quote unquote, to be here walking in. And yeah, I mean, I gosh, it is a little hard. I remember seeing the pastor kind of standing up here. I don't know if I remember much more of a visual memory of that first day. I mean, I remember people coming up being friendly and again, I was thinking about this last night in preparation for this. So, it was probably later in the summer. And the church's big fundraiser is called Aki Matsuri, which is kind of a traditional fall festival from Japan. So, I came at a time, I think, when they were just starting the prep work for organizing for Aki Matsuri. And again, right, that was part I was just looking for something to join, to connect to, to be part of, to make a contribution to. And so, I think that was my really first big piece that, you know, come, and volunteer and help and do that. So, yeah, so I so probably I think that's the main thing that that to me right away is that early on I found a way to join in and participate and kind of have a role. And that I find really helps me to join groups is when they have some role or something to do.

HC: Can you tell me a little bit more about this fall festival? It's not something I've come across before.

BH: Okay. Yeah. So, this again to start well and they're definitely members of the church who can give you more detail than me, but so I don't know if we said that probably will be a description. Right. But so, our church is historically a Japanese American congregation formed shortly after World War Two. And there, you know, there has already been a bit of migration during the war and then definitely after the war, as many in the Nisei, the first generation of Japanese Americans, were released from the don't want to use the wrong word,

HC: internment camp.

BH: internment camps. Thank you. I'm thinking of a word that starts with C, which was the internment camps. So that is the history of the church. So not surprisingly, again, it's a Japanese themed and fall festival that is the major fundraiser for the church. So, it is typically the first Saturday of October and is a huge production. You know, a number of Japanese entrees are prepared. So, there's a whole crew that does that. Then there's other, a bakery sale, Japanese goods, clothes, all of different aspects that's there and the takeout process that happens. And so, it's definitely where and especially at that point. Even ten years ago, you know, primarily than Japanese Americans who are not necessarily regular members of the church or maybe members of the church at all, they'll come for that specific event. I've learned that they're all through the city and there are other Japanese American congregations and groups. And so, everyone has maybe some weekend that some folks go to as kind of the unofficial calendar of Japanese American events here in Chicago. So we get a lot of people and it's, again, both an event definitely for the folks who've grown up in the church, who've been part of that community for a long time to, you know, make those connections. And, you know, I would say in my time here has also had a bit of evolution. One

of the pieces that I think also says a lot about Tri-C is that one of the gentlemen who primarily works in the kitchen making all the food has been become connected with a family of Muslim faith and great folks who also have kind of become definitely friends of the church and family and also come from a fairly progressive background. They do a lot of social justice work. So, for now, again, this is all kind of pre-COVID, right. COVID changed a lot. And so, the last three, four years, the festival has been very modified and shortened. I think this is the first year that well, maybe we'll see, you know, but at least it's on the table to approach a bit more, you know, returning back to that model. But anyway, ultimately decided and have served for multiple years a halal version of the Japanese because he's actually Japanese American and Muslim. And as I get outside a friend so prepared. And where we sit right and probably in your work in other faith communities here in West Ridge and Rogers Park. Right. Have a very large Muslim neighborhood and folks who live here. So, to have served a halal version of Japanese American food as part of our fundraising at festival, which is great.

HC: Wonderful, yeah, that sounds really interesting. I'll be on the lookout for it.

BH: Oh, yeah. Absolutely. Absolutely.

HC: So, I know we touched on it just a little bit, just. But you've mentioned the evolution of the church. So, since you joined, how has Tri-C changed and evolved over the last few years?

BH: I think a lot. So. Well, let me start off with, as I said, so there was a banner, pride banner out on the front of the church. So, the UCC, the United Church of Christ has an official process that the church can go through to become what's called an open and affirming congregation. Right. So, kind of a learning process and things that you go through to officially get that label. So, I think I think it was in the year before, maybe a year and a half before I came, that Tri-C had gone through that process. And so that was all done. And obviously, again, that that's part of what definitely brought me. Well, again. I don't know the entire history of where things were. I think. I know you may. Editing. I think that there probably were not that many out, um, you know, fairly vocal in their identity, LGBT folks in the congregation. Have definitely learned that, you know, back with that progressive tradition, definitely some of the kids of my peers have now come out as gay. Um, and pieces. HI [waves hello to member entering the church] I. So, um, so that has definitely happened. But, um, anyway, so I think part of the evolution on that has been that the church has now pretty much every year marched in the gay pride parade, which is great. One of our co-moderators who really has probably become my strongest personal connection here at church, then she through her Japanese American connections and pieces. And again, this was pre-COVID for about five or six years ago, partnered with another organization to have a once-a-month family gathering for Asian American LGBTQ folks. And so that was great. Again, COVID, I think, kind of changed that. But, um, you know, that the church has been that and to see that. And so, where we're sitting, it's clear you can't see it. But Tri-C actually received a national award from a national LGBTQ, Asian-American organization.

HC: Oh, that's incredible.

BH: Yeah. You know, and just the testimonies, again. Testimonies, right. Sounds really, because these groups were not, you know, we provided space, but actually it was the other group that primarily ran the group. So, it was not a religious, you know, requirement or any piece of the program to do that, but just to provide the space. Right. And I think especially, the co-moderator I'm speaking of, you know, she's just so warm. She's a retired teacher that kind of great way with young people and kids, um, you know, and for them to see a church and the person who's a moderator at a church being so welcoming and embracing and accepting and all of those pieces, um, you know, where, where I came, you know, much later in life, right at 45. But to see some folks just, just to be in the space and just to be welcomed, oh, was fantastic. So, some great things have happened with that since I've been here. We've our front yard, which truly was kind of when I came here, it just maybe to barely call the front yard. It's very nice. We have basically four lots with a lawn here, which again here in the Rogers Park Tri-C neighborhood is quite an asset to have, but it was just kind of grass of flagpole that had been put up. I think when the church, I belong to another congregation and wasn't really used much so we and I will remember we had did have a summer kind of all-day retreat to kind of talk about what are some passion plans, what are some things that folks would love to do. Um, and so one of them was doing the garden. And so now we have what's a very welcoming peace garden out front that we do concerts in the summer. This will be a third of the fourth year of concerts in the summer out on the lawn. So, a really welcoming up to the community. Right. Um so that's there my passion was especially again at that time I was riding my bike a lot more. So, I was like, Oh, be so great. And we were on the bike. And I thought, you know, other people like me, right, to take advantage of that, some of mine was to get some sort of bike rack built for the church and ultimately for another member who knew an Eagle Scout who needed their final project. It was great. They came and did all the work. Got their piece. So that for again, another person, she wanted to do the little libraries. So that got done. So probably what I would say is the biggest evolution has been opening up the church more to the community and to, you know, some outside folks. Again, I think understandably, you know, it still has had and so has very much a Japanese American. That grounded base. But, you know, those have been all the pieces, just that reaching out and now finding ways to make additional connections has been fantastic.

HC: So, sounds like Tri-C has a really positive relationship with the community, would you say that's a fair assessment?

BH: I would definitely say that's a fair assessment. I think there are ways we can continue to grow that are definitely we again pre-COVID partnered with another organization, Heartland Alliance, and they had an after-school program here. That was housed, had that, the karate school where folks are just starting to come in now to do that. That's again run by and owned by a couple who are parishioners here. But that very much draws in folks into the community as well. And we've had some chances, you know, to work with our alderman and so making those connections as well. And

again, what I would say, which has been great and nice for me, because I am one of the few still, I would say members of the congregation who live here by the church. The vast majority of folks do still live in either the suburbs or some different parts of town. There are a few, definitely, who are more here than they ever had. But, you know, just to see, you know, the space and when I can walk by and there are benches out there where, you know, people on walks that the kids families out there, you know, playing, it would be interesting to see, you know, if we did a survey, you know, what you know about the space and how you know it and things. But I definitely know our folks would identify it as you know that's got that nice and the parkland space that's stuff a contribution to the community and I think we are doing our best and try to continue to live those values to be, you know, open and welcoming to everyone.

HC: That's wonderful. So, what keeps you coming back every week?

BH: I keep coming back. Well, and I will say, actually, last year for 20 most of 2022, again, just those kinds of things were opening back up a little bit. I did actually take a step back and said that to folks primarily because and again, it's been great. It's opened up a lot of doors for me. Again, thought wise and growth wise, I'm here with the church and again, kind of rare, right? For somebody who's fairly involved with their church, it really is the only church I've known. As I said, I had some connections as a young person, but, you know, not I would say that formative quote unquote. We had a longtime pastor who just at the beginning of this year ended his ten years. He had started officially being the pastor just a few months before me. So, I wanted to go out and experience some other churches to kind of see how, you know, what they offer and how they did services, all of those types of pieces. So, and again and what's great though about this church is I knew and said, you know, so I'm going to go, you know, not be quite as active, take some time off. But, you know, I will. I'm planning on coming back. And, you know, I still came back for Aki Matsuri, you know, the version that we did last year and things like that. So, I still made some connections, but I did come back. Why is it still just three blocks from my place? Yeah, so that makes it kind of easy. Yes. You know, that's true. You know, I definitely have formed connections. I guess I would say this that, you know we've it has been some of the. Groups. We did. We did a year of folks just meeting and talking about white oppression and social justice. And, you know, and that was great for me as a Caucasian white person then to be in a group of Asian Americans talking about race and all of these pieces and what we know, the white culture and challenges, the difficulties and all the pieces with that, you know. And so, you know, in those conversations and others, when, you know, it is time to go deep and to be vulnerable and to talk about things, you know, there's just no other group right on the planet of people that, I know, and again, it's hard for me to say anything 100%, right? I'm always 18 qualifiers, as you can hear. But for me to be able to say without, you know, any qualifiers that I know, even if we disagree, these are people that are coming from a great place and ah, you know, just feels 100% safe, you know, in ways that you just can't. Right. At work and other things. So just already to have that connection, that ability and safety here. And, you know, and I would say, you know, and our pastor is just leaving and I think we have now a fantastic we have been very lucky with our transitional pastor. I think she's already done a great job and is going to do a great job. I think we are

at an inflection point with that. And, you know, some folks have talked about the social justice piece and where that is. And, you know, there's I think we've just had a good, healthy discussion about who we are as Tri-C. Um and going forward with that. But again, just knowing that I feel like, you know, of any place on the planet to be able to have that type of conversation in a safe way. I, and that's my hopeful and believe it's going to be a great growth opportunity for the church. Um, and I am equally hopeful that's going to be a great growth opportunity for me.

HC: That's wonderful to hear. And you know, as someone who did not grow up very religious at all and so coming in to observe your service was incredibly informative and it's like, okay, church can look like this. It's not just the stagnant sort of sit there and listen that I was really informed about. It was a wonderful experience. And so, what would you want someone outside of this community to know about Tri-C?

BH: What that sparks. I don't I don't think it was that service, but maybe the service before. Actually, that Reverend Erin, our transitional pastor, talked about is kind of a more even gentler call in the sense right of sharing of one's faith and doing that as a thought, as a part of, you know, being a welcoming piece and potentially other members joining. Again, that naturally sets off in me, right, the social progressive. And, you know, I'm not here to talk to you into anything or that I know the da da da dah, which I know I just don't just kind of that gut reaction from. You know, parts of where I believe, you know, religion has not been that helpful and challenges and so right but so again when she said that and, in our mission, statement is a statement about everyone being prepared for ministry and talking about that. And I am a big believer of right if that if the words are there, we got to figure out are we living it or not? If I take out the words or find a way to live it so long again, that way of saying that's been a little bit on my mind because again, you know. So anyway. So, I guess for my own peace, right? I mean, just what I try to share is one to be, you know, again, a very open gay man who goes to a Protestant congregation. Um, again, sounds like maybe a little bit like yourself or like lots of folks, right? They also, again, think of churches not being welcoming and open and affirming and a place. Um, so part of what I hope people just know is again, that I, what I find that I find again, it's, it's a place that I've really been able to bring all of myself to it, and it has been great. And so, for folks to know that, you know, just as there are many other churches that are the same way, I do see that as part of my social justice work to do that both as a social worker and as a human being. And so, you know, I would just want them to know that that very much lives here in Tri-C. And I think especially over the ten years that I've been here, has really done and continued great job of spreading that message and being a place that is open and affirming and on your faith journey as well. Um, you know, I again have been, you know, fairly open still for me. Jesus. Actually, we put it this way. Right? So, I tend not to read the Bible and view faith from a very literal sense. But more from when we did the book study group that talked about this more from a 10,000 feet view of the Bible. So, write the last letter all the more. What's the big picture? What's the big story? What do we take away from this? The values? And so, I would say that, again, for anybody who is looking for a church, Tri-C has everybody at every altitude. I would say some folks who still, you know, come from a fairly, you know, Bible based at least thought about

Jesus and all of the stories and, you know, those ways to folks who are that we have a person who is open and she's really of a Buddhist belief, you know, just that wide range. And so, I would want folks to know, I guess, from my point of view, that truly wherever you are on the journey and that's part of the UCC marketing. But I think this is absolutely a place where that can happen.

HC: That's wonderful to hear. Um, and so with that, what do you think the future of Tri-C looks like?

BH: I think we'll have to see. Again, I think that this year, next two years are going to be a bit of an inflection point. So, as I mentioned, you know, kind of the folks of my generation, maybe a little older, a little younger had lots of kids. Again, this is my perspective. They grow up with very strong connections because there are multiple families here, again, who have been longtime members of Tri-C, the Japanese American community, where now it's all these marriages. I mean, literally know five or six women. It would be a very interesting family, genogram, because now all those kids have kind of intermarried. That's not a good word, right? Oh, but you know, they met. It was before I was here. Right. But they all kind of met their future spouses here as kids. All the camp, you know. And so there used to be a lot of. Right, family camp activities, a lot of things. Right now, we don't have very many families with young kids, teenagers coming to Tri-C. We just recently did an Easter egg hunt where some of those folks came back. You know, I know for some of the folks here in the church, again, with a longer history and all those pieces are kind of hoping that some of them come back. They do come back for Aki Matsuri again and all the events and pieces. So, where that will be, I don't know. And, you know, I think there continues to be great opportunities for Tri-C and I guess I do sometimes think just broader, more broadly about progressive Christianity and churches out there. You know, for let me know if I'm going to far astray but you know for Pete Buttigieg who is again very open Gay man has you know now a family. Well, again, lots of ways you can think about the family by the board. Right. Even a traditional family with a spouse and two kids, you know. And for him to talk about his faith and I think it's Episcopalian, not sure, folks can fact check me on that. But, you know, for him to talk about his faith and come compared to a former president we had and what would be a more evangelical base, I guess I won't go much farther than that. You know, I'm just very hopeful that a more inclusive message and purpose can come out and find those in the community for progressive churches. I again, the pride parade is great. So, you know, I'm hoping for more of that, right. That the future can have some social justice focus and pieces. And again, want to honor that. There are some folks in our congregation that, again, are still not so comfortable, are looking at that piece. Right. The discussion of right politics in the church, power, race relations, all of those. Right are very difficult conversations to have and folks are not right at absolute points. It's a wide range. And so, again, what I'm looking forward to is being able to have those discussions in a safe way. I'm glad that not everybody again, I guess I just keep saying this to say, you know, I'm just one voice right out of here at Tri-C. I and so, you know. And again, that's what I feel is going to be growth for promoting for me and I hope the church is to be able to have some of these conversations that I think need to happen in the world and are very, very tough to have. And I guess this is me and you're interviewing me if, you know, if that journey, again, is something that Tri-C

finds a way to build upon and to use just, you know, talk about. You know, again, right. I strongly believe in, you know, a separation of church and state. And I feel, you know, I feel with the social justice issues, we have to talk about power and look at how power plays in our country and take stances on that. And that's by its nature as well. All right. So how you figure out all of that and do all of that, I guess and maybe I go to that because that's I think the most concretely say that I think this next two years at least is really going to be interesting. And I look forward to that. Then I think, you know, from there, who knows?

HC: We'll see. Thank. And so those are my primary inquiries. I was only if you had any last things that you wanted to mention that maybe I didn't cover?

BH: I mean, nothing comes to a head. Great questions. I think all of those were the pieces. No, I don't think so. Did you? You did get some did you get kind of a narrative history of the church or I don't know if that's what you were looking for.

HC: Yes. No, you're right. You did a wonderful overview of everything and really hit on a lot of points that we've noted in our research as well.

BH: Okay.

HC: But with that, thank you so much. Oh, thank you. This was fantastic. And we'll definitely share it with you when it comes time to verify that.

BH: Good luck. Thank you.