

Synopsis of Interview with Reverend David Algers  
March 02, 1992  
Tacoma, Washington

I spoke with Reverend Algers to obtain an "outside" perspective on St. Leo's. All my other interviews were with people who have been directly associated with St. Leo's as a parishioner or clergy. I wanted to get an opinion concerning the impact St. Leo's has had on the community due to its social justice mission and endeavors.

Reverend Algers has been the Director of Associated Ministries in Tacoma since 1980. Associated Ministries is an interfaith, ecumenical organization committed to fostering spiritual, educational, and social programs throughout the community.

When speaking about St. Leo's, Reverend Algers relates a variety of very interesting and insightful occurrences over the years. These range from experiences at Nativity House to Mass at St. Leo's. Geographically, the Interfaith Center is located directly up the hill from St. Leo's. (Standing in Reverend Algers office you can see St. Leo's.) Because they are located in the same neighborhood, they have experienced many of the same growing pains and problems associated with the declining neighborhood of the Hilltop over the last years. A number of instances are related concerning this.

I prefer not to go into too much detail concerning this interview. It is most worthwhile reading for anyone interested in the spirit of those committed to changing the environment of the Hilltop. This takes into consideration the spiritual as well as the physical aspect of the people and where they live.

Reverend Algers is extremely eloquent in his praise of St. Leo's and their endeavors throughout the years. However, he is also realistic in his approach and discusses problems associated with such endeavors. He

also discusses what he sees as the role the church, any church, needs to take in our current and future society.

This was a wonderful experience and I recommend reading the transcript for anyone interested in the Hilltop or Social Ministry programs or humanity in general.

65

March 2, 1991 Interview with **Reverend David Alger**, Director,  
Associated Ministries, Tacoma, Washington

***If you don't mind, why don't we begin. Tell me a little bit about Associated Ministries.***

Associated Ministries Organization formed in 1969 as a result of, basically, putting to bed a couple of other urban ministry efforts, the old Pierce County Council of Churches and another urban ministry program. So we formed Associated Ministries in 1969. Since that time I am the second director the agency has had. The first was Bruce Forman. Bruce started the agency and was here for about ten years. I've been here for twelve years.

Associated Ministries has grown rather substantially. It is a large agency. [It has] 150 churches [that] are members, another 50 agencies and groups as well as another 9 interfaith partners that we work with. Associated Ministries offers a wide variety of programs. I don't know if you want to go into that.

***Why don't you just touch on it briefly.***

We do educational programs for clergy and laity. We have a major program called Communiversity that we do with Pacific Lutheran University and the University of Puget Sound. Actually, we should involve the University of Washington in that soon. ***That's true.*** We also have FISH Food Banks affiliated with us. They have 28 different food banks. Until this year [we] used to run the Emergency Food Network which is a main provider of food to all the feeding programs here in Pierce County. But now the EFN is an independent entity. We do a lot of advocacy work here in the city, county and at the state level on behalf of low income people. We run Paint Tacoma/Pierce Beautiful and paint homes of senior citizens. We sponsor the Welfare Rights Organization. We sponsor another organization that deals with gang prevention type of activities with the youth and educational programs. We have a drug prevention program that we do through the churches and other activities

as they evolve. We do a lot of ecumenical tying of churches together involving all kinds of things.

We moved down here, let's see this is 1992, the fall of 1989. Well, we've been here going on three years. This building we are in is an old mortuary. You are going to be talking about St. Leo's in a minute and this is an old Catholic Mortuary, the Cassedy-Allen Mortuary. We bought this building from the Forkenbrock family and rehabilitated it. [We] got some grants, actually got a whole lot of grants, and redid this facility in hopes of putting our agency here, which we did.

[We] endowed the building and called it the Interfaith Center. We now have the Martin Luther King Center downstairs in this building. We used to have the Pierce County AIDS Foundation, which we started, but they got too big for the downstairs and had to move. And we have a couple of other smaller programs that use the facility including a direct outlet food bank in the back of the building. One of our first neighborhood projects was the building of the children's park right next door. We did that jointly with two other groups. But we basically handled the money and bought the property and so on. When we moved here, at the corner of 13th and "I", [we bought the property] on both sides of 13th. We are still trying to figure out what we are going to do with this large lot next door, which used to be a parking lot. That is a very rough outline [of what we do]. Associated Ministries is very complex to understand.

***But is it basically trying to tie together all the different churches and denominations and interfaith types of associations? Was that the main intent?***

Yes. We are very clearly a part of the ecumenical movement as it is understood world-wide. We are fundamentally a council of churches for Tacoma and Pierce County. So even though we are located in the Hilltop we work with churches throughout the area, from Puyallup to Long Branch -- whatever. We have members scattered all over the place and a lot of our churches are from the valley, Sumner and Puyallup and then from the Kitsap Peninsula. We have a lot of churches out there.

**Well, as I told you when I called, the main research topic I'm working on is St. Leo's. I was hoping to address it from their issues of social justice and the programs that they have initiated over the years. I am hoping to get a viewpoint from someone else in the community, in the same area of service, to tell me a little bit about how they feel. Tell me what you know about the programs they have initiated over the years, how successful you feel they have been, if they've been going along the right track, or what you see as problems or cornerstones they have initiated, that type of thing. Whatever you can share with me.**

St. Leo's is a very unique Catholic parish and certainly unique among all the churches in Tacoma. It's a Jesuit parish, as you are probably aware of by now, which makes it somewhat different. They don't have a diocesan priest. They have a Jesuit priest who is appointed. Since I've been here there have been three or four different priests at the parish. Its most exciting time, I believe, has been since Father [Pat] Carroll has been there. What is interesting is that his field of specialty is not directly related to social ministry. His field of specialty has to do with spiritual growth and development which makes him a very interesting priest for that parish.

Anyway, we started working with them. We've been involved with them ever since I've been here and well before I got here so that takes us back to at least 1980. And I have been impressed with a lot of the programs they have started. It has been really interesting. On one hand, you look at St. Leo's and you start thinking of things like the Martin Luther King Center, which they were part of originally. You think of what Keith Hagen is doing with street and disabled people, or go down to Nativity House and you think of that in relationship to St. Leo's. The "G" Street Community, which is now the Catholic Worker House, and some of those activities, they are actually some of the [organizations] very loosely connected to St. Leo's. That even includes the Food Connection and Hospitality Kitchen. There is a loose connection, it used to be a tighter connection.

Where the public sees all these wonderful things going on, of course, holding all of that together is the intensity of their urban ministry which has been very difficult, very difficult. Because, these people are out fighting and working on the front lines. I mean, you go down to the

Hospitality Kitchen for lunch. I don't know if you have been down there for lunch [or not but] you go down there for lunch and you are eating lunch with some of the roughest and toughest people in Tacoma, as well as some wonderful families and other people who are just having hard times. Or, you go to the Food Connection. You go down to the Last Chance Shelter connected with the MLK Center or certainly down to Nativity House. Those are tough things they are doing. They are reaching out to the most disenfranchised, some of the most unpleasant, unlovable, down right ornery and nasty and often frightening people, people that could do you great bodily harm.

Yet, they are out there with those folks as well as mentally handicapped people, as well as bringing in refugees, like they did with the Central American family, Francisco and Romulta [Viadares] family, when they came up from El Salvador.<sup>1</sup>

That tension, anyway, that whole stress in that type of work does make it hard and it hasn't been a bed of roses. I mean everything at St. Leo's has not been perfect, by any stretch of the imagination. There have been a lot of difficulties but the great thing is that they have dealt with them. There has been stress that has existed between programs, competitive feelings. There's been jealousies, there's been all kinds of things that have gone on between programs. And programs, haven't always worked smoothly. But they have been the most effective programs at reaching this particular population, the really disenfranchised folks.

I remember, gee, how old is the Food Connection now? It must be about 7 years old. I remember -- in fact it's actually a subject or illustration in a sermon that I gave quite a while ago -- talking with the Director of Social Ministries at St. Leo's, Joyceann Hagen, and getting into a disagreement with her. She came up to me and told me she wanted to start a food bank at St. Leo's. I was explaining to her that we had a major food bank. It's the one that is located in this building and that there are a number of other feeding programs on the Hill. Later we were to find that the Salvation Army was to be moving right on the edge of the Hilltop with their food bank system, and the Seventh Day

---

<sup>1</sup> St. Leo's became a Sanctuary Parish for political refugees from El Salvador in 1983.

Adventists had their program. I told Joyceann that I didn't think it was a really good idea to establish the food bank because there was enough going on already. She made it clear to me that the issue wasn't whether or not I approved or disapproved but whether I was going to be a help or a hindrance. (laugh) That was when I began to learn. I asked her what her resources were. Well we don't have anything. We have a big open, empty room and out of that came the Food Connection and ultimately the Hospitality Kitchen.

The Hospitality Kitchen is the largest hot meal site in Pierce County and the Food Connection is the largest volume food bank in Pierce County. And by the way, you should go down and eat lunch there, because the lunches aren't bad. They are quite good. The Food Connection itself scrambles to feed as many people as it can. The difference between it and something like Fish Food Banks [is that] Fish sees itself as an emergency service program. Actually the food quality, if you would come to a Fish food bank, you [would] get a much more diverse and complete meal in your food basket, actually food bag, than you will necessarily get at St. Leo's. But those folks scramble. I mean, they find food and resources in amazing ways. And they will do everything they can to put food in the mouths of the people they serve. And again, they are the most difficult clients that are in the most stress.

Anyway, how does one define St. Leo's? St. Leo's is really hard to get your hands around because, you know, it is a worshipping community. I am wandering a little bit. I was thinking of their worshipping community. I have worshipped down there. In fact several years ago -- a couple of years back -- I was preaching down there during the week of Christian Unity and preached at all the Masses. I'll never forget an experience I had there that reflects the spirit of the parish. I had to sit outside the circle when they had Mass and could never go take Communion. I was a well known person in the community and I knew if I went to take Communion, while Pat [Carroll] might very well serve me, there are people within the Catholic Church who would have taken that back and gotten the Archbishop in trouble, not necessarily [Father] Pat. But, we would not do anything [to cause problems for the Archbishop], we are talking specifically about the previous Archbishop, Raymond Hunthausen. After four services Pat [Carroll] stood up and when he was

saying his closing remarks at the end of the service, he recognized that I was sitting outside of Communion and he was crying as he was talking about that, as were a number of people in the church.

It is a church that really feels the brokenness of humanity, not just among the poor but I think ecumenically as well. They see the fact that their church, that is the Roman Catholic Church, has an exclusive Communion or Eucharist Service [and it] is very painful for those people, as it is for those of us who cannot participate in it. But again, that is reflective of the life of that community.

Also, many of the things that we do -- It is interesting to see who worships there. ...I was talking to someone earlier this morning [and] I would guess on an average weekend you would see 30-40 Protestants that worship at St. Leo's. There are a number of Protestants, progressive thinking Lutherans, Episcopalians and Presbyterians, who are looking for a church they believe combines their need for spiritual growth and nurture with their social conscience.

***Have you seen that change over the years since you've been here?***

That has really evolved since I've been here. And I would comment, it is because, I believe, St. Leo's is on the leading edge of what the Church is called to be as we are moving into the 21st Century. It is really going back to the very beginning of the Reformation. The Church then was a church which focused on the theology of the Cross, which is very central to St. Leo's. They see themselves as a servant church, a church that is willing to be crucified, a church that is willing to lose itself for the sake of humanity.

Many of the churches that you see around the community, many churches which I attend and dearly love, are reflective of what happened with the Constantine era when the church became the established part of the social order from the 4th century and now up to the 20th century. They [churches] are very much a part of the social order. They [other churches] may be concerned about some of the same social issues but they are also concerned about their large budget, their large facility, their stature within the community, and so on. St. Leo's isn't concerned about its stature within the community. Interestingly enough, therefore,



it has tremendous stature. It is a church that is really, truly willing to lose itself.

I always run a test on people's knowledge of churches and locations when people call and say they want to come and meet me. I think I did the same thing with you. No, I didn't have to because you were doing this project on St. Leo's. One of the things I always do is say, "Well, we are a block up the hill from St. Leo's Parish. Do you know where that is?" I have yet to have anybody say they didn't know where it was. Now think about that. If I was to say a block up the hill from First Presbyterian, even though that is a really prominent facility downtown, you can bet that 75% of the people wouldn't know where it was. Everybody knows where St. Leo's is and it's because they have been touched by it in so many ways. So it's --

***When you started here about 1980 had you lived in Tacoma?***

No. I came here from the Midwest.

***I was going to ask you about what time, if you knew when St. Leo's really got involved in their social justice issues and programs?***

I had always seen St. Leo's -- Ever since I've been here St. Leo's has been the church that is involved in things. My guess is it goes back well before I got here.

***Have you ever had contact with any of the parishioners there or any knowledge as to whether there has been divisiveness as to the course of action the parish has taken over the years?***

Oh, I think there has. In fact, there are women who go there who are still irritated about the church and the role of women. I mean, I know some very progressive Catholic women who won't even set foot inside of St. Leo's because they are so upset about the Church [Rome] and women. Even though people, like Pat Carroll, and people on the staff, clearly come from a progressive feminist position, the church itself by virtue of what is dictated to it by Rome, becomes what a lot of women believe an unhealthy environment for them.

There are also people, the old school, who have been a part of St. Leo's [many years] and have watched the change take place, that I'm sure have been frustrated. I mean, there have been some highly political things that have been done and said out of that church -- that come from the left side of the political spectrum. That inevitably is going to alienate and frustrate some people.

But on the other hand, you have a person now like Father Pat Carroll, the pastor, whose whole focus is on spirituality. He didn't have to worry about social ministry. They [parish community] are all there doing it [social ministry] and so he [Pat] also works on it but focuses on the spiritual needs of his people, focuses on loving his people. I love to watch him. He is like a real good Protestant Minister. (laugh) I watch Pat when he is at gatherings going on at the church and he is moving from person to person to person all the time. [He is] talking to people, checking with them. He does a lot of pastoral care.

Father Gary [Smith] was like that except Gary did that with street people. He was at Nativity House before he had to leave this last year [due to illness]. You go down the street and you could probably talk to almost anyone down there and mention Father Gary and they will know who you are talking about. One of my great stories about him -- he's a Jesuit. In fact, he and Father Pat Carroll lived together in the Jesuit house. I was downtown one night, about 1:00 a.m. I was volunteering with a group called Operation Night Watch that particular night and I noticed a lot of emergency vehicles over by the Last Chance Shelter. So I decided I better stop in and see what was going on. You walk into that shelter, and that was before they fixed it up to the condition it's in now, and it's not the world's greatest place now, but you walked into that place and there's probably 80 people stuffed into there sleeping -- homeless men. The place smells like stale tobacco, alcohol, urine, and it was dark. There was clearly...an uneasiness in the room when I walked in, not because of me, but because of what was going on. And what was going on, about two-thirds of the way into the room, there was a fellow on the floor who was dying of an overdose. The place was just ready to explode. There was all this tension and people were scared, homeless people where scared. They didn't know what was going on. I was there for about three or four minutes and behind me I noticed somebody

coming in. I turned and it was Gary. It was just amazing. I am trying to think of a parallel, to what happened. But as he moved through that room -- He moved through that room and he touched people. He called them by name and he knew all these people who were in these beds. I remember, there was one young Hispanic boy on an upper bunk and Gary hugged him for a while. Anyway, there was a calmness that just moved through the room. That spirit [of calm] was [present] only because of the investment that this extension of St. Leo's Parish had made in the lives of those people. That was months and years of Gary's life caring for these people. There was this open love of God that he allowed to flow through him. And that whole place calmed down as he walked through. It was an extraordinary thing to watch -- an extraordinary thing. One of the most moving spiritual experiences of my life. I think that is part of what the secret is to St. Leo's.

There [at St. Leo's] is this focus on the importance of the spiritual growth and development and nurture of people's spirit. There is a consistency. Somebody the other day asked me about that too. They said, "What is it about a place like St. Leo's as opposed to Mason Methodist or Bethany Presbyterian or some of these others [churches] that are trying to be relevant?" I think St. Leo's is relevant but it also has a consistency of what people can count on. Their worship, even though it's up to date, it's historically grounded. It's the same worship they have been doing for hundreds of years. They've just made it a little bit new. There are certain rituals maintained that are a source of sustenance for people and that's really very significant. I think that is extremely important. You can count -- there are certain things, that you just can count on, that are going to be there. There are certain values that ride through everything they do.

***Do you see them as an anchor, along with Associated Ministries and others here on the Hilltop, as to the revitalization of this area, bringing it back, stabilizing it in some manner from the problems it has had over the last few years?***

...I have learned not to count St. Leo's out. I see them as an anchor, a spiritual anchor on the Hill and as a human service anchor on

the Hill in terms of the advocacy and direct service they provide to people. It is just astounding. In terms of the future of the Hilltop they are very interested in the level to which -- If their vision<sup>2</sup> comes through working with Catholic Community Services, and if the new facility does come into being -- and that's kind of on shaky ground right now in terms of whether or not it will happen -- and the new houses they were talking about building down on Yakima between 13th and 14th, that will have a tremendous impact. Even if that doesn't happen, they will continue to have a tremendous impact. Their staff and parishioners are deeply involved in terms of strategic planning around housing and economic development here on the Hilltop. They're right in the center and they have been an active voice. So I think they are a critical component.

When you look at that whole [situation] in terms of what's going on in the Hilltop, it's a hell of a lot more than St. Leo's. It's some of these other churches that are here, like Shilo Baptist. Shilo has probably been here as long as St. Leo's, except, I guess, at one time, they used to be a Lutheran church. Some of these historic Black churches really do play a major role, as well as the Urban League and some of the other institutions that have been deeply involved in the Hilltop. But clearly they [St. Leo's] are a major player. And they are a major player you can count on. They are going to be there.

***Speaking about the Hilltop, in general, do you see whether the area has gotten any better over the last couple years? I was talking to Joyceann Hagen<sup>3</sup> about a week ago. She mentioned that at one time they had some real serious problems at The Food Connection and Hospitality Kitchen with the drugs. Of course, the drugs are still an element here, obviously, but have you seen that it has shifted at all?***

It has been interesting to see what has happened. When I first came here in 1980, actually late 1979, I was getting a tour of this area. Coming from the Midwest and the East Coast, we actually passed all the way through Hilltop and were leaving Hilltop before I realized this was

---

<sup>2</sup> Future building and program development is anticipated with Catholic Community Services.

<sup>3</sup> Director of Social Justice Ministry for St. Leo's Parish.

the area they were talking about as the bad area. It was a perspective thing. I just didn't feel that I had gotten into the bad area yet. Now that I've been here and have been involved in Hilltop for a long time, there's been a long history of problems and a lack of willingness to really address them as a community in coordination with the city. Interestingly enough, that will [to address the problems] came along, almost in sync with this horrible situation that happened with cocaine traffic and the organizing of gangs in this area and their impact on the Hill. They came into being right about the time we were securing this building.

Have things changed here -- I love to look out the window here. As you look down toward St. Leo's, you realize that the apartment building down on the left on the corner of 13th & Yakima had somewhere between 12 and 14 drug dealing operations going on out of it. With Keith Hagen from St. Leo's and Denny Hunthausen from Catholic Community Services and Reverend Brazil from Shilo Baptist and a few of the neighbors, we closed down that apartment building, with the help of Safe Streets, of course. It has been re-done and renovated and now it's a safe building. Kitty corner there is a little white house across the street. It's still shut down but that was a major drug dealing operation. I came to work one day and it was a little after noon. There were 13 police vehicles scattered all around this intersection and they were chasing down somebody who had a weapon and had just committed a murder. Right after we bought this house, kitty corner across the street, right there on the corner of 13th and "I", or just before we bought this building, there was a young man killed right on that corner. Two years ago we had young women involved in prostitution hooking on these corners. We were picking up needles in our parking lot -- what is now the children's park. We had drug dealing going on in the street right up to the steps [of our building]. [There were] kids with visible weapons dealing with cars on the street. People using, where the water box is across the street, as a drop box for cocaine. It was hot. It was hot and heavy just in this neighborhood and this immediate area right around the building. None of that is going on now.

***Have they just relocated?***

Oh, yes. There has been a lot of relocation. But there has also been a lot of bad guys who are just gone -- lot of bad guys are in jail, lot of bad guys are dead, shot each other. This is tragic in terms of what is happening to these young people. We still have some hot spots here in the Hilltop.

But the Hilltop is really coming together now. We've organized the Hilltop Housing Consortium. St. Leo's is a player in that. We're moving along. We've got access to several millions of dollars now and we will be doing some major impact work on the Hilltop around housing. There is our staff of the Hilltop Action Coalition which we also sponsor. They have organized, I forgot how many, blocks in the Hilltop now. There are more blocks literally every month [organized in the coalition]. The neighborhoods are organized. A lot of these people are St. Leo's people too. And some of our most active organizing folks are Catholic parishioners of St. Leo's here on the Hilltop. All those people are die-hards who have been here. The old Italian families, they've been here -- they've been here for years. **St. Rita's?** Yes, they aren't going -- they aren't going anywhere. They are staying. So I see a change for the good.

It is still hard for somebody who wants to invest in the Hilltop, in terms of coming here to live, to believe. That's why, I think, we have to make some conservative kind of special effort so people can come by and say, "Oh, my goodness. Look at all those new houses. Look at how that is organized."

... By the way, one of the other partners with St. Leo's has been St. Joe's [Hospital].<sup>4</sup> I don't know if you know much about that connection. St. Joe's has provided them [St. Leo's] all kinds of resources for the Clinic they have down there. We had to open up another clinic in the Hilltop. But again, St. Leo's [is] taking the most difficult cases down at their Neighborhood Clinic. A lot of the young families with children, etc., got scared to go down and sit around with the people waiting for the clinic. So Trinity Presbyterian Church opened a neighborhood medical clinic that [they run] aiming more at families. Well, where are we --

---

<sup>4</sup> St. Joseph Hospital medical personnel do volunteer staffing of the Neighborhood Clinic that is part of St. Leo's Social Justice Ministry.

**Since you deal with a lot of the churches, you touched on this a little bit, how do you think the other Catholic Churches in the community and other denominations, how do you think they view St. Leo's during the time period you've been here?**

Well, it's hard -- I mean the Catholic Community is as diverse as the Protestant Community in a lot of ways. But, generally, the Catholic community, I would say, is very supportive of the efforts of St. Leo's and its programs. Every Catholic church I've been to speaks with great respect for the work Keith Hagen has done and Maureen Howard with the Martin Luther King Center and all that evolved to be. I think people hold that in high regard. I would say some of the more traditional Catholics, more conservative Catholics, would be troubled by what they see. ...My intuition says and what I've experienced, even among a lot of those conservative people, there is a sense of admiration for the willingness of St. Leo's to be in touch with the poor and to be living out the gospel in the way they do.

...One of my favorite parishes in Tacoma is, actually, St. Charles Borromeo, a conservative parish as described by many, many people. You're nodding all the time like you're Catholic. **I am. I go to St. Charles.** (laugh). They are wonderful to deal with ecumenically. It has been a wonderful parish to deal with. I understand all the problems they have, maybe, internally. But they have this little thing they do with sneakers, they have that sneaker service (shoe day) and they collect all those [hundreds of pairs of new shoes to distribute to children] and bring them down here -- wonderful -- and special offerings. They [St. Charles Borromeo Parish] are helping with one of the houses at MLK Center. **They've progressed in a lot of things.** They have.

A lot of the churches [have progressed]. I mean, you go over to St. Ann's -- and St. Ann's is even aware of what is going on and has been somewhat supportive, or St. Andrews way out in Sumner. Those churches take an interest in what's going on at St. Leo's. I sometimes worry about that. It's not unlike the Presbyterians with their fascination with Trinity Presbyterian because it's doing relevant things in the Hilltop. They [other Presbyterian churches] can keep themselves so busy

supporting those efforts. It makes them feel better and helps them to avoid taking their own initiative to deal with their own area and their own ministry. There is a way in which places like St. Leo's enable you not to get your hands dirty. And I'm part of that. There are lots of times when I don't necessarily want to go down and deal with the things that St. Leo's is doing. I don't want to feed those people every day. But, gee, those people, day in and day out --

***How do you think the city ,or the powers that be governmentally, has reacted to St. Leo's ? Do you ever see --***

Well, I'm very familiar with the power structure of Tacoma and St. Leo's Catholic Parish is held in very high regard, extremely high regard within City Hall. It's just -- I mean Norm Dicks may not like them a whole lot because of...their opposition to his policies regarding Central America and other military [programs]. But even when there were difficulties with Nativity House, down closer to downtown, I was astounded that it seemed to have worked out relatively smoothly. ...I mean Last Chance is right on the edge of downtown and the city has put hundreds of thousands of dollars into that operation. I went to the benefit the other day for Nativity House and saw a friend of mine who is a Judge -- who I have never seen do anything publicly -- and he was serving food to raise money for Nativity House. So I would say it has been held in high regard.

The Jesuit leadership in some cases, because of the political activity of somebody like Bix [Father Bill Bichsel], has -- Bix knows how to clarify issues. ...and he is part of the St. Leo's history, very clearly. I don't know how many people realize that he goes over into the park every morning for his morning meditation for an hour or so. Every morning, Bix is down in Wright's Park for his meditation, every day. But the type of politics a person like Bix espouses does cause alienation of politicians. He has confronted the President of the United States. He confronts our Senators, our Representatives, anybody who he believes is running contrary to what he envisions is the will of God for what we [human race] should be doing. Bix is right there taking a firm stance.



I remember the first time I met him. He was the second minister I met, first one was an African American minister here from Hilltop. The second person I met -- this guy came into our office when we were over at Sixth Avenue Baptist Church, 1980, in January of 1980. I looked out through my office, down through Jan's [assistant] office. We had this little area in the catacombs of Sixth Avenue Baptist church and I saw this guy standing talking to Jan. He was in torn up jeans and crummy sweatshirt and had some strange hat on his head and had paint on him from head to foot. I asked Jan to come into my room and I said, "Who is that out there?" I said, "my guess is, it's one of two things." And she said, "what do you mean?" I said, "that's either a transient you are talking to and you might need my help or it's a Jesuit priest." (laugh). And it was a Jesuit priest. It was Bix. Ever since he has been a dear friend. But --

***Do you think the path St. Leo's has taken has definitely been influenced because they were staffed by Jesuits vs Diocesan priests, or is that even a fair question in your situation to ask?***

It's a hard one. I don't know what made St. Leo's. I mean, Jesuits they have kind of a tainted history as well, like the rest of us. I don't know -- I don't know if it was Jesuit or whether it was -- what it was. But it's something in that Catholic heritage, I'll tell you that. It's something unique about who they are as a Catholic parish.

***Do you see St. Leo's persevering in these programs and their mission throughout the next number of years?***

I think they are a role model for the future of the church, I really do. We are moving into an era where there is a need for the church to become more of a servant church, a church that is willing to be very explicit about who they are. ...we have churches that are just wild eyed in terms of this new evangelism, evangelical churches. They have little or no relevance to daily life or daily needs of people. What is it that people have so spiritualized the church that they are of no earthly use at all. There's that group. Then there's a group, I think among a lot of us as Protestants, who are really trying to be relevant but we aren't

grounded. We aren't grounded in who we are in a sense of tradition. We aren't grounded in terms of our spirituality. We aren't grounded in terms of our theology and that's what I am saying about St. Leo's -- that I am sensing. There's a groundedness in who they are that ties to their serving attitude, and their servant attitude towards society and their willingness to stand up face to face with society, that gives them a strength that's going to keep them in good stead for, I think, decades to come. But it's also something the rest of us need to be looking at if the progressive, moderate, even moderate to liberal church is going to impact and survive. I think that's the direction they need to be going.

***Well, this has given me a very good insight from another perspective and I greatly appreciate it. It adds a valuable section to the project I am working on. Thank you.***

Well, good.