



FEBRUARY 15, 2024
SAVANNAH COMMUNITY MEMORIES PROJECT
“FAITH IN ACTION” RESIDENCY
INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEWER: TOM KOHLER
DIRECTOR/CAMERA: ERIC DARLING
PRODUCER: MICKEY YOUMANS

SUBJECT: KATRINA BOSTICK



Katrina Bostick

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14:50:22:15 [Eric Darling]: And as soon as we can settle, Tom, we're ready to go.

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14:50:31:14 [Mickey Youmans]: I'm done.

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14:50:32:19 [Eric Darling]: Anytime

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14:50:33:09 [Tom Kohler]: To Thank you. Hi, Katrina. Thanks for being with us today. We appreciate it very much.

14:50:37:09 [Katrina Bostick]: You are welcome.

14:50:38:13 [Tom Kohler]: And I think we're just gonna get started if you don't mind telling us who you are by name and also spelling it if you would please.

14:50:45:06 [Katrina Bostick]: My name is Katrina Bostick. K-A-T-R-I-N-A-B-O-S-T-I-C-K. And then do you have pronouns that you prefer? My pronouns are she and her.

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14:50:56:01 [Tom Kohler]: Great. Thank you so much. Well, just to help everybody learn a little bit about you, kind of where were you born and if not in Savannah, how did you get here, those kind of things. And, and we'll just kinda get started in that way.

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14:51:09:11 [Katrina Bostick]: OK. I am a Savannah native, born and raised here in 1975. So I've seen the city grow and change right before my eyes.

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14:51:20:16 [Tom Kohler]: Do you mind, where'd you go to school and neighborhood and just kind of a little bit of that.

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Katrina Bostick

14:51:25:00 [Katrina Bostick]: So, I really grew up on the east and west sides of Savannah. My father's family was West Savannah and my mother's family was East Savannah. So I had the opportunity to see a little bit of everything about Savannah. I graduated from Savannah High School and I'm also a proud alum of Savannah State University. So for me, I, I'm

14:51:51:04 definitely Savannah homegrown and I absolutely love my community.

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14:51:57:00 [Tom Kohler]: And then home church?

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14:51:58:20 [Katrina Bostick]: My home church is Flipper Chapel, AME church. So that's African Methodist Episcopal on Pitt Street and the Carver Village area. Yes. So that is, that was my mother's church. That was our, the maternal side of my family was AME and the paternal side of my family was Baptist. So I also got a different taste of the different faiths when it came around Christianity from African American Episcopal to the Baptist

14:52:32:23 congregations. So my father's family grew up in Second Arnold Baptist Church when it was on Arnold Street up until it moved to 37th. So, like I said, I've seen really the best of both worlds with Savannah. All parts. I've lived on the south side wherever my family has really grown in this

14:52:58:12 community.

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14:52:59:21 [Tom Kohler]: And you come from a big extended family?

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14:53:02:06 [Katrina Bostick]: I do, I do. My grandfather, both of my grandfathers were, they come from an entrepreneurial spirit. My father's father, he owned a paint and body shop downtown. And it was one of those areas where, you know, we had public transportation, but not really. So I did a lot of walking around Savannah, but we would walk to his paint and body shop. It was in Perry Lane right behind Social Apostolate, and he was

14:53:40:00 there for about 30 years. Oh my gosh. So it, it's definitely different now, but I think that's where I learned my entrepreneurial spirit from my grandfather, my paternal grandfather, and then my maternal grandfather, he worked for Union Camp and right before they changed over to International

14:54:04:03 Paper, he retired. So, you know, when I look at industry in this community and how my family was able to prosper because of the industry in this community, I

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do look at, you know, the ways that you have to be connected and what the, what that connection looks like.

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14:54:24:19 [Tom Kohler]: Your family life now, are you still, is is your home church your current church?

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14:54:28:18 [Katrina Bostick]: Or? My home church is not my current church, which is a little different for me because Flipper Chapel was a very small congregation. I am now a member of Kingdom Life Fellowship Church, which is a much larger congregation, pastor Charles Robeson and Pastor Yolanda Robeson. They lead that congregation out on the south side off of Middleground Road, very instrumental in and making sure that they are a church beyond the walls. So there's a lot of community outreach, there's a

14:55:01:11 lot of community engagement. They make sure that parishioners, whether they're connected to the church or not, they have the resources that they need. And especially on the south side where there are limited resources, I believe that that congregation has really stepped in and fill in the gap for services around poverty, around homelessness, around food insecurity and things of that nature.

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14:55:27:21 [Tom Kohler]: I want to go back to Perry Lane just for a a minute. Yeah. That would name Reverend Sammy Clark mean anything to you by any chance?

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14:55:37:03 [Katrina Bostick]: It would, it would.

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14:55:38:03 [Tom Kohler]: Would, do you mind talking about that a little bit?

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14:55:42:00 [Katrina Bostick]: I remember him intersecting with my grandfather and their connection, and my grandfather was, he was more of a workaholic. So my grandfather, my grandmother was the one that made sure we went to church that made sure we went to Sunday school. I can remember learning how to drive at 10 so that I could take my grandmother back and forth to church laws were a little different then. So my grandfather, because, you know, his work was in automotives, he would have all of these

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14:56:15:04 extra cars and I had a El Camino that I, that he would allow me to drive around the streets of Savannah to take my grandmother back and forth to church. But I remember him. But it's very vague memories.

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14:56:34:01 [Tom Kohler]: The first inner-city night shelter was right down the street. Yeah. And Sammy Clark was, many of the Methodist ministers of my generation. (Katrina: Okay.) Consider him kind of the person that brought them into ministry. Because he had a very strong social justice bent. And, and, and they could see themselves in that way ministerially rather than maybe in a more passive ministerial role, I'll say. But it's right. I mean, would've been other end of the block,

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14:57:00:15 [Katrina Bostick]: The other end. I was curious. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

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14:57:03:18 [Tom Kohler]: Well, let's talk about Family Promise because it sounds like

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14:57:07:15 [Mickey Youmans]: Make sure to include the question in the answer. Okay. Okay. You that, so if you wanted, we ask when he's asking a question, talk about a, like a person when you respond, it's his, the name and then start.

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14:57:21:23 [Katrina Bostick]: Right. Okay. Okay. Got it. Got it.

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14:57:26:08 [Tom Kohler]: Well, let's talk a bit about Family Promise. Yes. Just if you don't mind, Family Promise is, and your history with it, and then we'll just kind of work out from there.

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14:57:37:15 [Katrina Bostick]: Okay. So Family Promise is a local nonprofit organization that works with homeless families with children. We've actually served the, the greater Savannah Chatham County area for over 25 years, but we're actually a national organization. And the way that Family Promise, formerly Interfaith Hospitality Network was established was because the founder at that time knew and had a, a true connection to the

Katrina Bostick

- 14:58:09:07 faith-based community. And she looked at how the faith-based community could be more of service to those that were in need. So her being from New York, New Jersey area where the homeless population was a little higher and more prevalent, you know, she would see homeless individuals more frequently. So for what she did was she started having conversations with the faith-based community and asked if they would be open to opening their
- 14:58:42:03 doors to homeless families with children. And they would take their Sunday school rooms, their music rooms, and they would convert these spaces that were only being used maybe once or twice a week to private living accommodations for families with children.

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- 14:59:00:20 [Katrina Bostick]: So when we think about sheltering and what that looks like, it gives, working with Family Promise gives individuals a little bit more of security and confidentiality because you're not residing in a dorm style facility. You have more of a safety net where you're in a space with just your family. And it gave the faith-based community an opportunity to do mission work without having to travel to third world countries because there was so many individuals and families in need in our
- 14:59:34:06 community. So to open their doors for 30 plus years around the nation, it actually has given birth to mission work for the faith-based community. And it's all faiths, all religions that are connected to this organization.

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- 14:59:52:02 [Tom Kohler]: And does that original image, is that the same image that exists here in Savannah today?

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- 14:59:58:14 [Katrina Bostick]: That is the same image that that exists here in Savannah, but we've had to change our model due to Covid. So pre-Covid, our families were actually residing in churches every week. This this church here, First Baptist, First Presbyterian was, is actually one of our host congregations. And they would open their doors at least three or four times a year to allow families to stay here a week at a time where they would provide three meals and shelter for those that were experiencing an episode of housing insecurity. And also gave our families an opportunity to
- 15:00:34:01 really build their social capital because they were now interacting and interfacing with individuals that nine times outta 10 they would not connect with. So when you think about families that live in poverty, typically they really live and work within five blocks of where they reside. And they oftentimes don't venture out of

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those spaces unless they absolutely have to. But by connecting to our organization, they've been

15:01:03:03 able to go on to Whitemarsh Island and Wilmington Island and Tybee Island and Isle of Hope, and really meet and connect indi with individuals that they would not normally connect with. So they are having dinner with doctors and lawyers and professionals and things of that nature to really help change and impact their lives in a different way.

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15:01:28:00 [Tom Kohler]: I mean, how many congregations are in your, what I would call Rolodex?

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15:01:31:15 [Katrina Bostick]: In our Rolodex? So Family Promise, because we now serve multiple counties, we have about 80 congregations that we're connected to across the four county footprint in Chatham County. We have about 30, 35 churches that we are connected to. And like I said, all faiths, all religions, all sizes they have connected to us in some way, whether it's a support congregation and or a host congregation. So if they

15:02:03:16 don't have the space to house families, then they give in other ways, whether it's monetarily or volunteers or just really moral support for the organization.

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15:02:16:17 [Tom Kohler]: And then what role does the Family Promise play that enables the congregations to participate in this way, to get to, to offer this ministry? I mean, what's kind of going on behind the scenes through your organization?

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15:02:31:16 [Katrina Bostick]: So the role that Family Promise plays with making sure that the Faith-based community is connected to us is one, inviting their, our volunteers in to really give their expertise on different areas. So they may hold classes for our families. One of the things that we really pride ourselves on is really building that social capital for our families. So we wanna make sure that they're connected to mentors that can help bridge themselves to help them to bridge themselves

15:03:02:11 from out of poverty. So you may have individuals that are working with you for finance and budgeting, whether it's parenting, whether it's soft skills or educational skills. We are connecting to professionals on all levels and they are pouring into our families.

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Katrina Bostick

15:03:20:10 [Tom Kohler]: And are there, are there opportunities for people to, how do you manage relational boundaries between people?

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15:03:31:00 [Katrina Bostick]: So the way that we manage relational boundaries is through trainings. And really sometimes we just have to have those conversations when we are having and engaging with conversations with our families, we really want them to know that individuals that we will connect them to. These are safe spaces, but they are not obligated to share any information that they do not want to share. And then with our trainings with our volunteers, we encourage them not to ask questions that may be

15:04:03:00 deemed inappropriate. No personal questions. For one, it's about our volunteers offering an opportunity to display and distribute hospitality. And we, you know, really stray away from proselytizing or anything like that. We want our families to feel confident and open as they work with the faith-based community. And that there is no pressure because oftentimes, you know, families feel when the, the faith-based connection is there that

15:04:33:08 they have to participate maybe in a Sunday school session or something like that. But with us, we, we don't force our families to do anything. We want them to, to find that, that connection to a higher power for themselves.

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15:04:49:15 [Tom Kohler]: Are there congregations that have a hard time not proselytizing?

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15:04:55:22 [Katrina Bostick]: We, we have come across some that have had a difficult time with boundaries. We've had some that have had a difficult time with accepting our families for who they are, because when we serve our families, as long as they have children under the age of 18, they're eligible for a short term housing program. So sometimes we will get same sex couples, sometimes we will get two parent households, sometimes we will get single fathers with their children. Sometimes we will mixed race family

15:05:33:04 members or interracial couples. So there has been some, some issues where families or our congregations have felt some discomfort with families that live in their truth. So for us, you know, we, we make sure that they understand that we don't discriminate in any way. And if they feel that

15:05:57:02 this is not a good fit for them, then we encourage them to partner with us in other ways.

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Katrina Bostick

15:06:03:09 [Tom Kohler]: On any given night, I mean, how many congregations that open their door on any given night, so to speak?

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15:06:09:20 [Katrina Bostick]: On any given night? At least three to four, like I said, because we serve multiple counties, we have multiple offices where our, the faith-based community is connected to us in some kind of way. So our churches are really doing, in our opinion, their part in making sure that the families that we serve, the children in our community that are experiencing an episode of homelessness, they have an opportunity to have a, a hot meal, to have a warm bed to sleep in and to really be loved

15:06:44:04 on experiencing an episode of homelessness is not easy. And for children, they often don't understand that, especially our children who have challenges with autism and other disabilities. So when they are differently able, when we're talking about change and multiple change, that can be difficult for them. So we wanna make sure that the spaces that we're

15:07:10:08 providing our families, it's, it's healthy and it's a safe space for them. And our congregations are really standing and walking alongside us to make sure that that happens.

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15:07:22:03 [Tom Kohler]: If you know, I'm, I'm 72 now, so I've been around for a while. I vaguely remember when this organization first started. Yes. I mean, I'm conscious of it, but are there a couple, three people back from the old days that are kind of the founders or there's some, there's some folks kind of, if you go back and look at the history that were really the driving forces and that sort of thing, how did the local organization flower out become what it is today?

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15:07:49:15 [Katrina Bostick]: So the interception or the, the conception of interfaith hospitality started around 1996, and it was about 12 congregations that came together to talk about how from a faith-based perspective, they could really do their part and really look at providing services and being congregations outside of the walls. You know, oftentimes I say, you know, when, when we think about Jesus in his walk, we, he, we

15:08:23:18 knew that he, he talked to individuals outside of the walls. They were not coming to him, he was going to them. So our faith-based community looked at how we could take our services outside of the walls. With that, I can remember vaguely the churches that I can name some of them off. So one of

Katrina Bostick

15:08:54:13 our founding churches, First Presbyterian, St. Michael's, White Bluff, Wesley Monumental, St. Philip, AME on Jefferson, let's see, I wanna say First Baptist on the Square, but I think they came a little bit after, but

15:09:22:15 Cooks, Cokesberry, Asbury. So like I said, it was all different denominations that came together.

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15:09:33:09 [Tom Kohler]: So, Interdenominational? And interracial?

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15:09:34:17 [Katrina Bostick]: Yes, Yes.

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15:09:36:06 [Tom Kohler]: Back in the day?

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15:09:36:22 [Katrina Bostick]: Back in the day. Okay. Back in the day. And of course, that network has grown over time to where we have more African American churches that are connecting to us. I think for a time, many thought that interfaith or Family Promise was only connected or connected to Caucasian churches or Caucasian-led churches where we're not, we're definitely growing more in the African American community, but again, it's

15:10:08:23 about letting congregations know this is something that's out there and this is how they can connect.

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15:10:16:04 [Tom Kohler]: So I mean, the way you see this, this is an opportunity for congregations?

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15:10:20:07 [Katrina Bostick]: This is definitely an opportunity for congregations.

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15:10:23:22 [Tom Kohler]: And, and then if, if we go back into biblical teaching, yes. Are there certain parts of, of the Bible, certain biblical teachings that for you, sort of are the essence of what you're trying to accomplish?

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Katrina Bostick

15:10:38:03 [Katrina Bostick]: Yes, there are biblical teachers that are the essence of what we're trying to accomplish. Definitely understanding that at some point in our life, we all may struggle. And it's how our faith intersects with that struggle to help us become more resilient. Definitely live by the principles of non-judgment, which can be very difficult, which

15:11:12:15 can be very difficult. What else would I say? I would also say being a neighbor and understanding what a neighbor looks like. And it's not always

15:11:40:09 what we perceive it to be. You know, just because of a family or individual does not have a, a roof over their head per se. They're still our neighbors and making sure that we treat our neighbors the way we would want to be treated.

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15:12:00:23 [Tom Kohler]: And then your personal, I'm just curious, your personal faith. I mean, are you, do you consider yourself faith led or do you consider, I mean, how, how do you picture, how do you picture yourself in this work that you're doing?

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15:12:15:16 [Katrina Bostick]: I would probably say I'm more spiritually led because I've had an opportunity to connect to so many different faiths. For me, I grab on to things that stick and some things that don't, they're just not for me. But I've been able to learn from so many different faiths that I, I can't really say that I can tie myself down to one particular faith.

15:12:49:21 So that's why I would consider myself to be more of a spiritual person

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15:12:57:18 [Tom Kohler]: Through. And how long have you been doing this work?

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15:13:02:14 [Katrina Bostick]: Oh, wow. So I actually connected to this work in 2013 as an intern at Savannah State. And I was one of those individuals that really didn't understand my neighbor. I didn't, I was that individual that I did not want to work with the homeless population because of, in my mind, the negative connotation that came with homelessness. When I thought

15:13:37:13 about homelessness, I only saw one type because I only knew one type I never thought about and or knew the intersection between homelessness and families. So connecting to Family Promise gave me an opportunity to really connect to my passion and my purpose, which was families with children that were then

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15:14:04:11 now experiencing an episode of homelessness. So I came in at, in 2023, I'm sorry, in 2013 as an intern and was offered the opportunity to lead the organization in 2016. So it's been a rollercoaster ride, but it's been one of those learning experiences where I've been able to grow more in this space and learn more about people, learn more about my community, learn

15:14:33:19 more about what those needs are and how we could as an organization, fill the gap for those needs.

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15:14:42:05 [Tom Kohler]: And then how, how are you financially supported?

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15:14:47:08 [Katrina Bostick]: We are financially supported, of course, through the faith-based community and other private donations from foundations. We are a United Way funded agency, state and local government at funding as well. So our funding sources are diversified, but of course we're always looking to increase that funding because a lot of the source sources that we have typically don't like to cover administrative costs. And that's really the most important thing because, you know, my team is

15:15:21:18 doing the work.

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15:15:24:00 [Mickey Youmans]: Do do you have just whenever, when you're talk, you know, when you're listening, stop making phones. Yeah. Yeah. Okay. Sorry. Okay.

15:15:40:07 [Tom Kohler]: Talk to me about your personal relationships with clergy. Do you, I mean, do you know lots and lots of pastors?

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15:15:48:13 [Katrina Bostick]: I do. My relationship with clergy is probably The most passionate thing about this job because I do know a lot of clergymen. I talk to a lot of clergymen on a weekly basis, and I am, I have the opportunity to learn so much just through even short conversations about the work that they're doing in their congregations about the work that they're doing outside of their congregations. They are really, really

15:16:24:04 the backbone of, of what is being done in this community. Because oftentimes, just like with the school district, you know what's happening in your building. So our students are going to school and they're talking to their teachers, our community, they're going to churches and they're talking to their pastors. So they give us a lot of insight on what some of those ills are that their parishioners are dealing with, so that we can

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15:16:51:09 then go back and say, okay, well what are some of the things that we can do to support them? They're also a, a good source of a good referral source, not just from a service provider, but also from a monetary standpoint. If there is a need that we can't meet at the organization, I can lean on the faith-based community to assist us with that need. And they do not mind, you know, coming in and stepping up to support families with children that,

15:17:21:17 that need those services.

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15:17:26:04 [Tom Kohler]: And then, because you're able to spend time with various ministers and that sort of thing, do you see other work being done that would be faith-based work that you think that's, that's a good thing? That's a good thing. That's a good thing. What else do you see that's going on in the faith community beyond what you're doing that sort of presses you or you think other people would like to know about?

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15:17:50:16 [Katrina Bostick]: I think some of the things that are happening in the faith-based community that many may not know about is the, a lot of our congregations are taking more of a active approach in advocating for resources and services in our community. They're looking at ways that they can use their people power for effective change to promote effective change in our community. They're having conversations among themselves, but also outside of of that they are having conversations with our elected

15:18:25:09 officials. They are looking at how they could galvanize that people power to make sure that policies are implemented in our community for the greater good. So I think the community needs to know about those types of things that the faith-based community is doing that may not be as forward facing.

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15:18:48:09 [Tom Kohler]: So it sounds like, it sounds like you're seeing in several congregations there's maybe a stronger social justice bent than there have been in the past...

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15:18:58:13 [Katrina Bostick]: Yes, definitely.

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15:19:00:09 [Tom Kohler]: Any idea what's, is there something in the water or what's...

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15:19:07:08 [Katrina Bostick]: I think over the, the last couple of years there's probably more movement, more traction coming along. I wanna say maybe 2018 I started having conversations with pastors, leaders in our community around social justice and what were some of the things that we could do to really galvanize that this, that people power. We had a couple of organizations come in. One of those organizations is Dart, where we

15:19:44:12 established at one point it was called SAGEM, but now it's called JUST, and we looked at the people, the power of really bringing the faith-based community together to look at what were some of the, the ills, the barriers in our community, the challenges that our community was facing that maybe

15:20:09:09 needed to be addressed and needed more people having conversations around those things.

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15:20:24:00 [Tom Kohler]: I need just a second. You're fine. Sort of, I wanna make sure I get, kind of get the things that we have to get

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15:20:33:21 [Eric Darling]: Real quick. I'll ask what please, and you can direct it to Tom. Okay. To me. But I'm curious to know in your opinion, why you think there's been more traction lately. I mean, I guess the why question? Why is it happening? Why is it changing? Why is it happening better now than it was before?

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15:20:54:21 [Katrina Bostick]: For me, I think the why happened is in it, it really ramped up the way that the faith-based community is interfacing with the community because of the social atrocities that have happened pre-Covid into Covid, the death of George Floyd, the death of, Ahmaud Arbery, where we were sheltering in place and people had to sit and watch these things. So even though these were things that were happening for years, the fact

15:21:29:04 that the nation had to sit still and actually watch it and there was no movement, I think it changed the way that the faith-based community could really, in a sense, use their power, use their voice to become advocates for the community and the parishioners that they are serving.

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15:21:51:03 [Tom Kohler]: And then who would be three or four local people? Now I know you can't think of everyone, but I know people say, oh, I don't want to use names. Who are three or four of the people around town that you think are sort of the, the yeast and the kind of the yeast and the dough when it comes to building this idea

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of an interfaith community, a collective group of people from across different faiths that have common purpose? Who's some of the yeast in that dough?

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15:22:19:21 [Katrina Bostick]: I think one of the individuals that in my opinion has really been working around social justice and really just a collective movement with the faith space, the faith-based community intersecting with government and nonprofit organizations and residents is the interim pastor at White Bluff Presbyterian, Reverend John Rule. I'm, in my opinion, he's been doing some amazing work around really having

15:22:53:00 difficult conversations, but needed conversations and he's been doing research around what has, what are some best practices in other communities and how those things could potentially be implemented into our community. So he has really, really impressed me around bridging the faith-based community into the inner workings of our, our government, our school

15:23:22:12 district. He was instrumental in Rise when our children, they had educational barriers and technology barriers to make sure that that gap was filled. He really galvanized and pulled the faith-based community into these conversations where I think years before that probably would not have happened. So I think he's definitely one of those individuals to be on the

15:23:50:03 lookout for, and he, he really has his, his ear to the ground around what are some things that are needed in this community, even though he's been here maybe 10 years. But sometimes, you know, when individuals come in from different communities, they, they have a different perspective, but he's come in with some really innovative ideas to make sure that the faith-based community is at the table at every table. So I, I really enjoy working with

15:24:21:01 him. I really think he's one of those individuals that definitely makes sure from a faith-based co connection, that faith is always at the table and there's always room for faith to be at the table.

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15:24:36:08 [Tom Kohler]: That's a beautiful way to say that, that faith is always at the table.

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15:24:39:03 [Katrina Bostick]: Is always at the table. Yeah.

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15:24:42:11 [Tom Kohler]: I wanna be respectful of your time and time out there. Yes. Are there things that you want to make sure to say to us that we've not found a way to give you sort of a platform for today? Anything that relates to, again, this idea of

Katrina Bostick

the idea of the way that people of faith and organizations that are faith driven engage in the larger community and the way they engage with one another?

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15:25:11:07 [Katrina Bostick]: I think because I work in a space where there are multiple faiths and religion, it's all encompassing and no one is greater than the other. So we have to figure out how to work together because in the end, this entire community is gonna be impacted. So it takes all of us working together, putting egos and pride aside to make sure that

15:25:46:07 the least, the lost, the left-out have what they need. Because that's biblical.

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15:25:54:19 [Tom Kohler]: That's a good place to stop. Okay. Well thank you.

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15:25:58:08 [Katrina Bostick]: You are welcome. You are welcome. You're welcome