TRANSCRIPT: PAUL DRUMMOND

Interviewee:	PAUL DRUMMOND
Interviewer:	Dwana Waugh
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START OF CD

DW: OK, this is Dwana Waugh. It is July 15, 2006, and I am interviewing Reverend Paul Drummond. And good morning.

PD: Good morning.

DW: I think how I wanted to start the interview first is if you could just tell me about when you moved to Charlotte from South Carolina.

PD: We moved here in September, 1970, as pastor of the Saint Paul Baptist Church, 1401 North Allen Street. I had a wife, and one son who was about five or six, and a daughter who had just been born.

DW: OK. And when you first moved to Charlotte, could you talk a little bit about what Charlotte was like in 1970 and in the seventies, what you remember?

PD: Charlotte at that time, most of the white population was moving to the suburban area, and the inner city was predominantly black. There was located here a black hospital that has since been razzed, or torn down. Youngsters, young blacks, were being put out of school for the slightest provocation in my opinion. Therefore, I started a Come as You Are and Start Where You Stop Program at the Saint Paul Church, to ensure

that the youngsters could complete their education. I think we started with the ninth grade; it had to be ninth grade or above. That program was sponsored by Saint Paul, but it was in conjunction with Central Piedmont Community College. We got free teachers from the college to take the students wherever they were. We didn't get too much into why they were expelled. That program lasted for a number of years. I found a lot of illiteracy in the congregation and in the community, and we started a reading program for adults, which lasted a few years.

There were, and are, three closely knit communities in Belmont: Belmont, Cornelius Park, and for the life of me, I can't think of the third one. But they all are in close proximity. Many of the problems were drug-related, and Belmont was infested with drug deals, murders, you name it. Consequently, the city decided to do a study of the Belmont area and appointed a commission. I served on that commission. I believe Gantt was the mayor. I'm not sure; you can check that date.

DW: Now—.

PD: We—.

DW: Oh, I'm sorry. Go ahead.

PD: That's OK. You stop me when you want to ask questions.

DW: Oh, well, I was just curious when you talk about the high crime rate, was that in the seventies or the eighties?

PD: That was in the seventies and possibly moved into the eighties, because it lasted for a long time. I'm familiar with it because I had a lot of members who were involved, either jail or—. One year I did eighteen funerals, in the Saint Paul Church, of teenagers. That study sought to identify the problems. [Interrupted by knock on door]

Drugs, murder, lack of education, abandoned cars, whatever else. My concern at that time was that the commission sought to deal only with the Piedmont Courts area. My cry was that if we are able to alleviate the problems here, we're simply going to push them up into the Saint Paul area, the Cornelius Park area, and that other area, and that did happen.

From the study, there was some strong recommendations made. One dealt with abandoned cars. One dealt with the lack of daycare for children, which caused the Saint Paul Church to renovate the church and open a daycare for a hundred and some kids. Initially, we got three. The problem we found was that out of all the publicity that we sought to do, in terms of putting up flyers, sending it in the Cub Scouts and what have you, people did not read. Therefore, we had to go door to door, and got a goodly number. Another problem we identified with respect to daycare, a lot of the parents were staying at home because they were getting a check. As opposed to putting the child in an organized educational facility, they were just staying at home.

We found poverty personified in that community. There were folk who were cooking on the lids of trashcans, which caused Saint Paul Church to open a Feed the Needy and Greedy Program, which we did. Four-course meal, three times a day, no questions asked. We fed as many as three hundred people at certain intervals. It was open to anybody across the city; we didn't restrict it just to the Belmont area. Obviously, we had some greedy folk who came for a free meal.

DW: I guess that's part of the name. [Laughter]

PD: That's why I named it Feed the Needy and Greedy. That's what the name was. But that program grew out of the ministry of a lady who is now since gone to be with the Lord, who came to me as pastor and said the Lord had laid it upon her heart.

She was a professional caterer. And so we opened the door, and she gave up her time freely for years with several other members who came in, prepared the food, and served it. Ironically, the offering of the church increased by almost three thousand dollars per week. I have no data to find out how that happened, other than the fact that I believe when the church is out doing what it ought to do, the Lord will provide the resources. Then of course, there was a food bank here in the city where large grocery stores had a dint in a can or something out of date, they would give it to this consortium that would let programs have it for little or nothing, like about ten cents a pound. We could go shop it twice a week and buy food stuff.

I believe in, and it was my—. I still believe that we can evangelize, which is the meaning of the church, through ministries. When computers first came out, and some of them were almost as large as that couch, I had two members working for Digital here in Charlotte. We opened a computer center at Saint Paul Church. We invested fifty thousand dollars, and the company gave us something like twenty or twenty-five thousand dollars in addition worth of computers. We tried to do some educational things through computers and starting up businesses, and just to acquaint the members with that technology that was really just coming into focus at that particular time.

Later, Habitat for Humanity came into the community. Then I had a problem with it initially because it was some white folk who came into the black community without saying anything to me. At one time, Saint Paul was the largest black Baptist church between Richmond and Atlanta. That's not true nowadays. University Park and Friendship possibly. It's still a large congregation. Have you been by there?

DW: I have, yes.

PD: That sanctuary and gym was built by me before I retired.

DW: Oh.

PD: I retired; I'm not supposed to be here. I'm seventy-four, if you're looking forward, because soon you will be. So I retired to—. This church is a split out of that church, not directly, indirectly. So some of the same people I'm dealing with were the folk who were over there.

DW: First Mayfield.

PD: Yeah, this is First Mayfield. I came here as an interim. The church had split again, and in effort to try to get them back on track, and then when I tried to leave, they called me as pastor, as an old man. So I've been here for about six or seven years.

DW: Well, I was curious—. I do want to talk about the activism that you spearheaded at Saint Paul and even today. But I wanted to go back just for a second to Charlotte in the seventies, and ask you what your sense was of affordable housing in Charlotte, and particularly as it applies to the Belmont community, too.

PD: I'm not completely familiar with all the inner workings. I know there was Piedmont Courts, and there was a housing project right across the street here, and there was still two or three—. I really don't know what to say. I have some strong feelings about it, because I had a lot of member in Saint Paul who lived in those projects. Now what I do know that happened subsequently, the whites started coming back into the inner city, and the blacks started moving out.

They've always been a step ahead of us, and I don't mind that being in print. In fact, the house that I live in now, when I moved in my community, it was about ninety-five percent white, and ninety-nine percent black, because they're always a step ahead of

us. What happened in the inner city, all the dilapidated houses the rich folk bought there but a few blacks, and the prices skyrocketed so that blacks could no longer afford to live in the inner city. So they pushed us. From a housing standpoint, they have pushed us.

Now recently, there has been a dramatic improvement in housing for blacks. Across the street here, everything you see basically from a certain point down is for low-income people. The dynamics have changed slightly. They've got five years to find gainful employment and get out of there. Now what the city's done, I guess in conjunction with the federal government, is that they—. If you don't have a skill, we've opened our doors here and are using this facility to train anybody over there who does not have the skill.

The upper part here is for senior citizens. Right below that is public housing, and I think they will possibly do the same thing in the Belmont area, where they've just torn down. I have not looked at the floor plan. This community here is not completely developed. They've been talking since I've been here about what we're going to do. I said the problem is, and I'm just kidding now and this ain't for public. You can cut the tape off. When I say, you cut the tape back on. [Recorder is turned off and then back on] But I've said that from the pulpit. [Laughter]

But the housing—. And I do know that there has always been in this city a waiting list of over two thousand people for public housing. But I've not gotten too much in that, because I have a problem with—. I just believe that if you are a man, you got no business standing on the street with your eyes focused talking about I can't find a job. For senior citizens, yes, but for young people, I got problems with public housing.

I know I'm being overbearing, because I have a daughter who has two kids, and

her marriage did not work. In fact, they're at my house now. They spend about ninety-five percent of their time at my house. My point is, if it were not for my wife and myself, she wouldn't be able to make it. She has her own house, but I had to help her get it. Her kids are in public private school, a thousand dollars a month. She has a master's and a good job, but she doesn't make enough money, and the daddy quit a good job to keep from paying child support.

I've got a problem with a man or a woman who will bring children in the world and won't take care of them. That's why I'm mad at the white folk who talk about abortions, and we got all these kids who don't have any wherewithal, nobody to take care of them. I'm serving the public schools also, so I'm there every day simply because I don't have to be. I couldn't stand it if that were my full-time job. This is rough. These kids are something out of this world. [Laughter]

My thing is unless the church, the school, and the home find a way to get together, the outcome is going to be devastating for blacks because our kids are being reared amoral. When I say "amoral," you know I mean they don't have any morals. You're either immoral or moral. They are amoral. They'll blow your brains out, sleep in your blood, and feel nothing. I see that every day in the public schools in sixth graders, seventh graders, eighth graders, and even on into high school. I've seen kids on three and four medications before they come to school.

One single parent, it's a mess out there. So I've got problems with that whole thing when you was talking about public housing. I think the federal government aids and abets, and the more kids you have out of wedlock, the bigger your welfare check. It just tears me up when I hear white folk talk about the fact that we don't address the

problems in the black community. They don't know what they're talking about. I require every kid in this church who's in the public school to bring to me his or her report card every quarter. I stand up in the pulpit and take time out—. That is not to embarrass them. It's to try to encourage those who are doing good, encourage those who are not doing good just to look at those who are and to do better. We have a back-to-school workshop every year. We talk about the fact that the parents need to find out where their kids are going or their teachers' names or the PTA, etc.

I have even here now what we call a Super Summer Program. Most churches in Charlotte, black, are doing that, and I was the first one to start it, at Saint Paul Church years ago. We bring them in at 6:00 in the morning. Keep them all day. And our aim has been, still is, threefold. One, I always try to deal with the latchkey situation. See, kids out of school now and parents at work, and the girls are womanish and the boys are mannish. They got nowhere to go, then they're going to go see each other. So we bring them here.

Second objective was to introduce them to a religious institution. A lot of these kids never been in a church, and I see them at funerals. You could have a funeral any day of the week with a teenager and fill up any church in this city. You can tell from that that many or most of them never been inside of a church. So my thing is just to introduce them. We don't proselyte, but when they come here, we take them from kindergarten through sixth grade. That's my Super Summer Program. They know that this is the Lord's house throughout this building.

The third objective is to deal with them academically. See, give a child a tape with that thing in his ear, let him listen to it one time, they can tell you everything on it.

Then they talking about they can't read and they can't achieve. That's bunk. They're just not being taught, because in our schools many of the teachers are just there for a paycheck, not really to teach. You're not too far removed from the situation. Well, I've said it publicly, but I keep denying that I've said it, but you can cut the tape off right here. [Recorder turned off and then back on]

So that's pretty much where I am. I've seen a lot of improvement. We've still got a long way to go and a great deal of that is, as stated, within the black community. We've got to do a better job with having babies out of wedlock, because a lot of these folk were not babied. Well, I don't hold the kids responsible, because there's no such thing as an illegitimate child. Children don't ask to be born. There may be some illegitimate parents, but no illegitimate children. Wherever they are, that's where we need to take them and work with them. And that's what we try to do, and that's where my heart is.

DW: Well, I wanted to go back, and you might have already answered this, but when you're talking about children being amoral, what do you think is the cause of this amorality that you see going on today? And the other question that I wanted to ask is did you see the same kind of amorality when you first came to Charlotte, or was it something that developed over time?

PD: It's progressive. I think part of it started what I've mentioned previously; that's when we call ourself integrated. See, black folk had a family structure, which we don't have anymore. If you were out of eggs, you could go and borrow a dozen eggs and nothing would be said. You go borrow some eggs now, and I'll be in New York when you get up in court. And we don't network; we don't care for each other as blacks used

to do. We used to be family, and there's hardly family even in the black churches now. You got diversity—. One of the worst things we could have ever done in the black community was—. And I started it here in Charlotte to have two services, what we called early morning service. You divided the congregation. Those who come early don't know those who come at 11:00. And all of this makes for immorality.

Morals have to be taught, and the further you get away from morality, the more you move toward amorality. And see, when the child grows up amoral, then he has a family, get married, then all of his children. That's why I say the church, the school, and the family have got to come together at some point if we're going to deal with that. And that is the crux of the problem. Either you're moral or you're immoral. To be immoral is bad, but there's some hope for you. But my God, when you become an amoral person, that brings on the killings, and I think drugs play into that also.

I told a young man before, addiction—. See, black folk don't understand addiction, whether it's drugs or alcohol, which is the safest? People who are addicted—. It's interesting, and I don't know if you want to publish this or not. Some of my best friends in the Saint Paul area and the Belmont area were addicts, because they knew I cared. In fact, we had a halfway house over there at Saint Paul once, where we took in four addicts. And I wrote a program for addicts. I remember all of that. They had to have a job, and we gave them a time limit to stay in the house. They had to be clean, and they had to be in at a certain hour. The problem with them--. We got some fine facilities for addicts and fine programs. I've visited a lot of them, and they do a good job. But the problem is that when they return back to society, they go right back into the same community.

Here again, even if you're not addicted, to be in the flesh without God, in my opinion, is hell on wheels. Flesh is weak and wicked, and without any governance on it, you'll do anything or say anything. That's what's happening from the amoral point of view, and that's frightening. We're not addressing it. I'm not sure everybody sees it, you know, see that problem. We know we got problems, but we're not dealing with the root cause. We're cussing folk out telling them what they ought to do to straighten themselves out, beating kids over the head and putting them out of school, and they like that. Oh, they like to be put of school, because they go home, ain't nobody there. They go for that.

DW: Well, what would you say it would be, if it's the church and the school and home or family, and I don't want to put words in your mouth. I'm assuming you're saying that all three have fallen down in some point, which is causing this amorality. What would be the solution to—?

PD: Putting it back together? God, I wished I knew. I'd be richer than anyone. [Laughter] I wished I knew. The only thing I know, I keep saying it—. We just met—. We got a new superintendent, and he met with the black preachers Thursday. As he talked to us, one of the things he mentioned was he discovered that there was an internal divide. And you know crazy me, I asked him why. And of course he had two school board members there, and he said, "My bosses are here. I wouldn't dare to answer that in words." But I know the problem we got, there's a culture thing for moving into Charlotte from the north and trying to bring their morays and their culture from the South in that system. That brings on the problem. I wished I knew how to—.

There are signs and there's enough stuff in all of our communities to alleviate the

problems. For example, one of the best kept secrets in Charlotte is an organization called the Carolina something. Dr. Williams, who was a principal in public school, is the director. The aim of that program is to bring religion into the public schools, but it has to be on a volunteer basis. And it's legal. I've been asked to serve on that youth commission. That's the name of it, Carolina Youth Commission. I've been asked to serve on the board.

I went to the affair that was held at the last-built, most expensive hotel in Charlotte, sponsored by the white folk. The sad part about the whole situation was that—and that place was packed, the ballroom was packed—ninety-nine percent of the religious organizations and public schools are white, and the greatest need is black. One young lady said her entire family are atheists and forbid her to talk about religion. The only way she could have some sense of direction was to join this organization in the school. They can meet during their lunch hour, they can meet after school, all that is legitimate. And I just mention that because the tools that are needed are there.

Here's another example. Now things are so crazy. Now I have a program here, I think we've got about thirty-six kids. And they come here every morning at about 6:00. We give them free lunch. Our teachers are public school teachers for the most part. They go on a field trip, they do fun things, they got all kinds of educational tools back there. The point I'm making is that that community over there got kids hanging out the window, but I can't bring them here. One, the parents can't afford to bring them, and we cut it down to only sixty dollars a week. Can you believe, a kid from 7:00 in the morning till 5:00 in the evening, with this kind of atmosphere, breakfast, lunch, and all for sixty dollars a week? My grandkids are in a white school, and they're paying twice that much,

I think it's almost--

The point is that my facility here is not licensed, and therefore if it were, and I hope to get there, then Social Service would pay for those kids to come here. But since I'm not licensed, I just have to look at them, and there's nothing I can do about that particular point. Churches are beginning to do some things along that line. I hope they spare my program. For example, teachers have several work days here in Charlotte in the school year. That means when the teachers have work days, kids don't go to school. The parents don't have any place to put them, so I'm hoping to start a program along that particular line and maybe do some after-school things also. But if I knew how to bridge that gap, I'd be rich. I keep talking about it everywhere I go, and hopefully it might catch on. I understand Friendship is planning to open a high school that's right down the road. That is really the First Baptist of Charlotte.

DW: OK. That's the name, First Baptist, but it changed—.

PD: No, no, no, no. I'm just picking at them. We do have a First Baptist; it's right down the street. But you've got more professionals at Friendship, and it's a larger congregation. You know how First Baptist folk are. They are the elite. They are the Sadducees of Christianity. [Laughter] They think they know everything, and that means this and such. They don't do this and they don't do that if you're a member of First Baptist. We get down. The preacher lectures; they do all that kind of stuff. OK, any questions or comments? I done talked bad now; I done got it out of my system.

DW: You were talking about the membership at Saint Paul when you got there. It seems that a lot of Belmont residents were members. Do you know if that's the same today, or if more people outside of the community come to the church?

PD: Well, they did not constitute the majority. Before I left there—. See, one of my aims for churches is that everybody who is a Christian has a spiritual gift, and those spiritual gifts should permitted to exorcise themselves within the framework of the church. Each church is strategically located, and what it ought do is to canvass its community and find out what the problems are, and then seek to relate to those problems. We ain't got no business doing what the white folk are doing. Well, for example, I don't have any business over here doing what Saint Paul over on Allen Street is doing. We need to find out what our problems are in this community over there back here. We've done some of that, but we have to get out to do some leg work and talk to people, and find out what the problems are and relate.

Charlotte is a church-going city. When I came here in 1970, it was the second largest church-going city in America per hundred thousand. Ironically, we were number one in crime. Where I'm trying to go is that in this city, congregations are mixed. In fact, I had two deacons who lived in South Carolina, in Rock Hill, which is just down the road. But Saint Paul has members from all the environs, and I suspect all the metropolitan churches are the same. I know the ministries, though, and that's becoming another thing, good or bad. T. D. Jakes, you've heard of him. We have one here in Charlotte named--. Creflo Dollar, he's not here. I just happened to mention him. We got Victory Christian Center here. And all of these ministries came out of the traditional church, which means that the traditional church is in trouble.

Now, I don't know whether I want this in public. I'll put this public; I'll let you print this in publication. Let me try to figure out how I want to say it. Mammoth congregations suffer for the most part from the lack of being ministered to. You can't

have but one shepherd over a flock. I know Jesus is the only shepherd. I used to have to look in the casket to see if I knew the person who had expired because of the size of Saint Paul. Three or four thousand members, no way in the world for one man to know his sheep or for his sheep to know him.

They used to play a game on me, and I thought of a way to get back at them. I said, "What's my name?" And I'm not good at remembering. I remember faces, but not names, and they would get indignant. I would tell you this Sunday, "Now next Sunday, I'm going to come back and ask you, 'What's my name?'" And I got tired of it, so I said, "How long you been a member of this church?" "Oh, I've been here thirty years." I knew how large the church was, said, "You know Brother Billings?" Said, "No." I said, "Well, he been here thirty years, too. You don't know him. How you expect me to know everybody?" So everybody got off of me.

But that's my hang-up with some of the larger situations, and that to me makes for a breakdown in families within the church which is so desperately needed. Metamorphosis, Lord, in the black culture and in the church—. I don't know where we're going. I don't know what the bottom line is, but I've seen a lot of things. I've been at this fifty-seven years as a pastor. I've been all over South Carolina, and I've seen it all.

DW: I know I keep trying to go back to the seventies, and now I'll go back to the sixties just briefly. So the Civil Rights Movement was all the press, and I guess I'm just curious to find out what impact you felt the Civil Rights movement had on your life and—.

PD: Well, let me give you a little bit of my history. Let me take you back further.

When I finished eighth grade in the country, there were no public transportation for blacks. There were no high schools in the black community. I never needed a mentor. The Son was my mentor, because I grew up on a farm, fall off the north end of a southbound mule twenty some years. So I walked almost three miles every morning, caught a public bus, Trailways, fifty cents, got on it, rode seven, got off and walked one to the high school. That was my ninth grade.

Tenth grade, the white kid that lived next door to us could throw a rock. His daddy bought him a car, and he was going to New Bethel High, which was all white. He decided to let me ride, so my second year I rode with him. [Interruption] He didn't never take me to my school. He put me off right in town. I still had to walk that mile. New Bethel was about a mile out of the little town called Woodruff. New Bethel High School. Third year, they bought a bus for all the blacks in the community. Started out it was late every morning and would break down every other day. But I finally made it through high school.

Never wanted to be a preacher, so I went off to a trade school. I wanted to be a tailor and enrolled in a tailor program. Second year, I was drafted in the Korean conflict, stayed in the army three years. In the army the last year, I committed to becoming a preacher. My tour was up. I knew that I had to be trained if I was going to do the Lord's work. So I got out; I was discharged with an honorable discharge in the fifties. I went to college as a freshman when I should have been coming out as a senior.

Toward the latter part of my college education was when the Civil Rights Movement started. So I was in the midst of it in Columbia, South Carolina, Benedict College. I helped integrate the bus station. I was arrested. I'm ticklish; you can't go

under my arms. I told the man, "When you get ready to frisk me, you can't go under there." They threw about seven, eight of us in the car and arrested us. Of course in school and all, it was just a matter of time before we got out.

During that time, I also became pastor of the Saint Paul Baptist Church in Lexington, which is twelve miles out of Columbia. Luckily, I went to summer school, so I was able to get out of college in three years by going to summer school every summer. But now I'm either a senior or a student in the seminary, and I have a church in Lexington, which is Ku Klux Klan territory. This is when schools were just becoming integrated, and fighting was everywhere.

So I led about three hundred people from Saint Paul Baptist Church, Lexington, as a protest, in an effort to integrate the schools in Lexington. Scared as all outdoors, and when we got to the courthouse, we didn't plan to go in. We just was demonstrating. They had four big German shepherds out there on a leash, and we said our prayer and read out petition, and went back to the church. Ironically, two years ago, I was invited back to that same courthouse to be the guest speaker on a Martin Luther King celebration.

I grew up in the segregated society that it was a part of me. When I was in the army before I went to college, I was on my way from Petersburg, Virginia, on a Greyhound bus, sitting in the middle of the bus at night, and with a uniform on. The bus starts filling up with white folk, and the driver eventually asked me to move to the back. I guess you know I got up and moved. That was before anything had ever started, you know.

I had never been above the Mason-Dixon line, and I was in Washington. I had on a uniform, and it was raining, and I was looking for the colored waiting room in

Washington, DC. I'm going out, peeping in, and all, and I saw some black folk in there with white folk, but I thought they were just being uppity. I had been trained to stay in your place. And so it was raining, and I finally got up on the stand to get my boots shined. Anybody that going to get boots shined and it's raining already, just asked the boot black , "Where's the colored restroom?", who was insulted. Cursed me out, "There it is! Who you are? Where you from?" That's why I can understand addiction, I can understand people when you grew up a certain way, and it's ingrained in you and becomes a part of you, it's hard to get it out of your system.

But I made the transition in that fashion, because I was very much involved with the Civil Rights Movement in the sixties. I met with a lot of white folk. We had a lot of meetings. One night, we were meeting in a black church, and when we came out of the meeting, the white folk had spreaded tacks by the bushels in the driveway in effort to puncture our tires. I was even called by the F.B.I. to be cautious. I was the ring--, little black young pastor crazy leader and Ku Klux--. And you could almost walk through that town and feel the tension. That's how deep--. And we met with white folk and we argued. The schools finally integrated, but it was a rough go. It was a rough go.

DW: Well, what did you feel were the goals that came out of the Civil Rights Movement as you had in mind, and how did those goals shape your expectations of what you should do as a minister?

PD: My background, rural, a farmer, gave me to believe always, even as a boy—I guess it was something that the Lord instilled in me—that the church was, and is, the catalyst for change. And if the church as the body of Christ is about doing what it ought be doing, then it seeks to meet the total needs of the individual—spiritual, social,

mentally, you name it. And I think there's where we're falling short, so that's been my inspiration, and that's where I try to lead.

Saint Paul was a split church when I went there. It had four or five hundred members, but it grew into a mega-church. Not so much that I'm such a powerful preacher, but I had a young lady in that church who was a young Mahalia Jackson. Singing mellows the heart, and it draws people in this state, and crowds beget crowds. All you got to do is say, "Yeah, you have a church about this size," and somebody say you couldn't get in there. The next Sunday, they'd be lining up out there. It's just psychological, the way people are.

So I've always tried to move the church, and I think a great deal had to do with my background. I think as far as I'm concerned, that people would forget about color and just be themselves, and I think I've always felt this way. So I've really not had a great deal of enthusiasm for integration one way or the other. I think if you be who you are and are doing what you ought to do, color does not matter. I'm prejudiced, even as I sit and talk to you, because now I feel that white folk for the most part, first thing they try to do when they meet you is to size you up. And then they'll talk to you on the basis of where they think you are. If they feel you don't know anything, they'll talk down to you.

[Cut off the recorder]

It's intercultural, because I tell folk here, if you study the Bible, you have to look at culture, tradition, and all of these things play into. White folk are first name-based folk, and we can't do that in the black community. I can't let these folk call me Paul. See, that reduces me to their level, and they can't deal. I can't be Paul; I have to be their pastor. I am Paul, but if they call me Paul, they have in their own minds pulled me down

and not pulled themselves up to their color. White folk are good at that: John, Sam, Bill.

So when I was at Saint Paul in Lexington, we were the first black church I know of in that community, maybe the state, to have cushioned pews. I never will forget it, this fellow was that these pews came from Wilonca, Indiana. That's where they were made, and this white fellow brought them. When he was selling us the pitch, he was up before the congregation and calling me Paul. Boy, I turned about twenty shades blacker than I was, because that was an insult to me. My members knew it, so I said, "I'm going to get him." I've always been a little devil, mean, you know. I said, "Well, folk, Bill and I been knowing each other for a long time. That's why we on first-name basis." He turned red as a beet because we had just met each other. He got the word; he got the message. [Laughter] So that's been—.

My son said to me, if he ever had any children—I hoped he did, his marriage didn't work out—that he would not send his children to Carolina or a school like that. And I said, "Why?" We were proud of him. I told him if he got a scholarship, that I would buy him a new car. He had the Polk [scholarship] at Carolina, so he went there free. He wanted the Z28 Q-top, which almost killed him. I didn't know that's what—. But his point was that the culture was of such, and I'm sure this changed with the years, but those rich white parents would come in there with all those frat houses. He said, "We were just a statistic here, just a number. If I had any kids I would want them to be more of a part of the university."

What do you think about the Duke situation? I am a basketball freak for Carolina. Oh, God, I almost get sick when they lose, and I can't stand Duke.

DW: Oh, it's a good rivalry.

PD: I know Coach K.; he's good at what he does. But it's been interesting to hearing what the Duke situation is.

DW: Yeah, very.

PD: They keep ( ) and carrying on. Well, you can go too high, and I don't know whether this is true at Duke or not, but time and circumstances has a way of bringing you down. Okay.

DW: OK. Well, I wanted to go back to what you were talking about, some of the programs that you initiated, the Come as You Are, Start Where You Stop and the Feed the Needy and the Greedy type of programs, the Digital computer program. How exactly did all of these programs come about?

PD: Some of them came about because of what I had said earlier. [To someone else: "Come in."] Finding folk who had a spiritual gift. That's how we got into the Feed the Needy program, which was a grand success, because that was her spiritual gift. Now the computer program fizzled because I had two people in the church working for this company, and when we decided to get the computers, then I had to decide who was going to be the director of the center—the young lady, the young man. The young lady was very strong; the young man was kind of laid-back. To make a long story short, I chose the lady. And I never seen him since.

I'm going somewhere with this. That program never got off ground because that was not her ministry or her calling. She was interested in money and the glamour and the spotlight, and that will kill anything in the Lord's work. There's another young man in the church who was a deacon who had a computer company, and therefore since he had all that going, I asked him to take charge of the center, which he did. But it never got

going because that was not his ministry. He was good at the hardware, but he knew nothing about the software or programming.

Ministries have to be led by people who feel that they are—. What I look for in the church is somebody that will come to me and say, "Pastor, we ought to be doing so-and-so and so-and-so." "Oh, yeah? How do you know that?" "Well, it's been bothering me." "OK. I know the Lord has been worrying you, and that is your calling. So if you're concerned about it and you got the guts to come and talk to me, let's get together." It works every time.

We had a strong youth ministry at Saint Paul, and that's how it got started. Young lady kept bugging me about we ain't doing nothing for the young people. "What do you want to do? What do you want to do? Tell me." I'm "OK, the door is open. Are you willing to do it?" "Oh, well, I, yeah." "Well, the Lord put it on your heart, so you must have some expertise." So that's how ministries, that's how we got them going at Saint Paul. All the ones that was successful, usually were persons who came forward and said to me that the Lord had been bothering them or they saw this need.

We are trying to get a Feed the Needy program here. The first young lady that stuck her head in the door to fix my breakfast has come to me and wants to start a Feed the Needy program. She's a good cook and she loves it, and so we're in the process. That's how you get things started. The need, and then finding somebody who will—. I don't care what the need is. If you don't have somebody who's willing to give it all they got, it ain't going anywhere. That's how ministries are birthed, and that's how they become successful.

DW: OK. You were talking before about how these ministries started out, like

the Feed the Needy, it was a caterer that started out the program. And then you had said about how Saint Paul seemed to be divided--. Was your sense that some of these divisions were over the direction of the church focusing on the Belmont community?

PD: No. Belmont was lily white, especially—. I guess that's why you had three communities. As Piedmont Courts became predominantly black, whites took flight. The Saint Paul Church, the old building was a white congregation. Saint Paul had previously built a new church over there where the hotel is, over there on McDowell Street. Urban renewal tore all of that, and they had to find a new location. So they split over the location, basically. Then there's a church on Sugar Creek called Mayfield, large church that was initially the split. They got over there and couldn't get together, so they split again. To try to outdo each other, we got a Mayfield, and this is a First Mayfield, named after one of the former pastors of Saint Paul. But the split came about as a result of relocation.

See, when I built over there, there were those who wanted us to get out of that community because they wanted to be big shots. That was about a five million dollar situation over there, and we wanted to be in the limelight. But my thing is the church ought to be located where the needs are, and if there ever were any needs in this community, they were over there in the Belmont area. Still are. Go down to any corner, you see those fellows standing on the corner and they're selling drugs. Prostitutes, male and female.

When I was pastor, a lady flagged me down, ugly as homemade sin, and said, "Let me ride." It was in the middle of the day, and I said, "You know who I am?" Said, "I don't care who you are. You got a cool car. I want a ride." And I picked at her and

said, "I'm the pastor of this church here." And she said, "I don't give a damn. I still want a ride." [Laughter] So everything that you could ever think of in terms of immorality and amorality is in that community, and that's where the church ought to be if it's concerned about people. I'll baptize alcoholics, winos, and some of them we straighten out. As I say it now, they found out that I'm over here now, and they making a beeline back over here, still lying you know.

DW: I wanted to ask you, since you've served on the town commission for housing, what your feelings are about the Charlotte Housing Authority and the mayor, and whether they have the same goals as, being a minister at Saint Paul, you felt was a goal for the community.

PD: How is the—. I don't know this. I have a feeling that Hugh McColl, who was the backbone of Nations Bank—. Is it Nations Bank now? What is it? I always get—.

DW: Bank of America, but I think it was Nations Bank.

PD: Yeah, well it was. I know it was. Bank of America now. And he has always been philanthropic, so that I think he gave Saint Paul through his friends around four hundred thousand dollars to erect their gym. They call the Family Life Center. I built that gym basically for that community. I intended to have midnight basketball and run the wine out of them and do everything else. But of course I'm not pastor anymore. But I said all that to say that I feel, and I don't know this, I do know that he's been a philanthropist, and I think he's had a great deal to do with the housing situation in this city.

But the only thing that I can know is to look at the structure, and I think we got

some of the finest structures. If you look downtown in that area, they got some of the nicest houses. These places over here look like first class hotels. I told somebody I believe I need to get poor and get me one of these over here so I can move in. Physically, I think the city has it, and I would hope a part of that has been because of the powers that be and because of certainly some of the black elected officials who hopefully will be moving in the right direction.

Internally, as far as who is living there and what has been done, I think this is a good program here, where you've got five years to get your act together, then you've got to go. You've got to be on your own. The white folk always accuse us of aiding and abetting poverty, and I think we do do that. I think we have done that to some extent, because some of these folk on welfare feel like they got a right to be on welfare and they talking about my check. And it's your tax dollars, my tax dollars. And certainly my tax dollars're perpetuating, and I don't think we want to sink into that kind of mentality. You've got a brain, you can make it. This is my thinking.

DW: Well, could you just talk for a moment about a typical day or typical time when you tried to enlist the community into certain programs and the challenges and benefits that came from tha?. So for example, with the childcare program that you were speaking of before, what was that like trying to recruit people and having to go door to door?

PD: People who have needs will respond if they feel that the offers are legitimate. Most of the problems that we have as churches and congregations with respect to doing things for people are internal. The so-called powers that be, that's where my fight was. See, I had to eventually give up that high school program because number one, they beat

me over the head every day, [they're] tearing apart our church and blah blah blah. That's the powers that be and the leaders, and they did. Kids were coming in and they'd be lying at the door, and you had to step over them to get to church. But I understood that kind of mentality.

But churches are not doing what they ought to be doing because either the leader is not geared up in that direction, or he's having internal problems. I had to curse some folk out here just the other night, because I got some folk around here who want to run the church—trustees, you know. He's talking about first thing he went out and did was go down and bring the city in here to inspect the kitchen. Well, I had the kitchen inspected. All this back here including this office relatively new. All this was a shell when I came. The church not only split, but they went bankrupt. They didn't have any money, and owed everybody in town. But my point is, I said number one, you ain't the administrator. I'm the administrator. And number two, my program is not licensed; therefore, the city had no business coming in here. If I were licensed, then they could tell us how to run the program, how many doors I need to have and all of that. But we're not licensed. And I prepared--.

I said, "Well, we feed the folk." He talking about suppose the kids get food poisoning. I said, "Well, we don't feed them." "Suppose the congregation get food poisoning". "I got insurance to cover that." But usually, it's an internal fight and internal problems. Either the church is not meeting the needs of the community because they don't understand what the church ought to be doing. For most of us, it's a feel-good get-together Sunday morning, go to hell the rest of the week and forget about it, that kind of thing.

DW: Did you see any way to get around these powers that be?

PD: Um-hmm. Sure. As the pastor, you know more than one way to skin a cat. If you won't let me start at the head, I'll start at the tail. I am committed, commitment, determination, and know where you're going. I remember I sat for a number of years to study Saint Paul, and I presented to the powers that be a fifteen year program, which was unheard of in the Baptist church. They wouldn't even let me present it. So I just put it in the drawer and therefore everything I could implement became a reality.

I had some things envisioned for Saint Paul never came to fruition because of time. I wanted that church to have a first class filling station. I was looking at employment, and they're talking they're working, but filling stations change their texture all along. You got to pump your own gas now and take your own water, and that was way back in the seventies when were doing—. Filling stations everywhere. You pull up at the filling station, you didn't pump your gas. Somebody check your pressure, how much gas you want, check your tires and everything, and did all the small mechanical work. I envisioned the church having that as a ministry.

I envisioned Saint Paul having a first-class food store like an A&P or a Winn Dixie. I ain't talking about no cheap stuff. I'm talking about first class, to employ people. Then we had enough members in Saint Paul where we could have a discount. People could buy food cheaply, cheap as they could, and of course, places like Saint Paul now—. At one point, most of the folk went over there. We didn't have cars; they didn't have nowhere to buy food. They had to go to these little quick shops where the food is five times higher. Nearest A&P was five or six miles away, because they left them in the community.

My third aim was to open a first-class restaurant. Those were my dreams, but things shifted, and as I said, culture changes. If I had stayed there, and if times had not changed, all of that would have come to pass. It was just because of the change of time, as opposed to the internal conflict.

DW: Let's see, how do I want to say this--. What impact do you feel that Saint Paul had on the community?

PD: I would hope and pray that it had a positive impact which is unique and unusual, because all churches—. See, the majority of the members of Saint Paul didn't live in the community. I was concerned about the fact that the folk who did live in the community did see us as an elite bunch of folk who drove our big cars and on Sunday morning came dressed to kill, and did our thing, and left and didn't see us no more until next Sunday. That was my concern, and that's why I was so ministry-minded to say to the community, "If you got a need, we're here." I walked the streets, and I was visible.

And of course, Saint Paul was on the air, live, during all of my—. Folk had never seen me or heard me preach, I meet folk every day now who are meeting me for the first time. It's interesting, everybody who had never seen and heard me on the radio through the years saw me as a short man weighing three hundred pounds, fat and bald-headed. Well, I'm old and bald now, but I was never short. But that's the kind of image—. I would hope Saint Paul's people had a good image in the Belmont community, because we were there. We were visible, and we tried out best to let the people know.

At one point in time, this girl—. See, one program I did not mention was an after-school program where we had fifty kids out of that community, free. They come to the church directly out of school. Some were dropped off by their buses. Some we had—.

Three schools, I think, we picked them up. We gave them a snack when they got there. They had a brief devotion, and then we got into their homework. We checked with the teachers to find out what their deficiencies were. That's what we worked on. When the parents came to pick them up, or if we had to take them home, their homework was completed when they left the church. They had relaxed. They knew they were in a religious environment, they knew we were concerned about them, and that was free for the kids in that community.

DW: When you talk about the community, are you referring to Belmont, or Belmont and Piedmont Courts?

PD: Well, Belmont mostly is a name. Piedmont Courts really is the name, because as I said, there's three geographical conditions. Saint Paul really was never in Piedmont Courts there, and Belmont—. It's called Belmont because of the name of that street there. That's Belmont. But you go down four or five blocks, and then there's Cornelius Park. And then you go up Parkwood on up there, and that's an entirely different community. Sometimes I may use those interchangeably, but really, when I talk about Belmont, as far as Saint Paul is concerned, I'm talking about that whole environ as far as we could stretch. We saw that as our community.

DW: Did you ever—?

PD: The main impact I had on Belmont Court was through our members, because I've already told you that the white Presbyterian church right there had everything anybody could ever want for a community or for the kids. In fact, that little church had a full-time Christian education director who was black to work with basically Piedmont Courts. And that church which was predominantly white was sponsored by the Vatican.

You know, we have a little Vatican in Charlotte. That's Covenant Presbyterian on Morehead. When we say Vatican, that means rich, rich, rich.

Now if I could wave a magic wand with respect to what Saint Paul tried to do, then you would have an ideal community in that area. We had all the pieces. We were there. We were concerned, and that's why the church is still located in that community, because we're committed to meeting the needs of people.

DW: Could you speak just a little bit more about this ideal community and what it would look like ideally. Is it just that people are committed to the community?

PD: Well, I guess you would never have a utopia, because we're all in the flesh, and the flesh is wicked. What I would hope to see is a church—. I asked these folk not too long ago, if this church were burned to the ground, not to be rebuilt, would it make a difference in this community because it was here? I guess that's the best answer that I can give you. Whatever the needs are, the church ought to try to meet those needs. I think that's Jesus did. That's why he fed folk; that's why he healed folk. The only way we're going to do that is to get out there and find out what they are. Folk that we need are not coming to us, and we're not willing to go to them.

I think Jesus is quite dissatisfied with the so-called traditional church, because we're not doing what he told us to do. He told us to go into Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the utmost parts of the world and make disciples. Now let me break that down for you. Jerusalem is your own house. That's your own family. Most difficult place in all the world to make folk do right is in your own house with the door locked. And you can't stay there forever. Sometime other folk can do more with your family than you can. Jerusalem.

Judea is your community. Whatever the needs are in that community, there's a church there that ought to be trying to meet those community needs and get out there and find out where they are. Talk to the people, invite them. Now, Samaria is a red light district. I tell folk, if you're going to Samaria, you ought to carry somebody with you, because they might accuse you--. [Laughter] That's the whiskey houses and pornographic shops and all of those places. Usually in the community, they're the people—. We can't be holier than thou. That's turning folk off.

And yet most parts of the world are like Shaw University, Benedict College, church-related schools, like most parts of the world. Is it Africa where our brothers and sisters are suffering, we send money there. And Katrina can be the utmost part of the world, and Rita. Look like Bush going to make the whole world like the utmost parts of the world, all this mess he's got going on in the world, I tell you. So that's what the church ought to be about. See, white and black, we spend big major bucks in buildings. We ain't doing nothing for the lives of people. The Lord didn't organize the church to give preachers big salaries and some big cars and ride fine. I got no problem with that, but that ought to be secondary.

DW: Do you feel that the politicians, either national or local, have been responsive to the needs of people?

PD: There are some good ones and some bad ones. Yeah, some good and some bad.

DW: I was reading some articles about Charlotte. Seems like every time I see something in the *Charlotte Observer*, they're talking about a crisis of affordable housing for people in the area. You were talking about the community across the street. Which is

Oaklawn?

PD: Um-hmm.

DW: I guess what I'm interested in hearing your opinion on is this Hope Six initiative, which is doing all of the revitalization in places like Oaklawn or First Ward or what's going on now in Belmont. What do you see as the assets or the dangers of this initiative or other revitalization?

PD: Well, Jesus said you'll always have the poor with you, so I think there will always be a need to help those who have fallen through the cracks, who are not able to help themselves. However, I think the danger is that allowing people who could help themselves to become complacent. And I don't know whether there's anything in place to draw the line or make the distinction between the haves and the have-nots. I just heard on the radio where they're going to tax—. I don't know whether it's the Housing Authority, I don't know whether it's nationwide or if just in Washington, going to tax the poor folk, because the Housing Authority has a budget crunch. This is what they're going to do. They're going to tax the poor folk who have cars and televisions and some other things. Now, folk will come here for a handout. They can't pay their rent. And yet they got a cell phone; they drove up here in a car. They got three TVs in the house.

So we have to be careful, and I think it's sinful to aid and abet. If I have any concern about public housing, it's that it would be a situation of aiding. I was in New York—I haven't been in New York but two or three times in my life—but I was just amazed. I guess this was in Brooklyn, when I saw all these high rises and it was in July, and I said, "My God, look at the tax dollars." Folk hanging out the window, and this was up in the day. It look like some of them ought to be working somewhere. That's my

concern.

But here in the city, all of the old dilapidated structures are being razzed, and new stuff is going up. I just hope there is some motivation on the part of those individuals who would live—. And I'm not talking about senior citizens. I'm talking about young, energetic people. We've lost the pride, and there were blacks who were poor and always be poor, but they had pride. Certain things we just didn't stoop to, handouts. We made it on whatever we had. I don't know how we'll get back to it, but I just see that there is a strong dichotomy in leading people in the wrong direction.

That's pretty strong coming from a black person, but I feel like that they're stronger. We can help ourselves. I think we can do more than we're doing as blacks who are dependent upon public assistance. If you're a man, don't be coming to me asking. And I can feel sometime—. I drive through the street, and they tell me some of these folk standing on the corner talk about they will work for a meal or something, and they said these folks got bank accounts. I'd rather err on the side of doing good than to sit in judgment, but I think if you look, religion always have that feel, whether it's legit or not.

I've got no problem—. I will give you the shirt off my back, literally, if you need it, but for God's sake, don't try to take my stuff. And for God's sake, don't try to use me. I'm too old. Young folk come around and a fellow in here the other day, he knew me. I baptized him and all of that. I know he was addicted when he walked in the door. He going to con me. Come on, man. He wanted me to help him. Just be straight up with me, and I'm going to do what I can. But I'm going to let you know, don't pull no fast one of me. So I told him where to go and what to do.

We're going to always have that crowd, and we need to be there for them. I'm

not talking about those who are sick, and I'm not talking about those who are afflicted or addicted and all of that. I understand that part. I'm talking about these folk who done sat down on themselves and who need to get up off the street and do nothing, and do something for themselves and for their children. I can go with a young lady making a mistake one time and getting pregnant. Two or three times, no. All this stuff out there, there's a dead cat on the line somewhere. You done lost something. Yep.

DW: Well, I guess my final question is—. We were talking about, before the tape actually started, all of the changes that are going on in Belmont, and you said they've been going on for a few years now. I have a two part question. How do you feel about those changes? And the other question I have is about this mixed income/multi-racial community that the Housing Authority is hoping will happen with places like Piedmont Courts that are being revitalized. What's your take on that as well?

PD: I'm not sure I understand the last part.

DW: Oh, well, there's been a trend now for public housing to kind of be done away with and now move to multiple income—.

PD: Like your situation over here. Well, I think that's good because it is making people responsible. Well, it subsidize what I just said all along. I think we got people in public housing who ought not be there and who don't have to be there. I think they choose to be there, and if they make that choice, then they something wrong somewhere. A man who's a man, he ought to fill his manhood. If he's a man, he ought not be wanting a handout. If he wants a handout, there's something wrong with him. He lost his manhood somewhere. There's just something about it, and he ought to take care of his family.

I just feel with that kind of mentality that a whole lot of the problems that we got—. Because if there ain't but one way to go, you're either going up or going down. If you think standing still, that means you're going down. These people who are not self-sufficient and claim they can't find no jobs, to me they just going down. They've found themselves complacent, so I would say more power to the cities and the government who are trying to move, because I think for too long now we've aided and abetted. I know some of these folk feel like they got a right not to hit a lick at a black snake, but depending upon welfare to feed themselves and their children. They ought to be getting their tails off.

Part of that, as I said to you earlier, when we were feeding the needy and greedy, sometimes we'd feed three hundred folk. The first of the month, you'd hardly see anybody. You know why? They done got their paycheck. They going to live it up on wine and booze and whatever else they can get. They got that so important welfare check come in. And we didn't see them. They'd eat good for a couple of days off their own stuff, bologna and sardines.

DW: What's your take about what's going on in Belmont now with the changes that are taking place?

PD: I don't really know since I'm not over there. You might want to talk to Pastor Moss if you can catch him and find out. I don't even know what the plans are. All I know is—. I used to go over there and get my retirement check from the church, but now they deposit it out of an account. I'm called back occasionally to do a funeral. In fact, I'm doing one over there Monday. You know how some of the older members are; they want Pastor Drummond to come back. But I really don't know what's going on.

I'm pleasantly surprised to see them because those are some of the older buildings, but we got another housing place out here on South Boulevard that really worse than them, because those were brick. These are—. Then you got some right down there on Oaklawn. Now there's a new thing going on. I don't know how that'll relate to this. We got ready to do our youth revival, we decided to go up to the community and put out flyers and invite folk. You're not familiar with Charlotte, are you?

DW: Not *too* familiar.

PD: Well, anyway, when you go there, if you turn left from there all the way down, get down to a certain section, there's a whole housing authority. They've upgraded it, but my point is, is when we got in there, and I didn't know that, they are all Hispanics. That's a new thing. I can understand, and this is off the record; you need to really cut this one off, back on. I don't want that for publication. [Recorder turned off and then back on] But that was interesting. I didn't know that, in particular this whole housing unit down in that section. They're right down where they stay.

[Motion to cut off the recorder]

My wife's mother's a hundred, and she lives in Spartanburg. My wife is a nervous wreck. She got no car. She claim she can't drive that far, so sometime I'll drive her down there and come back on the bus. Last time I got on the bus, that bus was packed full of Hispanics. It was 10:00 at night and folk trying to sleep, and they were talking Spanish. I wanted to say, "Shut up in here!" [Laughter] That's life, but that's housing.

I imagine we're going to see a shift, because they are coming in this city--. Like

[Interstate] 40 going north. And they're bringing their problems with them. Almost daily now we hear of some killing or incident, and usually it's Hispanic. So I guess what goes around comes around. It's going to be interesting, because the statistics—. That's not the word I want to use, but the *demographics* are that we are no longer going to have an all-lily-white population across the world. Now it going to be colored folk. That's going to be interesting.

DW: OK.

PD: Leave that up there on the wall and unhook me here, and let me go to the little boy's room.

END OF TRANSCRIPT

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