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Sister Audrey Koch interview, 06 November 2003

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Patricia Haller
Tremont Oral History Project
Interview: Sister Audrey Koch
St. Colman's Church Office – 2007 West 65th
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Categories: Sisters of St. Joseph, Social Services of St. Augustine's on West 14th Street, Catholic Social Justice Theory, Catholic Diocese of Cleveland's Church in the City Program, St. Noel's of Willoughby, West Side Catholic Center, Providence House, Care Alliance, President George W. Bush's visit to St. Augustine's Hunger Center, Religious Art of Kimberly Brady

Patricia Haller: Good morning today is Thursday, November 6, 2003. My name is Patricia Ann Haller. I am with Cleveland State University Tremont Oral History Project. Today, I'm interviewing Sister Koch who formerly served at St. Augustine's Church in the Tremont neighborhood in Cleveland, Ohio. Please state your name and the religious order that you belong to.

Sister Audrey Koch: I am Sister Audrey Koch and I belong to the Sisters of St. Joseph who are located on 3430 Rocky River Drive.

PH: Can you tell us something about your career as a nun?

SAK: Ah, I joined the Order of Sisters of St. Joseph in 1954. I started my teaching career at St. Ignatius Parish on West Boulevard in 1957. After I had attended St. John's College and have a degree in education, elementary education, and a degree in administration of elementary schools.

PH: When did you come to St. Augustine's, how long were you there?

SAK: After teaching at St. Ignatius Elementary School, on 79th and Euclid, and St. Thomas on Ansel Road, and St. John's in Lorain, Ohio, and then St. Colman's School at 65th and Madison in Cleveland, Ohio. And ah, I taught at St. Joseph Academy uh on Rocky River Drive. And then I came to St. Augustine's parish in 1991, and I stayed there for twelve years, and I am now stationed at St. Colman's parish.

PH: What was your first impression of St. Augustine's?

SAK: It was a very welcoming community and very much connected with the neighborhood not just with the church members.

PH: How would you describe the Tremont community such as in social and economic and political terms?

SAK: The Tremont area is ah neighborhood filled with many different nationalities of people and many of them are the working class and some are what I call the working poor

and then there were down on the what the 7th Street, the projects, many people out of work and in great need of help.

PH: What makes Tremont a special and enjoyable neighborhood?

SAK: I think the location is a self contained area and then there was park, Lincoln Park, which was right across the street from St. Augustine Church and that park gathered a lot of the people from the neighborhood from the little one's to the older ones, the dog walkers and people cutting through going to the different restaurants and other areas in the neighborhood.

PH: How would you describe the church and its location?

SAK: The church is a very small a building. It was originally, ah, a great big Irish community of people who were the working people in the neighborhood and in the Flats. And then it ah has grown because it became a hunger center for many people in the neighborhood and those traveling across the bridge for um a food. Ah we, we, we then gathered many other people who came from outside to help us with the volunteering work of serving the food for the people in the neighborhood.

PH: How did St. Augustine help the immigrant when they came from Europe?

SAK: Well, it was ah a parish church, but it was also a school. So the education was a primary, a focus for the parish at that time. And also, helping the people with everything they needed from clothing to food, and payment of the, ah bills that families occurred. So the church was ah, very friendly, ah group of the staff itself would reach out to all the people that were in need. And so the people who came from any of the ethnic European areas ah at the beginning many of them would come and be a part of the ah community of St. Augustine church who came from any of the ethnic European areas a in at the beginning many of them would come and be a part of the ah community of St. Augustine church.

PH: Did the staff of St. Augustine's help the new immigrants to find jobs?

SAK: That was a very big part because as you know ah jobs are the stabilizing unit that helps the families to grow. The jobs are what gives them their stability, their housing, their clothing, their food, the payment of doctor bills. So yes, ah jobs was a very big part of that and the staff at St. Augustine's used any of the connections that they had with the union's or other people that would help to get them ah established as they were trying to form their families, and their social connections in the area.

PH: St. Augustine had a grade school at one time. What was that like?

SAK: The school was wonderful. It started right in the area there and the mother house of the Sisters of St. Joseph were right down the street on Starkweather so the school was staffed by the very best educated woman who were there right in the neighborhood and their convent was very close so a lot of extra help tutoring for the children for the parents a lot of that could be done the school was excellent.

PH: Can you explain Catholic Social Justice Theory? What is it based on?

SAK: It's a gospel based information that is used throughout the whole Catholic Diocese, not just here in Cleveland, but in the whole United State of America and, and in Europe. Also, it's where you look at the people and say, 'do on to others as you have them do on to you.' And the whole um social justice theory is to reach out and help those who are in most need, especially having a preferential assistance to the poor and the working poor and their families.

PH: Who were the main proponents or examples of this Catholic Social Justice Theory around the country and in Cleveland?

SAK: Well it actually came from the people and in Cleveland, we have a great social justice in contingency or unit or office down at the diocesan office where Bishop Pilla and all the staff work ah Len Calabrese is one of the direction directors of these programs and they have many people who reach out to all the parishes and anyone who will partner with them to um have the best for the people who are in the most great need.

PH: What special groups of people does St. Augustine's service? How long have the support program, programs for each group existed?

SAK: Well, St. Augustine's started with a, a parish like all parishes and as people moved on and are moved up, ah the parish became small. Sister Corita and Father Joseph McNulty who are there at this present time were very much at part of the Diocesan Office of Catholic Charities for disabilities so when they were stationed there at St. Augustine's, ah the priest before them was in charge of the deaf. Father Wilson and the deaf program was then um, placed at St. Augustine's Church. The deaf and hard of hearing, they took over the school building room especially in the basement. There's a special office and program for the ah deaf and the hard of hearing and their program is well established, and that's been. I think they celebrated a fifty year anniversary of their program just a few years ago. And Sister Corita Ambro and Father Joseph McNulty are the directors of that program. And um they, the blind folks were meeting downtown at the cathedral and Bishop Pills had asked could they become a part of the programs at St. Augustine's. So the blind ah, Catholic blind community, had been meeting for years and then they put their program down at St. Augustine's parish because the, ah members of the church were smaller. And so there was room now ah for another community to form there; the school had closed back in the sixties. So the school building was perfect for them to establish their programs. So Sister Corita and Father Joseph McNulty became the directors of the blind community, but they had many other people on the staff that worked with them. Peggy Driscoll is one of the young women who within I think four years has been working with that program and they are very self

sufficient group. The blind community are wonderful people who really established a lot of help for other people.

PH: What services does St. Augustine offer for people who are hungry?

SAK: The hunger program started about maybe 25 years ago, and it started by the people of the parish. It started as a soup and sandwich, and it was gathering elderly in the neighborhood. Many of them were very lonely, and ah they needed a gathering place. So that's how it started with a lunch for the elderly in the neighborhood and the people from the parish and people from the neighborhood would help put these meals together. And as things progressed and there became more and more need of other people in the neighborhood family folks ah, mothers with children who are in great need of good nutritious food. They started a morning prayer program for the breakfast. Many of the kids would come for breakfast, and then go to school. And many of the people who worked in the neighborhood would come for breakfast and then go to work. Then um I forgot when maybe about ten, twelve years when project heat, um it was for the homeless people. Heat project, heat started downtown. Many of the folks started hearing about the good breakfast and lunch that was being served at St. Augustine's folks about the good food that was being served no charge. So many of the folks from the downtown area and other shelters start coming over for breakfast and lunch. Then the um program just kept growing to become a couple of hundred, maybe three hundred, and then four hundred people by the end of the month as their money would run out or what every other subsidy they were getting. And for the holidays, Christmas, Thanksgiving, Easter, and ah Labor Day, any of those holidays many of these folks had no where else to really gather and enjoy a holiday meal. So Sister Corita and Father Joe agree that this was needed. So many other volunteers came and they would – Father Joe and Sister Corita would go on the radio stations or television stations or the Plain Dealer, and let it be known that we needed volunteers to help with these meals. Volunteers came by the hundreds to come. They needed a place to ah. They needed a place to celebrate a holiday. Many of them were from families where there was a death in the family or a divorce in the family and they needed to be somewhere. And these holidays for their own good spiritual and good health. So we then had hundreds of volunteers. So then we could also deliver meals to those who were shut in. So then the delivery of meals went in to the thousands, just to get food to the people in our neighborhood, and anyone who would call in. We had volunteers who would track where these people lived, and put a map with each order. And we got them out to the folks. Plus, we also ah reached out to group homes ah that had people either with mental illness who were in recovery or what every ah the home was. And we would deliver extra meals on that day to give them a little boost and a little celebration so the hunger center was phenomenal.

PH: What services have been provided to the women in the Tremont community from St. Augustine's. Has St. Augustine provided any housing or special care?

SAK: For the women that's one our, ah up most needs right now. And Sister Corita and Father Joe has done everything they could to either have housing for the women and their children who are in shelters at this point that are not in good condition, and they have tried all that they could for housing. If they know of any apartments in our neighborhood,

that um are affordable, Father Joe and Sister Corita makes these apartments available for any women or the fellas to um that are in need of housing. But, we don't have enough housing for the women. And Sister Corita and Father Joe see them at the hunger center. They know they need more housing and if there was any way to do it they would, they would.

PH: What services have been provided to the children in the St. Augustine area? Has there been day care or a Head Start program affiliated with the church?

SAK: Well right across the street is Merrick House, and Merrick House, and um there's one other church down the street. I forget the name. Pilgrim Church, they have the day care and the Head Starts. So we partner with them and make sure that the children in the neighborhood have good safe care in the summer time. We do this at St. Augustine's. Ah, it's called Rainbow Camp. The Rainbow Camp invites all the children of the neighborhood and any other children who are, with are blind or deaf or any other physical handicap. Because we also work with our Lady of Angeles St. Joseph Center which is for children ah with learning disabilities, and that program is just one block from us so we partner with all of them. And in the summer time have a fabulous, fabulous, I can't -- you'd have to see it. It's called the Rainbow Camp, and we use the park. We have the pool across in the neighborhood are Lincoln Park. So we use that pool and all um the people, the volunteers, and the paid staff who do a wonderful job with those children. And the children then mix with other children with disabilities and they learn from the children how life is, and how they are. So, it's ah program for the children. It's just outstanding.

PH: What programs does St. Augustine offer to teenagers? Do you have anything to address the issue of juvenile delinquency?

SAK: Yes, we work with all ages, and the teenagers are very much welcomed at the Hunger Center in the church and for all the activities we have many social activities, picnics and, during the year many dinners and the teenagers are all a part of either serving, serving some of the meals by the way or ah are part of receiving help from us. Sister Corita and Father Joe do much to help the teens to keep them in school. They the, we have many public schools in the area and they will do everything to help to be sure they have the clothing, the food. And if they want to be in a Catholic School, they help with the tuition. The parish itself, St. Augustine's parish raises money and has fund raisers for tuition to help the children be in the best possible education development and growth for them. And there are many um schools, um there's Metro Catholic and urban community for the elementary. And many of those ah students get help from St. Augustine's church and um they had a sports program. And I don't know how it's going this year. I because, I am not there, but the teenagers are always there. A part of the religion classes -- Father Joe does a very special confirmation class with the teens and we have a social worker Tracy Gretick. So any young person who is in need of extra counseling or extra help, Tracy spends many hours with those teens so we're really blessed with the staff that's there that work with them and then there's the also the program that's call Seeds of Literacy. The Sisters of St. Joseph are a the sponsors and it's held right there at St. Augustine's Church. And Bob Duda is one of the young staff persons and many volunteer people who work the that program so that the young people can get all

help they need with their educational needs, if it's tutoring or it's GED's or what it is they need to help develop and enrich their own lives.

PH: What services does St. Augustine's offer to people who are unemployed? Does St. Augustine have a job training program?

SAK: Yes, we do. Sister Corita has a very special program. Her brother, Bob and other staff members work on. They, anyone who comes into the Hunger Center will see them. They really are trained on the job, taking care of the food, serving the foods packing. The foods doing all the service that's needed for food service right there at the, ah Hunger Center. When we have special fund raisers, these young people and some of them a little older are trained how to prepare the food, serve the food, be there with the people who come, to really talk to the people um for special um occasion for the blind of the deaf or parish celebrations. It's the Hunger Center staff that Sister Corita has trained and all those who work with them. Jack McMarlin and the other um people who are on the staff there. So the job training many of them who have received need training. There are now out ah of the area in, in job that are paying and many of these folks come back just for the fun of it to come back to see where they started. So we are very blessed with ah Sister Corita's program.

PH: So, Sister Corita's program has successfully placed people in the food service industry. Any other industries?

SAK: mm, huh

PH: Any other industries?

SAK: mm, huh. Yes, some of the other ones are in regular factory jobs and also are ah, with um the – I, I forgot the name of it in Lakewood. One of the um places in Lakewood that has a – I think it's Spitzer, but I'm not sure about that. Um, they ah have hired some of the young people who worked in our hunger center, because they saw they were reliable and very personable. And those are the kinds of people they are looking for -- a reliable, personable with a good attitude.

PH: What services does St. Augustine offer to people who are disabled?

SAK: Ah, that's their whole work. The disability people who come to St. Augustine's are so much a part of *every* thing of the parish. The ah, the blind, the deaf, the hard of hearing the mentally ill. There's a big program call Links Clubhouse. And those folks come Monday, Tuesday and Thursday from 3 o'clock until 7. Because many of those folks are in great need of sociability and really need to be a part of a church group and a social group and just to give them some enrichment of their life. So they um, St. Augustine's Church opens their arms, and many of the people who volunteer are people who have a disability. They volunteer with the um, the phone work, they volunteer with the mailing. A lot of mailing work gets done, um to get the word out for the need for finances and Father Joe has um, dictates beautiful letters that really explain our work and maybe that's. You need to

get a hold of some of these letters, because it does explain the work of the church and a parish right there at St. Augustine's.

PH: What services does St. Augustine's offer to substance abusers? Any programs?

SAK: Yes, ah. St. Augustine's it's opened for AA on um groups on Monday and Tuesday as the big book celebration group. And it's *large*. I mean ah on Monday and Tuesday nights you can't find a place to park. The basement of the church, which is the Hunger Center, belongs to them and they receive all the need, that they, that they need to help each other because of us, our self help groups. Then the NA groups meet on Thursday and Friday. We are close to the Matt Talbot Program which is just a block away. And many of those folks from the Matt Talbot Program, which is for substance and alcohol abuse, they come over and they're a part of us. And um, it's a big ministry to them and Father Joe will do the Fifth Step and so will Father Ben Jimenez. They will do the fifth step with any of those folks who are in need of that service. And Sister Corita and the staff are very open to the folks who are in need. And the staff are very open to all the folks who are in recovery or when they relapse and start all over again. That's a part of the whole service and purpose of St. Augustine's area.

PH: What services does St. Augustine's offer to those who have HIV or AIDS? Where do they go?

SAK: Well, as you know those folks are every where. And they're there at the Hunger Center, and we do connect them with programs. There are many programs in the area that are um well not well known. But, we know where they are. And St. Augustine Manor has a whole program and a whole ward area just for folks who are in a more severe part of their a HIV's or AIDS. So um, Father Joe and Sister Corita, Tracy Gretick, the parish nurse, um are all very familiar with the programs in the area and we do connect the people with that. And the folks are always welcome and they know that at our church for church services on celebrations at the Hunger Center. And ah Sheila and Tony Gelzinis have worked there for years. And they are very comfortable with the folks and make all the connection that they can with them.

PH: What services does St. Augustine offer to the homeless? Where do they go?

SAK: Oh, that's a lot of people. The Hunger Center itself every morning and noon, if you would come, the first week, the second week, the third week, the fourth week. The crowd grows week by week. And they're there every day. The homeless folks come. And that's where we try to make as many connections with the a shelters, the that the people can become a part of. And with the agencies, ah we have many ah people from the mental health services who come by. Ah, Tracy Gretick, the social worker, ah Father Joe, Sister Corita, Sister Janet the office manager, the women in the front office, um Doris and Marie and they did. They know the connections to make for them. So, if the people are willing, they make all the connections possible. Metro Hospital is one of the places where the homeless folks have to go to for their medical and for their medications. And that's the hard part making the

connections so that they are taking care of their health care are taken care of. And we connect them to Care Alliance. Jim Schlecht, one of their outreachers, comes there often. And um where else would they go? Well, those are the, the main ones. Metro Hospital and Care Alliance, and the Catholic Center is down on [West] 30th and Lorain, not too far from us. So, the Catholic Center helps take care of ah their clothing needs. And um, we know other shelters that they are connect with – the women or the men.

PH: What services does St. Augustine offer to those who need mental help? I understand that there's a less, oh pardon me, Links West organization. What is that?

SAK: I think I a talked about that a little bit um, the Links West Cleveland, um the starts using the word Cleveland because people were coming from both sides of town, east, west, north and south. So um, the mental health unit became a part of St. Augustine's because the parents of folks who had mental illness, be they in their twenties, thirties, forties, fifties needed a social group. They had their medication, they had their doctors. But they were *lonely* people. So the Links West was being housed over on [West] 130th Street and they ran out of their housing there. So Father Joe and Sister Corita opened their arms and said, 'come on over to St. Augustine's and you can have the second floor of the school building'. Sister Corita had the second floor renovated with a kitchen, game room, a gathering room, and office space, and they even have, computer room just for the Links West Clubhouse. So, if the people are in recovery, and need something for a social outlet just for them to develop and to just enjoy life. And um, Mary Smith is one of the women who works with it. Sister Mariam has gotten even Tai Chi. Some of her friends who teach Tai Chi. So the programs are put together with the people from the clubhouse. What would they like? Sometimes they'd like to just go to a movie. So, they do that, the whole group. We have a van, and the van driver picks them up – Monday, Tuesday, Thursday. Some people drive themselves. Some people come by a public transportation. And we make sure they get home safely. So the um Links Program is wonderful for the, ah folks who are in great need of sociability and a place to belong and their invited to everything at the church. Whatever the church is doing, they're invited. If it's a liturgy, a mass, a picnic whatever we do they are a part of it.

PH: Can you explain what Tai Chi is?

SAK: (Laughter), It's a great way to relax and to learn to relax, and to get in touch with your body. Um, the teacher, come and see a lot of folks are practicing it now, just to learn to be aware of your body, to relax and to relax every part of your body. And it helps you to learn to focus.

PH: What, transportation services does St. Augustine provide to the people in the community?

SAK: Because we had um, the um, ah the group of the blind, the Catholic um the Catholic Church's blind community stationed there at St. Augustine's Church. We have vans that are used, especially for the blind. But then we found that other people needed them just

as much. So, the blind community is serviced with transportation all the time. And then the Links Clubhouse folks, and then people with any disability, or elderly people, all of them have the use of these vans. And for the young children, if there's any kind of field trip that we have, that the vans are used. And so we are very blessed. The transportation makes everything possible to bring and gather people.

PH: What is the Stephen Program? What's it all about?

SAK: The Stephen Ministry program is at many, many churches. People are trained, as a matter of fact, there's a training going on right now at Metro Hospital. The chaplains over there are giving the training. The people are reaching out to people. So the most important part of the Stephen Ministry is to be there for people in need -- if a person is elderly, if a person is disabled, if a person is home bound. Whatever, their need is a Stephen Ministry will make a connection with that person, and be there for them. And by phone, for shopping for whatever their need is, and it's based on again the gospel message of being for people as Jesus was for people.

PH: Where did the name Stephen come from? Does anybody know?

SAK: [chuckle] Someone knows. I'm sorry, I'm just not, I don't have that in front of me. I wasn't a part of that program. I just saw the good work that they were doing. But we could get it for you.

PH: What programs does St. Augustine have for women who have unplanned pregnancies?

SAK: Well, we're connected with the area ministries. And um, Metro Hospital has a *wonderful* program for these women. And that is one of the things our parish nurse, ah Karen, she's excellent. This is one of the things, that she, that this is her area. And she works with the folks. And one of the things from Metro Hospital is there. Um, social workers all, all of them who work with the pediatrics ah know us. And they send their women over if there's need of clothing for the babies or food. You know all the things these women are going to need to prepare for their coming of the babies. And we have a connection with the church on the east side of town -- Holy Cross Church on Euclid Avenue. And they have a ministry we called Babies Corner and we just call them if they're in need of a crib, clothing, anything that the newborns are in need of. And as the children, the toddlers as they get older, things that they need and we make a phone call to Holy Cross Parish. And that group of women and the sister that works over there make a direct connection with any women who is, is in need.

PH: Do you know the name of the program at Metro Hospital?

SAK: Well, it's the pediatric area that's um ah, I didn't know the name of the program. I should. It's at WIC [Women, Infants, Children] is that the name of the program over there? It could be and I, I, I just was, was working there and a social workers would

send me young women and the young women were the ones I worked with to be sure that they received all that they need. So I am sorry I don't know the name of the program.

PH: Does St. Augustine offer any computer educational classes?

SAK: Yes, they do, ah Bob Duda works over at the Learning Center which is in the school building on the first floor and he is excellent with the computers and also the other volunteers that work right along with him. The volunteers come from all over – the city of Cleveland and suburbia. And they are excellent with the um students and Bob had it all set up on the third floor where the Links Clubhouse had a whole set of computers that are, are there for their use. And that program works with whatever age level a is in need. And if it's a mom or a dad or someone who knows that he could make their job better. They're more than welcome to come for the program, and Bob Duda is excellent with the students.

PH: How often do these computer classes meet?

SAK: Bob Duda makes the arrangements for the classes and many times it has to be done on an individual basis depending on um situation of the family for the student or the student, and ah Wednesdays for sure. I know he has ah a program there and then Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday when the Links Clubhouse has their time from three until 7 [o'clock] he has ah computer classes in session for the them in a very special way. But most of the time, it has to be done on a individual basis.

[End of Side A]

[Start of Side B]

PH: Where does St. Augustine receive its funds from? Is it state, local or federal, of from the city of Cleveland?

SAK: Well, the money comes from Catholic Charities who pays the salary for one, two, three, four people who work there and most of it comes from private donations every month. Father Joes writes a letter that's dictated to almost five thousand people all over the city of Cleveland. The suburban a parishes that are interested in helping us out and ah. So, most of it is done funding, raising either meals that are being done, or ah like if they have a turkey time when Thanksgiving comes. They have ah a cutting of the turkeys. The bishop comes and ah the Ford Motor executives come and those folks make a big effort to get money for our Hunger Center because that's a big cost item. So no we don't get city or any other funding. Um, we do a lot of work for ah the people. Community workers who come to us from the cities that are always asking for placement for volunteer people to come. So, the community workers come and we're are very grateful. Because ah the community workers are very good workers who do a lot of the assistance in our Hunger Center, and around the parish grounds that we could never afford to pay for. So they do a lot off the care of the, the um parish grounds and the Hunger Center work. Ah, but the that's a big help that we do get from the city, from the community workers. But no, most of it comes -- private donations. Father Joe and Sister Corita will go and speak to any group, the Kiwanis group, ah Knights

of Columbus, the LCBA [Loyal Christian Benefit Association]. Any parish that will invite them, they will speak to. And many of the food stuffs come from the high schools who will have a drives for food -- St. Joe's Academy's, St. Augustine Academy, St. Edwards's. Any of those schools who will have ah drives for the food and then many of the other public schools will also help with getting food for the Hunger Center and they even send their students to have ah experience, see the Hunger Center, to see the people to see where it is that their goods are going. So, um are wealth is in the people who care. Our wealth is in the people who will sacrifice to help other people. So ah, our Sunday collections in the church help out because they keep the electricity, and the heat, and everything going on in the a building. Because as you know a building cost a lot to keep up and the plumbing in the building you know how important that is. So it's really the parish people the Sunday collections and anyone who will help out and see they come as volunteers. And they see what's happening and they see who the people are who are in great need, and then they were. They will be glad to donate money to help to serve these folks.

PH: Where does St. Augustine get its supplies from to run its programs?

SAK: The supplies come from a lot of parishes, and ah especially ah around the Christmas time, the gifts that are given to many of the children who are in need and the families and ah, we have a great need for diapers. So, um the supplies come again from the parishes who are in our neighborhood; who are in suburbia. And many ah people, ah especially mothers who know what it is to raise a family, they will come right to the door and bring in bags of diapers and other things that they know that families are in great need of. And so most of the supplies again come from other churches and other groups such as the Kiwanis clubs, and other ah Knights of Columbus will throw a beautiful party for the children, and they will also take care of other needs when Father Joe or Sister Corita sees a family in need they know who they can call on because they'll say, 'just give me a call whatever you need.' And so, the Knights of Columbus are a big help for all the programs there at St. Augustine's.

PH: Can you describe Bishop Anthony's Pilla's Church in the City Program? Why was it initiated?

SAK: That's a big order. Ah, it's been in the newspaper, but I think Bishop Pilla's saw the great need of the city churches. Many of our parishioners have moved up and moved out and moved on. So, many of the people who are left in our city churches were in great need of the finances, you know the Sunday collections in what every church ran on. The Sunday collection is what put the lights on, and the heat and keeps the building in good condition. So, Bishop Pilla saw the need for other people who grew up in many of our city parishes, and had moved on. And maybe it was time for them to take a look back at where their roots were, they came from. And maybe they were the ones who could help the most. And ah, give the people in the city the chances and the enrichment in their lives that they have in their family life. So um, we were encouraged to connect with parishes outside our boundaries, out in suburbia, people who had um more finances than we had. And people who could become a part of us. I, they called it a partnership, and one of the programs, ah was St. Noel's that St. Augustine's partnered with and St. Noel's also did a garden. We have

this huge garden behind the school building. And the food from that garden helped all the people in the neighborhood, and the Hunger Center, and ah the pride, the beautiful pride of the people in the neighborhood, as they were a part of it. And anyone who drove by couldn't even believe that where we had this oh, little plot of farm, right in our neighborhood. So the pride that came with that garden, all the work. St. Noel's, I mean those folks were very generous --Wednesdays and Saturdays and came to plant it, and the folks from our Hunger Center and the people in the neighborhood who were a part of it. And we even had a blind couple that came. And we're a very much a part of the whole growth of the um big plot of growth of food that serviced everyone. So, we partnered with them, The Church in the City. We partnered with them fund raising and just plain fun – F U N. We had a lot of fun with the folks and told about what each other were doing. Just sharing stories of life, and sometimes we went out there to St. Noel's and sometimes, St. Noel's people came to us. And we also exchanged prayer and liturgies with them which was very delightful.

PH: What kind of good things grew in that garden? Were there any favorites?

SAK: I think the tomatoes are always the favorite, because everybody enjoyed home grown tomatoes. And then the greens they were really good. The lettuce and the a cucumbers, I man we really. And they even planted sunflowers. Now let me tell you the sunflower brought more joy because we would,, they would be picked and put down in the halls, and anywhere that anyone even over at the rectory of Father's house. It was really a delightful experience. And not only that, they planted another garden down a couple blocks away. And they brought in horses to plow the fields. And some of the kids in the neighboring schools were a part of that, to see the horses plowing the fields. The favorite of plowing it, planting it, and then watching the harvest grow and watering . Now that there's the hard part, getting it watered all the time. That was really good. So I say with tomatoes were probably the favorite. They even grow some gourds. I guess they didn't turn out so good, but they tried.

PH: What new programs would you like to see come out of the partnership of St. Noel's of Willoughby and St. Augustine's in Tremont?

SAK: I don't know if it's a new, ah the fourth Sunday of every month, St. Noel's comes and does the meals for the ah Hunger Center every ah fourth Sunday of the month. So, I wouldn't say a new one. I think we need to get ah um volunteers who will assist them in doing that. Ah, they've been doing it for a long a time, and when they see the deed of someone, they get to know these folks. And so they bring things that help them out -- if it's clothing or whatever you know -- toiletries. Ah so, I don't think it has to be a new program, as it must. Keeping the program going, especially they've been doing it for years the fourth Sunday of every month. And then they also help on the holidays to which is a big sacrifice for many of those people. Because they're going it with their own families, and then doing it with the families of St. Augustine's. Sure, I think the ah the, thee experience that we're having with St. Noel's is magnificent. They are there for us. They um, if there's anything that's there ever needed at the parish -- Father Joe or Sister Corita. There's a young man Frank Scialabba that's been working with them, and so they really watch what it is that's needed. And St. Noel's has been there. And even you know having the fun with them when

they invite our workers and our parish out to their church. It's been a real fun experience for both, both groups of people. So I just want a, to commend St. Noel's and all the work they have done, and are doing with ah St. Augustine families.

PH: How do you feel about President Bush's Faith Based and Community Initiative Program? Do you think that this is a good policy for the urban poor?

SAK: I think it was a big boost for all of us who work in the cities to hear our national leader acknowledge the great ah goodness of the program. Faith Based programs are just that. They're based on the great faith of the people in the neighborhoods, and when they see somebody in need. For years, your grandparents, our parents have always reached out to people in great need, and ah here our President came. When he came to St. Augustine's, it was so exciting because it was just like you know you're doing what needs to be done. And you are a good um family of, of church people. You know sometimes they make a little joke about church people, but ah, we have seen and experienced. And probably many of you have your grandparents, your parents, aunts or uncles, or cousins that have been involved with the poor over centuries of time. The St. Vincent DePaul Society at every Catholic Church have served many, many of these people, maybe in our own families even. And so, to have the President come and his whole policy of faith based um ah work, I think is ah, ah big boost and acknowledgment and appreciation. I wish we had more money. Oh, ah, we always do that, but I think ah just knowing that the appreciation and the acknowledgment of the poor and the working poor in ah every city in the United States of America. That ah, that was good. It was exciting, and it was good to hear it coming from our world leaders.

PH: How has St. Augustine benefited from Bush's new faith based and community initiative program?

SAK: Well, just the attention, the advertisement. Ah, ah about him coming to our church that he chose St. Augustine's was a real good thing for us. Because um for people to know, how do you get the story out to people of what's happening? The staff is so busy doing the work of serving the people that it was ah great that we could have uh free, if you want to call it that free publicity for people to know what's going on, and who's doing the work. And where they can trust to donate their ah services, their finances, it was ah good, um thrust for us, and I hope that continues.

PH: I saw on the internet. There's a site. It's called Whitehouse.com, and I saw a press release from the Office of the Press Secretary dated May 24, 2001, and it had a copy of the speech given by President Bush. Were you there at St. Augustine's when he came to visit and give that speech? What was it like?

SAK: I was there. It was um first of all I say exciting because he really ah address. The folks, the auditorium we all met down at OLA's [Our Lady of Angels] St. Joseph Center. He actually was at the Hunger Center first. But that was limited and Sister Corita, and Father Joe, and Tony and Shelia Gelzinis who are responsible for the Hunger Center, met with him there with many of the people from the Hunger Center. Then the rest of us were down at the auditorium at OLA's St. Joseph Center, which is just a block down

from church. And that auditorium was filled with, I'm going to say glowing faces, because the President came to us, all of us who have been working for years and years and years. And when he spoke to us, he really was speaking. We were kind of like, ah a model, if you want to say of all the people across the United States of America who are doing the same work that we do. But here he was addressing us, and telling us how he would like support our programs, and how he felt our programs were very trust worthy, and really serving the poor. We weren't just out there you know. Some people think we're always out converting people. Well, that's good, but we are also out here for the people, just helping the live and let live and to ah have um enrichment in their life and our programs are there to serve the people. And that's why we're there. And the President really commended that he commended the work of Father Joe's, Sister Corita, the staff. And really let us know that we were a part of a bigger ah establishment of people who are there serving, not because we're getting big salaries, but we're there because we're people serving people.

PH: What make's a faith based program a better program for addressing community needs, and bringing renewal, than a major government program?

SAK: Well it's hard to say, but one of the things I would like to say we're of the neighborhood. See, when you're of the neighborhood, and in the neighborhood and the people come to you, there's a stability because you're there, and you're there for them. And you don't have office hours. I mean we're there, they know they can come morning, noon and night. I always try to say from nine to nine. But that doesn't always work. So, I think a stability with the churches in the neighborhood and people are very comfortable coming to the neighborhood church. And we have um, I guess it's a holistic approach you know they know we have a great faith in God, but we have great faith in them because we have to love your neighbor as you love yourself and to love God. It all comes together, and it's very natural. I think there's a very natural connection that people have with their neighborhood churches, and there not afraid to come there. They'll come and talk with us, and just in their conversation, they may not be asking for anything, but you hear in their conversation some of the things they may need, and very quickly to can just help them. So that's how I see that are um our churches, our faith based ah programs are very valuable. Because some people will never go to a government program because they feel um the red tape and all the things that they hear and some things the government programs are overloaded, and people can't take care of all the folks who come to them for a number of reasons so many of the very ah needy people in our neighborhoods will very casually come to our churches they're there to pray. They're, there for other social events, but then they also receive services that are in great demand.

PH: Why do you think that the War on Poverty, and the Model Cities Program of President Johnson failed?

SAK: Well, I am sure there's many issues that I'm not aware of, but one of the things I would say, I think the need is greater than anyone envisioned. I think the poverty of the people is enormous -- the job situation with all the jobs that are fading away, and many. The jobs that people are not qualified to fill. I think the War on Poverty didn't work because there was a great number people who were in need of education, housing ah, and many of the folks

with mental illness. You know there are so many of the people who are out of work who are dirt poverty, because of their mental illness, and the medications that they need, the hospitalizations. We all know that the insurance coverage for hospitalization with people with mental illness is not sufficient, and unless the person gets in trouble, ah with the law, then they get into the hospitals. And our hospitals and our prisons have become the hospitals for the mentally ill. So, I think the War on Poverty has to um has not worked because there are many undiagnosed people with serious physical illness which they were not ready to address.

PH: Does St Augustine have a close relationship with Tremont West Corporation?

SAK: Oh, yes they do. As a matter of fact, Sister Corita is on their staff, not staff, their board. And so the West, um Tremont West Corporation, has been very much a part of everything that happens in the neighborhood. And Sister Corita would always supply the staff and the volunteers staff from St. Augustine's Hunger center to set up programs that they were doing – Festival in the Park, or any other fund raising that they were doing at OLA's St. Joseph Center. She'd do the set up, the serving, and the clean up, the forever cleanup for any of the programs that they were apart of.

PH: Does St. Augustine's benefit for any other community development corporations in Cleveland?

SAK: No, I can't answer that, because I am not sure of a development corporation. Ah, I just know that the um, the Merrick House across the street. Any of their programs, ah we're very much ah able to partner with their programs, and Pilgrim Congregational Church has a lot of programs. And Zion Church, and ah St. um John Cantius, they have a food distribution program there that. Many ah people from St. Augustine's can also benefit ah from their food programs, and um they have during the holiday season, especially during um Good Friday before Easter. There's a lot of programs that happens amongst all the churches in the neighborhood. It's interfaith very much. St Augustine's interfaith with all the churches in the neighborhood. So, I don't know about a community development, but I do know that the interfaith program at St. Augustine's Church in that whole Tremont area is very strong.

PH: What Catholic organizations have played a roll in supporting St. Augustine's? For example this would be Catholic Charities, St. Vincent DePaul's Society, West Side Catholic Center.

SAK: All of them. [ha, ha]. I think um we have been very fortunate because Father Joe and Sister Corita are willing to go on the radio, are willing to be interviewed, have been um with the Catholic [Universe] Bulletin, ah the P.D. [Plain Dealer]. So they make the needs known and people from all over and especially the Catholic organizations had been very good. Ah, there's another organization of the women. Ah, the Infant Child, Child Christ Child that's it. The Christ Child Society have been a very much a part of their programs. The um Knight's of Columbus are very much connected, and many of the Irish cultural, ah groups and the Slovenian cultural groups. Sister Corita connected with ah some of them. Of

course, the St. Vincent DePaul Society have always been a part of ah the work there and the Westside Catholic Center is like a partner, ah group that we exchange back and forth. If we don't have something, they may have it. And we can recommend the West Side Catholic Center, because that was started by all the parishes on the west side of Cleveland. That was a very wonderful organization to help the people in need. If they're young or old whatever their ah situation was and then they even started the women's shelter right out of the West Side Catholic Center which is a marvelous, marvelous place. And then Providence House for the little children.

PH: Sister, can you tell us more about the West Side Catholic Center and Providence House?

SAK: The West Side Catholic Center was started by the churches. Ah, we always called it a district meeting that we had with all the Catholic Diocese in the near west area. An um I'm trying to think back in the eighties. I guess when it began, that we said we needed a place that could store a clothing, furniture; and could serve the people that we could just send them there if they were in need of something to eat. And so it began, and we ah every parish church then was responsible for helping a for their supplies, for their volunteers and it just keep growing. And we were really happy St. Ignatius High School gave us the first building to be used. And one of our sisters, Sister Kathleen Kilbane was one of the first directors of Catholic Center, and she gave her all, her whole life for the people, and the program to develop. And then, when they got the building where they are right now it was a bowling alley. And we had ah sister really ah got the ah, ah unions ah CIO and all the unions to come and help to get that building into good shape and the parishes -- it went right at to the suburbs. All the parishes saw the good ah of this program, and so all of them have contributed volunteers, clothing, food and they also have social workers. They now have enough finances to pay um professional people, social workers who work there who can help. The people make the connections and referrals that they need for their life, and for their living. And the other, um what was the other program? And Providence House was for the little ah children, um some of them are crack babies. You know it's really so tough. And so Sister Hope Greener, one more of our Sisters of St. Joseph, was the founder of Providence House. And they started out with one building right behind the Catholic Center, and now they have another building, ah a beautiful home that other people have helped. I mean they've got funding from people all over Cleveland and suburbia who saw the goodness of this program. And Sister Hope Greener has stayed in touch, she is not longer the director of it, but stayed in touch with it. And that home has done wonders for children and their parents. And if you, you need to see, when you go to see the staff, some of the folks just come and rock babies in, in the rocking chairs just to give them the love and care and closeness that all newborn. And um I think it goes up to three years old. I have to check with that to be sure. And the, the good that they do for the parents of those children that the parent can relax and do what, what they need to do to get their lives in order because their children are in good safe care. And the staff there is so loving people that, ah well you'll have to go just to experience it. Some of these things you can't talk and put into words. You almost have to experience it, and the Catholic Center did um programs for women. Ah, the women's shelter—that grew out of the Catholic Center program. When they saw that people

who come there needed to be away from their environments and need a place to go that was safe in order to get their lives together. And then the Catholic Center got another building for those women. So between Providence House, the Catholic Center, and the shelters for the women, all the programs interact and interfaith with each other. And it's really been the goodness and generosity of the people in suburbia, and the people in the neighborhood who have support. Oh, fund raisers. Almost every month you can go to another fund raiser to keep the programs moving.

PH: Well this sounds like a wonderful program. Is there anything you would like to add to that?

SAK: Well, I think for the Providence Houses. I think you'd like to know that women who may need to be in other programs, ah to get their life together. Their educational programs as well as their addition -- ah recovery that those women can have. Their babies stay there at Providence House. While they are in their programs ah and recovery, and they know that their babies are safe, are in a good place and their babies will be healthy and will grow. And that's really important for any woman who wants to recover, and pull their life together. But they want to be sure their babies are in safe hands.

PH: Can you tell me something about the paint brush ministry of Kimberly Brady. I saw in a newspaper article from the Plain Dealer, Kimberly Brady painted a Jesus in the Bread Line portrait. Can you describe that or any of her other religious art works for St. Augustine's?

SAK: I'll be glad to. The picture of Jesus in the bread line is really ah iconic kind of work that's taken from the Catholic workers. If you're familiar with any of the Catholic worker newspaper or articles, you would see the same type of art and that's how she, Kimberly then used that type of art. And the people in the bread line are looking just like our street people all dressed in their shabby coats and their hats, anything that will keep them warm. Many times they're doubled up with coats or skirts, or slacks, and even their shoes are doubled over with other sometimes paper or rags tying them together. And in this picture, ah you would see about four or five people in the line and then the central figure is Jesus. And he has this long robe on and he's bent over a bit just standing in line waiting like all those other folks to get some soup or to get a sandwich, or whatever, the Hunger Center would be offering behind Jesus. So you know he's the central figure in illuminated light, and it symbolizes the whole idea of what we do unto others we do unto God. We do unto Jesus what you do unto me. He has said that over and over in scriptures. You would hear that, that what you have done to others you are doing unto me. And so, as we are serving the people at the Hunger Center, or anywhere we're actually doing what's our motivation. Why are we doing it, and we are doing it because we are all brothers and sisters. We are all the family of God. Jesus is a part of that family. So what we done unto others we're doing unto Jesus, and we're doing unto God himself. So that's our motivation. Now um, Kimberly had done a lot of art. She is very talented. A lot of her art is done as um icon type of work, which is very um strong facial expressions and body parts. She has done ah art work for ah all during Lent season or Advent season, whatever the theme of that Sunday's Gospel. She would use and that, ah take that theme and express it on her banners. So our church at St. Augustine's had a

different banner hanging every week depending on what the theme of the Gospel reading was. And it's very iconic. It, it, if you know icons you understand what I'm saying. They're very expressive facial experiences and the hand motions and the body positions ah very bold expression of the scripture, and the character that's being depicted in that story. And one of the sad things that happened was that Kimberly moved ah back home to Pennsylvania. So I'm sure she's still doing all that art work in Pennsylvania. But not any longer at St, Augustine Church.

PH: What would you like to see for the future of St. Augustine's? Also how about the future of Tremont?

SAK: It would be wonderful if the people who come for the Hunger Center would have housing. I think one of the most important things at this time is getting good affordable housing for the people. I wish we didn't have to have a Hunger Center. Ah for the purpose of people who are homeless? Ah, the Hunger Centers started with ah the elderly in the neighborhood just coming together as a social gathering. Wouldn't it be great if we had some of the apartment buildings, and some of the housing in Tremont that could be there for the homeless people the low income, ah finances that some of the people would have. And they be a part of the Tremont neighborhood and just come to the Hunger Center for social gathering, not for ah having to come to stay -- as long as they can they come early in the morning just to be warm, and they have a safe place to be. So, I think one of the dreams would be to have affordable income housing for the folks so they could have their own place to be and their own space.

PH: Thank you Sister Koch for participating in Cleveland State University's Tremont Oral History Project. Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW