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Oral History Interview Transcript with Emma and Carolyn Griffin

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Interviewees: Carolyn and Emma Griffin

Interviewer: Bonnie Hamer and Alexia Griffin

Interview Date: October 16, 2025

Interview Location: Riverhill Missionary Baptist Church

List of Acronyms: CG- Carolyn Griffin, EG- Emma Griffin, BH- Bonnie Hamer, AG- Alexia Griffin

Transcript by Bonnie Hamer

[00:00:00] Carolyn Griffin: My name is Carolyn Griffin. I was born in Essex County, Newark, New Jersey, and I came here to Valdosta when I was about eight months old, so I've been here ever since, and my date of birth is March 5th, 1961.

[00:00:28] Emma Griffin: My name is Emma Reed Griffin, and I was born in Lowndes County. My birthday is 3/7/38.

[00:00:40] Bonnie Hamer: Can you tell me about some of your earliest memories of Riverhill Baptist Church?

[00:00:46] CG: Some of my early memories that I remember as a child, just running around, I thoroughly enjoyed the times that we just had our family gatherings, you know, just family coming together, especially like our, you know, like some of the activities that we did, such as our church anniversaries, or those moments where we had, you know, fellowship on the grounds and just how we all come together, work together, you know, it was just a loving moment, you know, for me as a child. Of course, as a child, we were running around, having a blast, but everybody else just seemed to be very, you know, happy, and, you know, they were enjoying themselves, and that's what I enjoyed: the connection.

[00:01:46] CG: You can go back further than I can.

[Laughing]

[00:01:51] EG: I enjoy going to school. We had been in that little red schoolhouse you were talking about. I enjoyed going there, and I had a wonderful teacher. She whipped me one time for being late. While we were playing and jumping off the road down in it, I guess the teacher said that it was up high. Someone had set the bridge on fire, so they had to close it. And got to school, you know, enjoyed that. At the time I was here, I didn't go to but one grade. But other times I enjoyed just coming to church. And we had big meetings, and we ate out of the back of a trunk of a car. We ate out of boxes. I call them little banks, you know, where they put bricks up there and put some boards across there. They set boxes out. And you just go about everybody's boxes, pick out what you want, and get it, and keep moving. And then when they moved the school, we had [unintelligible] school. I guess I enjoyed that, the choir anniversary, and the usher anniversary.

[00:03:33] CG: That was similar to what I was talking about, too. You know, of course, I mean, I remember, because my grandmother, you know, they would always cook meals, right? That's

one thing that we would get up early in the morning and just cook all of this big meal, okay, a full-course meal, and she would always put them in that little box. We would pack it up and put it in the trunk of our car, and we would come here and attend those big meetings, like my mom just mentioned. When we get ready to eat today, they call it eating on the grounds or something like that, but back then it was so enjoyable because everybody had their own little spot, and everybody served out of their own little trunk of the car or on the bench and everyone would actually go to different ones and pick out the food that they want until they actually had a full plate. And everybody is just- it was just joyful. You know, everybody was happy to go here, go there. It wasn't a certain pick, you know, it's just that we would just go to those places, and sometimes you just go to kids. They're running around, and they just give them a little something. You see kids running around with a chicken leg in their hand or whatever the case may be; you know, it was just a really fun time. And the fellowship was just awesome for me as a child, you know, as I look and as I grow up. It became a part of me. And you just become a part of it, you know. And so that's, yeah, that's one of the things I thoroughly enjoyed, just with those fellowship moments. Yeah. Love that.

[00:05:06] BH: Did you guys start at the old location or the new location?

[00:05:12] CG: My mom started. I would say she started at the older location when it was the school, when it was down here on the edge. I came in after they had moved it because I think I was about what in my twenties when I actually moved here to this church, and so I've been here since my twenties.

[00:05:38] BH: So, the schoolhouse was located at the old location?

[00:05:40] CG: Yes, they actually moved the schoolhouse up to here as well. Now I remember the schoolhouse because, like my mom mentioned, eventually they used to do it on the ground, but when they moved the schoolhouse up here, they started having the meeting with the food and everything, and we would take it inside the schoolhouse. So, I do remember the schoolhouse, although it wasn't operating as a school at that time. But I do remember when they moved it up here.

[00:06:06] BH: Oh wow, okay.

[00:06:07] CG: Yeah, it was just a wooden building. And we would go inside, and they would, again, each person would have their little special space, and they put out their foods, and we all go in and grab a plate and just enjoy one another.

[00:06:24] BH: You mentioned that you went to the schoolhouse. Was it for primary school?

[00:06:30] EG: It was an elementary school. It went from the first grade to the fifth grade, if I'm not mistaken. I only went for one year. Then I was staying with my grandmother. When I went back home, staying with my mom and dad, I went to start school up there, where I was in Paris, and I went there when I was in the second grade, which wasn't so long ago. I probably haven't forgotten, but it was somewhere in my third grade or second grade.

[00:07:32] BH: Where did you go to school?

[00:07:34] CG: I actually went to elementary school at Well Miller, which was in Hahira, Georgia. I went there from my first and third years, and then they transitioned to Pine Grove. I went there from my fourth through my sixth year, and then I transitioned to Hahira Middle School from seventh to ninth years, and then I went to Nouns High School from my 10th through my 12th years. So do those other schools that I went to. It was all county schools.

[00:08:17] BH: Did you enjoy going to school?

[00:08:19] CG: Yeah, I did. That was a time away from the house. We didn't have to worry about doing all of those chores. But, yeah, I did enjoy myself going to school. I enjoy it because, you know, you have friends, and so that's that opportunity for you to see your friends and hang out, and you can't see your friends and study. And, yeah, I enjoyed it. I can't see anything that I did not like about it. Yeah, I enjoyed it.

[00:08:54] BH: So, we mentioned before, the older church eventually moved in 67. Do you remember anything about the older church? Like the amenities that were offered? What it looked like?

[00:09:10] CG: The only thing I remember is this church as it is today, you know. Yeah, because everything that I see right now is what I saw when I was coming, you know. They may have put up the new "One Lord, one faith, one baptism." They may have done the little tweaks from time to time, but for the way it's made to me, that's how I remember it. I don't even remember it being when they brought it here. I honestly cannot remember that part of my past. I think my mind has actually deleted that part, but yeah, I do remember what I see now. Do you remember anything different than what?

[00:10:03] EG: Yeah, the old church. I remember the old church. It didn't have a bathroom. It didn't have any air conditioning. You don't have windows in the old fans. If you don't have any fans, you just didn't sweat. It's just in the summertime.

[00:10:30] CG: What about the floors?

[00:10:31] EG: That's about it.

[00:10:33] CG: What about the floors? Did you have carpet on the floor?

[00:10:34] EG: Yeah, it had nothing on our floor. It's a straight wooden floor. But all this carpet and these seats and all. They put it in after we moved down here. But down there in the hall, it was nothing, just a plain white. I think it was still white. Well, beige-looking, because I think white had them get kind of old, the sunshine on them turning the color. But that was about it. It didn't have, like I said, we had no air conditioning, no carpet, and some furniture. And that's about it.

[00:11:13] BH: Do you remember the actual move?

[00:11:18] EG: I'm trying to think, did we have a piano? We might have had a piano, but I can't remember. That's about it.

[00:11:37] BH: Do you remember the actual move, moving the whole building to this location?

[00:11:45] EG: I can remember a little bit about it moving, but I didn't see any of it. I think I was probably in school when they were moving it. I don't think anybody really saw them move it. Black men or members, I don't think anybody saw them move it. But maybe some of the older deacons were here; they probably were around. Because they all had something to do with it, making decisions. But I think most of the memoirs, well, I don't think I really know exactly when they moved, but they know they moved. I take that back. They probably know about it, but I don't think that I've seen it that way.

[00:12:48] BH: Do you remember when I-75 was being built?

[00:12:52] EG: What is that?

[00:12:55] BH: Do you remember when I-75 was being built, the highway?

[00:13:16.] EG: No. I think I forgot. I know when I moved, the way we moved to the house, my grandfather's house, we went down the road. What was the name of that road?

[00:13:26] CG: [Unintelligible Name of road]?

[00:13:30] EG: [No], Valdosta Road...

[00:13:33] CG: North Valdosta Road?

[00:13:35] EG: I think I got it back. [unintelligible] When they were on this road, we had to go north of the road. It wasn't paved and all that, but not just a regular road. And then we went down to, I don't know where we turned to go to Valdosta.

[00:14:16] BH: There's a lot of roads.

[00:14:17] CG: Yeah. [Laughs]

[00:14:18] BH: I don't even know the names of most of them.

[00:14:20] CG: I can't help you out because I wasn't even born. [Laughing]

[00:14:26] EG: I'm trying to think. I don't know exactly where we got off and on, on the Valdosta Road, but that's the way that road took us. They hadn't widened it out; it was just a straight road back then. I can't remember exactly the way we got off it, but that's the way you had to go to get on I-75. They cut it when they put in I-75. They cut out the road going back to my grandpa's.

[00:14:56] EG: Was Highway 133, the one right out here, still there?

[00:15:00] EG: Which one?

[00:15:01] BH: The one near Quick Trip and the rug company is where you turn to get onto James Road.

[00:15:11] EG: James, what road?

[00:15:12] CG: That's St. Augustine?

[00:15:14] EG: Yes, St. Augustine. Was that still there?

[00:15:16] CG: Was St. Augustine still there when you was... The one that goes right over 75? One right up here.

[00:15:20] EG: Mm-mm [vocal segregate for no].

[00:15:30] CG: So it wasn't there? That they hadn't even built that.

[00:15:32] EG: I don't even think they had their school there when it was.

[00:15:44] BH: That's interesting, how roads are built and stuff.

[00:15:48] CG: Yeah. Because I do remember that. I kind of vaguely remember the church being there because I was a little. And I remember us coming off of St. Augustine. I don't know if it was called St. Augustine at that time. But I do remember because we had the turn. When we made that turn, the church was right there to our left. So I'm quite sure there was a word there for us to be able to travel, but I just don't know which one came first.

[00:16:20] BH: I don't know.

[00:16:21] CG: Because that's what she had asked: was St. Augustine there before they put 75? They had to be 75; well, evidently 75 had to be there first because they made her overpass over it.

[00:16:37] BH: I don't know. Well, that was kind of extra stuff.

[00:16:40] CG: Okay. We can move on.

[00:16:40] BH: I'm sorry.

[00:16:42] CG: That's okay. [Laughing]

[00:16:51] BH: It shows that the new location, which was signed over by J.D. McKey. Do you guys remember anything about the McKees?

[[00:17:00] CG: I don't. [Asks Emma Griffin] Do you know anything about the McKees when they signed over? [Emma Griffin Shakes head]

[00:17:05] BH: That's fair.

[00:17:08] CG: I guess that probably was something that was taking place just within the members who were actually handling it. And most of the time back then, we had like our deacon boards. They pretty much kind of handled those kinds of affairs, the business part of it. At least I would have assumed, because that's pretty much how they did things. Y'all know, they kind of kept us in the background.

[00:17:36] EG: Most of that was handled by the deacons.

[00:17:39] CG: Yeah, so I don't think we were just there for the celebration.

[00:17:42] EG: I can't remember them bringing in to the church, which I did after I was small.

[00:17:57] BH: Is it okay if I ask you about a couple of names? If you remember any stories about them, could they be related to the founders or to recent members?

[00:18:04] CG: Yeah, I guess you can ask and see if something- it would probably be more on her end than it is on mine, but I might can remember some of the things. I don't know. Try it; let's go for it. She's going to give you some names, and you can, if you know anything about them or if you can tell something about them, but you can share.

[00:18:27] BH:
I know a lot of history has been passed on orally. So, do you guys know anything more about Amy Wilson and Peter, Pete Wilson?

[00:18:38.960] CG:
Pete Wilson, and what was the other name? Amy Wilson? Amy Wilson. Mommy, you mom. I do remember Mother Amy.

[00:18:48] EG:
That might be the different one now.

[00:18:52] CG: We had two Amy Wilsons?

[00:18:55] EG: I don't even know Amy Wilson at all.

[00:18:57] CG: Oh, well, what was the other Amy you were talking about?

[00:19:00] EG: That was Sister Williams; Mama's name was Amy.

[00:19:07] CG: Well, maybe I don't know Amy Wilson.

[00:19:09] BH: Was there Amy Adams?

[00:19:18] EG: That's Sister Williams ...

[00:19:21] CG: Was that her mother?

[00:19:23] EG: Yeah, that time.

[00:19:28] CG: Wasn't she the mother of the church at one point? What was she?

[00:19:40] EG: She was a Wilson. I don't know how to ask around when they started the church. She was with my mother when it moved up here. What was her name? Amy.

[00:19:50] CG: Amy Wilson?

[00:19:52] EG: If I'm not mistaken, that.

[00:19:57] BH: Do you remember Frank Jones?

[00:20:01] EG: Yeah, I know him well. I always thought he was the funniest man in the church. And I couldn't figure out why he would come to church and fuss as he did, but I finally learned. Because the people that were supposed to come to church and conference and stuff weren't showing up, and he would come in and tell them off. He's funny. He didn't do no cuss words or nothing like that. He just told us straight out what they needed to do. Yeah, I know him. I would never forget him.

[00:20:40] BH: Did he have any roles in the church? Did he have any roles in the church?

[00:20:45.620] CG: Did he have a role? What position he played?

[00:20:48.160] EG: He was a deacon. He was the head deacon. Or the deacon boy at that time.

[00:20:56] BH: I know from the newspaper it says he became a member in 1897. He apparently was a part of the move, too, which is kind of interesting. So it makes sense that he was a deacon. Cool. Do you remember other things about him? Do you remember other things about Frank Jones?

[00:21:26.420] EG: That's about all I know. I think if I'm not mistaken, he was a farmer. And that's about all I know.

[00:21:38] BH: How old were you when, how old were you when you remember?

[00:21:45.750] EG: I couldn't tell you. I have to study on that one. But I guess I was in my teens. I say I was somewhere between 10 and up and I was going to look like somewhere in there. Because I don't even think I hadn't joined church. I was just coming with my mom and my grandmother. I was somewhere maybe starting my teens.

[00:22:26] BH: Do you remember Reverend Theodore Williams? What do you remember about him?

[00:22:33] EG: Well, I don't know too much about him, because he lived in Adel.

[00:22:42] BH: Adele.

[00:22:45] EG: All I know is he was coming, preaching him at the back hand.

[00:22:48] BH: Did he come and preach every Sunday?

[00:22:52] EG: Well, we didn't have two Sundays. That was second and fourth. I won't never forget him. He's the one who baptized me, and I was scared of it.

[00:23:01] CG: You were scared of what?

[00:23:04] EG: Being baptized.

[00:23:06] CG: That's because she was young. How old were you?

[00:23:15] EG: 28.

[00:23:18] CG: 28? Oh, that's not too young.

[00:23:28] EG: Yeah, but we didn't have a pool, and I had kept me that in the river, and they go down in the river on a Saturday night and drink and throw the bottles in the river and all that kind of stuff. I was scared of that, and I was scared I would step on a snake. Williams and Frank Jones was the ones who baptized me. I shot up, and I told him I was scared.

[00:24:19] CG: I don't know what it feels like to be baptized in a river.

[00:24:21] BH: I'm actually scared of rivers. So I would have been scared, too. [Laughing]

[00:24:26] CG: I think I was in a pool. Yeah, I was baptized in a pool.

[00:24:29] BH: Do you know when the pool was added?

[00:24:34] CG: The pool here at Riverhill? I don't know when it was added. I don't know what year it was added. It should be in the history, though.

[00:24:47] EG: Yeah, it should be in the history. They remodeled the church. So I'm going to move to the church down here. And the pool was put in when they remodeled it. I'm not sure when it was put in. When it moved down here, this part, and that part, and all that was remodeled.

[00:25:19] CG: It was what, mamma? Because I can hear you.

[00:25:28] EG: It was remodeled after we moved down there.

[00:25:27] BH: Probably most of this part.

[00:25:30] EG: I think this part, back to the door, was remodeled, too. That's when they put in, I'm not mistaken, the bathroom. I remember right now. Back then, I don't know what year it was. I don't remember dates and times and stuff like that. That's all I can remember right now.

[00:26:20] BH: I had a question. [Forgot a question]

[00:26:32] CG: Maybe it'll come back to you again.

[00:26:33] BH: Maybe, I hope so. I don't know; we can just move on to something else. We were talking about roads earlier. How did you get to school? I know that sounds like a weird question.

[00:26:54] EG: My grandfather, they had a house back on the river when you're going on North Valdosta Road. When you pass that river, the house is about a half a mile from that river. And when we came to school, we walked. The roads didn't have any names, so we just walked down a dirt road by that house, and then when we got to the road it got the school on. What was the name of the road? Wiregrass?

[00:27:48] CG: Val Tech?

[00:27:49] EG: Yeah. We come up to that road, then we come on down to this road. That's 84, no, that's 94, and that's where we had to come across the bridge. But the bridge, half of it wasn't there. They had to redo the bridge because someone had burned it down. And we came down that road and came on up to the school house.

[00:28:18] CG: So y'all walked?

[00:28:20] EG: Yeah.

[00:28:21] BH: How far?

[00:28:25] EG: I would say maybe two or three miles.

[00:28:34] BH: Every day? Was that just one way? Two to three miles one way?

[00:28:38] EG: No. If you pull out all the little turns, it would be. Because we come down one way and then we had to turn down that way and then turn down that way. If you put them all together, it would be about two or three miles.

[00:28:56] BH: Did you ever pass anyone on your way to school?

[00:29:05] EG: No, because by that road the bridge was out; nobody was travelling on that road. They couldn't travel because that first bridge was out. I don't know the reason why they built that other road. I think they named it Wiregrass. Isn't that right?

[00:29:49] CG: What, Val Tech?

[00:29:50] EG: Wasn't that the name of the road? Anyway, ain't nobody traveled that road. My grandfather had to travel in a car and had to go all the way around. Well, right now it's Valdosta Road, but back then it didn't have just a road. Really, I don't think it's too many people back there who had no cars, because there weren't too many people on that road at that time. Most of it was just family. The road Val Tech or Wiregrass was a dirt road. It didn't have a college or anything, just a plain road. People that stayed back there all had to go out of there on North Valdosta Road to go to Valdosta. Those people back there, but they didn't travel 94 until they redid the bridge.

[00:31:15] BH: What was school like?

[00:31:19] CG: What was the school like in the run of the day? What was it like?

[00:31:31] EG: Just like a normal school. Turned in and we had our lunch break, and when lunch break was over, we were back at school. We had one or two rooms, and one was first-second grade, and the other was third, fourth, and fifth grade.

[00:31:56] BH: Did you enjoy school? Did you like school?

[00:32:00] EG: Yeah, I liked it. I guess after I got that first whipping, it was okay. I missed one word. I had studied before my grandmother had carried me over my little reading. But when we played so hard, and when I got to school, we were late anyway. And I had forgotten it. And as soon as I walked in and sat down, my teacher, Ms. Butler, was her name. She had me go back then, and we didn't have class like we you do now. We had to read. We had what's called a reading book. We had to read. There were so many of us in one class. We went by paragraph. And soon as I sat down, she called me to read my paragraph, and I forgot the first word. That's what she whipped me about. She was sitting where you at and I probably was sitting like this, but we were sitting. She had a long switch, and she got that switch. She didn't even get out of her chair. So back then when we were going to school, they tore our hands, legs; they tore them up. If we forgot something, didn't do that right, or we did something, they whipped us. We learned to behave. We had to say it. We sang a song, the Lord's Prayer. It's a script. They didn't stand us in no corner. We didn't know what standing in a corner was. No time out. That was the way it was back in school.

[00:34:40] EG: We learned because we knew what we got. If we did anything at school, well, I didn't get into much trouble. I never had a good fight. Not even a good argument in school. But then the whole community just about raged. I did something. They're going to get on to wherever I'm at church or whatever. They get on to me. When they see Mama, they tell Mama. She'll get on me again. She'll give me a whipping. But I never did it again. I know what I was going to get, so I didn't get in. And one that I did. Friends that we had, we were close, we were like sisters. We didn't get in no argument, and we didn't get in no fight. I never had to fight with nobody at school. Everybody was just like Sister Brothers. So I don't know, it might be better than Sister Brothers, because Sister Brothers sometimes fight, I reckon. I don't know. I had nobody to fight with because I was a child. And so I had nobody to fight with at all. So I don't know how sisters and brothers. I just know how mine did when I had them.

[00:36:03] CG: So we had a couple of sibling hits. Of course I didn't do much fighting myself because I was the only girl, and so I wasn't about to fight all them boys, but I felt like I could. How many brothers do you have? I had five brothers at the time. I was the spoiled baby. I was the only girl. They'll fuss with me, but they never really tried to fight me. I would fight them because I was such a tomboy, but that was my childhood.

[00:36:39] BH: Yeah. BH: How far did you guys pursue education?

[00:36:53] CG: I went, I graduated all the way, and I've had college classes as well. And I've also graduated from university. How far did you go, Mom?

[00:37:08] EG: They dropped out of 11th grade because they didn't have twelfth grade. It was just eleventh grade. They added twelfth grade after I dropped out.

[00:37:30] Alexia Griffin: What university did you go to?

[00:37:33] CG: I recently graduated from Kaiser University. I'd just taken some classes out of VSU [Valdosta State University], but I never really graduated from VSU. I just took classes. And I was working towards a medical degree. I was trying to finish up as a physician assistant. I was taking classes from there. Had classes from other universities, but again, I was going back and forth as a single parent. It was kind of hard for me. But I just recently graduated from Kaiser University. Yay! Oh, well, I enjoyed it.

[00:38:32] BH: What did you do after 11th grade? What happened after 11th grade?

[00:38:41] EG: I got married. Well, I had planned to go back to school. I was working at night, and I was going to go back to school. And as soon as I had a plan to go back to school, they put me on the night, on the day shift. And so that knocked that out. From then on, I was just going from one shift to another. And so I never did go back. I think, well, I was working up to Nashville Hill, and so I was on the, you know, the night shift. And so I decided I'll go back and finish up, and they switched me to the day shift. No, I'm going to take that back. I was at Levi's.

[00:39:55] BH: You had six kids? Wow. What is Levi's?

[00:40:11] CG: Oh, that was a company that she worked for.

[00:40:] BH: Oh, for the jeans and stuff? Oh, okay.

[00:40:25] CG: That's Levi jeans.

[00:40:27] BH: They do make the best jeans. Yeah.

[00:40:30] CG: They've been really good for a long time too. I don't think hardly any jeans have been able to match that company, right?

[00:40:36] EG: Mm-hmm.

[00:40:57] EG: I had left when they had shut down. I started working for a carpet factory that made rice sacks, fruit sacks. They made something for the army, but I don't know what they made. I don't know what they did with it. There was some material they made for the army for a while.

[00:41:31] CG: That was a company that she worked for that actually made different types of bags, and they also made this. They made the material for, like, didn't they use that material to put down on the roads? Isn't that that black material?

[00:41:52] EG: I forgot what they call it.

[00:41:53] CG: Because they used to weave it. Yeah, but they can use it for parking lots like that stole it. They made that, and they also made stuff that goes on the highway.

[00:42:11] EG: We called a CEF. I don't know whether that was when we were making it was CEF. That's what we called it. They were made into rice sacks and fruit sacks for a different company that's on it. This carpet factory- I don't know if you remember that- they would buy the material for carpet packages. They made the carpet, but they got the material from there and made the carpet package.

[00:42:57] BH: So do you have extensive experience in factories?

[00:43:02] EG: [nods]

[00:43:02] BH: That is very cool.

[00:43:06] EG: This one winter, and I was working at Levi's and they were paying, I was making like \$80 for two weeks, because they would lay us off. And so I left and went down, I went to Levi's- well, it wasn't Levi's at the time, not, I'm wrong.

[00:43:34] CG: Amico.

[00:43:36] EG: It wasn't Amico at the time. They changed it to that. I was working at Levi's, and I left to go out there. I hadn't even told them I was leaving because I didn't know I was leaving because I went to leave down there in the car. That Friday morning, they hired me that same day. So I had to get up Monday morning and go to Levi's and tell them I wasn't going to be working there anymore. Then I had to leave there and go back to Nashville since I had to be there at 8:00 AM. I worked there 28 years. I was going to make it to 30, but I don't know what happened. I went down one morning working an 8-to-12 shift. I worked to 2 o'clock, and something told me to retire, and I couldn't shake it. After work, I went straight to worship. She told me to stay until October first, and I did. I left out of there. I was going to retire on the same day I started, but I didn't make it. I retired on October second.

[00:45:41] BH: Enjoying retirement ever since then. Can you tell us some of the events that the church hosted?

[00:46:04] CG: Annually, we would have the revivals. And that would usually be a weeklong event where we would invite other churches to come in and bring a message for the members and the community because we invite other churches as well as the community in. We had annual church anniversaries. We always celebrated those, and we pretty much did the same, where we advertised to the different churches, and we would have different churches come in and minister to the people. We celebrated some of the activities like some of the ministries that we have in our church, like the ushers will put on a program and invite the community, etc. Those usually are like a one-day affair; the annuals were like a week-long affair, like we have the church for a week, the revivals for a week, and the consecration for the week. Consecration is like a program where we consecrate separations; it simply means setting aside. So, you set the church aside for the work of God. It's like you're consecrating yourself; you're consecrating our church. And again, that was like a week-long event. Was it a week-long or maybe three days? I think it was a week-long event that we would do. And then all the other events that we would have, they would be like a one-day kind of event, or maybe in the afternoons, like a Sunday afternoon. The ushers would have their events, the choirs would have their events, different ministries, whatever they want to put on. Pastor Aid is where we have events where we do things for the pastor, and we recognize the pastor and honor him and his wife. We still have those events today. They are still very evident in our churches and Riverhill as well.

[00:48:20] EG: Do they still have controversial stuff? Bubba. Bubba.

[00:48:23] CG: I don't know that either. We don't have to take it that far. But that's what we used to have. That's pretty much some of the events that we would have. Of course, we had our Black History events. That's the one-day kind of thing where we would celebrate Black history. That's pretty much how our events go. But we do invite; we always invite the community, always invite other churches to partake, you know.

[00:48:55] AG: What were the Christmas and Easter programs like?

[00:48:58.240] CG: Oh, our Christmas and Easter programs were so cute because we had the little kids. You know, they say they Easter speeches. It was really, it was a community thing, but it was also a big thing for the kids to be able to get involved. Family members got involved in

that by teaching their kids their little Easter speeches, and we just enjoyed, you know, listening to the kids come out and do that. But that was like a one-day kind of thing or maybe something that we would do after church, like an Easter program. We used to put on a little show kind of. like we would do the we would do a little skit in reference to, you know, Jesus being born or at Christmas time. We would put on this skit when he was being which one of those I think it was- Easter; we would put on the one where he was crucified. I think it was Easter; we would put on a skit, the adults and the kids, all of them, and we just basically it was almost small-scale. You know, it wasn't a production. But it was kind of like a little small-scale where we, you know, we made up some crosses and everything, and we, you know, we showed him as he's, you know, carrying the cross, you know. We did those kinds of little skits. I would call them skits, not really a show. For the Easter and Christmas programs is where we would actually, you know, give more emphasis on the birth of. of Jesus Christ. Of course, we would decorate, and we would have our Christmas speeches and, you know, for the kids and sing our Christmas carols, have our, you know, eating on the grounds, you know, just fellowship. Yeah, so those were really nice. We always look forward to those. Yeah, it was exciting.

[00:51:10] BH: Do you remember the old-fashioned celebration that you guys had?

[00:51:14] CG: The old-fashioned day?

[00:51:15] BH: Yeah.

[00:51:16] CG: Oh yeah. Yeah, I remember that day. That was a big day; everybody really went all out their way trying to get the old-fashioned. I remember when we first did it, my grandmother, she and my mom had this lady, and she actually made all of our clothes. We had, and I hope to bring some of those pictures for you guys to see, but we had the old bonnets, you know, we put the bonnets on the head. We had the material that looked like the flower. You know, you got the little flowers everywhere all over the material. And then we had the white aprons that we tied around our waist, the little ruffles.

[00:52:00] EG: I don't think everyone had an apron.

[00:52:01] CG: Not everyone had them, but you know, that's the idea of what they had back in the day. They wore those aprons and the bonnets and the ruffles and from your neck all the way down to your ankle kind of thing, you know, you're dressed very, conservative and so we would always get dressed up like that for us the women and because I remember as I think I was up in I think I was in my 20s and I had my little gear on my little I'll be in my attire and my mom had hers my grandmother had hers and we all looked at like little ladies back from the 1800s and the guys there a little shoulder come on Little House on the Prairie. Yeah. That's what we looked at like, Little House on the Prairie. The guys, the men, they had on their overalls. Bad shirts. And what kind of shirts?

[00:53:15] EG: Plaid shirts.

[00:53:20] CG: The plaid shirts. That's how they dressed on that day. And so, yeah, we all looked like we were out of Little House on the Prairie Day.

[00:53:13] BH: Was that just? Like you just go to church, dress up?

[00:53:17] CG: Yeah, that was like a one-day affair. That's where we would all come to church that morning, and we dressed in that attire. We had our family, you know, afterwards; we had like a little eating afterwards. We all kind of fellowshiped afterwards. It was meals on the ground at that time. And that's where we would actually go back into the little school back there in the kitchen area because I don't even think we had a kitchen added on to the church at that time. That was an all-day affair pretty much, but it was fun. Yeah, everybody got a chance to dress up; even the little ones dressed up. It looked like the little house on the Prairie.

[00:54:06] BH: Do you remember when that stopped?

[00:54:15] CG: I think you know what that kind of died out with our ancestors who lived back during that time. I don't know, I think we had it more than one time, because I thoroughly enjoyed that time. But it kind of died out right along with our ancestors who, you know, as we evolved, we got away from it, you know.

[00:54:20] EG: I don't think we had it but one time.

[00:54:39] BH: Do you think it'll come back?

[00:54:41] CG: I would like to bring it back. I really would. And hopefully, as we move forward, I would like to look back on some of the things that we did and bring it back, and that could be one of the things, because I've got a lot of ideas going on right now. I just recently came back after moving back here from Orlando, but I hope to get more things, even if it's just for a day or maybe we do it once a year or something like that. But I really would like to bring back some of the old and reflect on some of the history, so that we don't forget it and keep it moving. Because eventually we are going to evolve because we're growing, different, you know, different new years and technology is coming. But I think it would always be a nice thing to always reach back in the past, you know, and just remember, you know. So, yeah, I hope to bring that out so we can do more of it.

[00:55:48] BH: If there is one piece of advice you could give the new generation, what would it be?

[00:55:55] CG: One piece of advice would definitely be to consider where you are going to spend eternity from a spiritual point of view. Because that is very important. We don't know when the day or the hour. We don't know when things are going to happen. Now is the time for people to really choose which side they want to be on because we don't know when it's going to happen. He said he's coming like a thief in the night. It can be now; it can be three years from now; it can be five years from now, but the fact of the matter is you don't know, and it's best that each person start thinking about where they want to spend eternity. Because this place is a temporary place. We're just here temporarily. The goals and everything that we sit here, they're going to stay right here. But you've got to go somewhere else. And it's time that we start thinking about that. It's been time, actually. We are way too late, but better late than never, they

say. And I would encourage anyone to consider where you want to spend your eternity. That's my ultimate goal. That's all I'm thinking about. I'm not too worried about all of the stuff because everything here is temporary. You can be here today, gone tomorrow. I'm not putting too much emphasis on that. He doesn't want us to put a whole lot of emphasis on that. When I say he, Jesus, don't want us to sit here and worry about where our next meal is going to come from or the clothes that we're going to put on our backs. He tells us that in his word. So, you know, it's just best that we start thinking about where we're going to spend eternity once we leave here, because that's going to be important too. You know, that's going to be very important because I would not want to be called home and I'm not ready. And I haven't done the things that are required of me to do in order to live eternally with him. So, yeah, I would definitely encourage them to start thinking about it and thinking about it now; now is the time, not tomorrow. And yesterday is already gone.

[00:58:39] BH: One last question?

[00:58:39] CG: Do you want her to answer that question? Did you want to answer that question too, Mom?

[00:58:45] BH: If you could give one piece of advice to the next generation, what would that be?

[00:58:54] EG: To the next generation? Hmm. Well, I guess I'll tell you to think about where you want to go to hell or heaven. Get into Bible study and church. Have faith in God; that's about it. I ain't going to preach on somebody.

[00:59:32] BH: It was great.

[00:59:34] EG: That's true. She'd get on to me. That's what I would tell them. That's when I'm telling my children, so I tell them, you know, just think about where you want to go. Hell or heaven. Because my grandchildren, they said, well, are they my grandchildren? There's grandchildren and great-grandchildren, I think. Yeah, I had them out of summer. And they would go out, they get hot, and they come in, and they want to turn their air conditioner on. You know what, to get cool and go back out and get hot, and come back in, and I told them no. They said, "Grandma, it's hot out here." I said, "Yeah, it's hot, and y'all better start getting ready for heaven or hell because hell is hotter than this." And they looked at me like I was crazy. And so that's what I would tell them. Just think about where you want to go. Heaven or Hell. And I probably have a little more advice, but that's where I'm going to stop. I want them to hear the word in church.

[01:00:47] CG: Yeah.

[01:00:51] EG: They can hear the word.

[01:00:57] BH: How has church been a home for you?

[01:01:06] CG: The way I see church is a sanctuary for me. Church is a place where I can escape everything, you know, because once I come here, I know it's a building, but once I come here, my mind is just on Christ Jesus, and I'm at peace. The things that I do here, my mind is so on him that I'm focused on him, and I don't worry about what's out there. I don't even worry about my own worries, you know what I mean? To me, it is a sacred place, and it has always been that sacred place for me, even though I can, you know I can find that sacred place anywhere. But this building is more sacred; if I had to, like, escape, this would be the place I would escape to and come to, and I could just get right on the floor and go to sleep. Without the pillow, but that's what it's that's what it is to me, and it's very sacred, and when they come in and things are not right, it's just not right with me, that sacred place.

[01:02:25] EG: I have no comment on that.

[01:02:31] BH: What do you hope will come from this preservation project?

[01:02:38] CG: I am hoping that, just by putting the history out and people getting to know what the church is,

[01:02:57] CG: I'm hoping that it would be that sacred place for anyone to be able to come, be that place for the community, just a safe place for someone to be able to come and have that connection with God. And if they're searching for that connection, I hope they can be able to find it here. It's something that I would always love to see stand regardless. I wouldn't want to see it torn down for nothing, because there's so much, so much a person can get from this, you know, just coming to church and having that closer relationship, being able to build your faith and having a closer relationship with God, and a place where you can see that and feel it and be recognized. And respected.

[01:04:18] BH: Do you guys have anything else that you would like to add?

[01:04:23] CG: Yeah. She says, anything that you would like to add?

[01:04:28] BH: Okay. Then we can end it.