This interview of Tooey Cameron was recorded on June 15, 2018, by parishioner Tom Birch in connection with the Bicentennial Celebration of Christ Church Georgetown.

Tom Birch: This is Tom Birch here with Tooey Cameron. We're at her house on N Street talking about her life with Christ Church. Tooey, let's just start with what it was that drew you to Christ Church. When was that?

Tooey: My husband and I got married in 1971 and we lived on the other side of Wisconsin. Both of us were cradle Episcopalians and had gone to church school, so church was important to us.

St. John's Church was only two blocks from our house, so we went to St. John's Church to begin. Then in 1980, we moved to 29th and N, so we were much nearer Christ Church.

I also have to say the minister at St. John's at that time was kind of problematic. I also really liked Bill Clarkson who was one of the assistant rectors with Sanford Garner.

That's basically how we came to Christ Church, and also Juan and his first wife had gone to Christ Church and Dr. Anschutz had married them. He had an affinity with Christ Church. Also, it's about a seven-minute walk from my house. I feel very lucky to live near my church.

Tom: It's wonderful as a parish church for our neighborhood.

Tooey: Exactly, I'm overly glad that people from outside of Georgetown come to Christ Church.

Tom: How did you then become involved in the life of the parish? The sorts of activities and opportunities for engagement?

Tooey: Let's see, in the '90s I decided to go to Wesley seminary to study theology. I didn't go to Virginia Theological Seminary because they weren't taking part-time students then, whereas Wesley was and that was such an exciting investigation and study of the Bible and ethics and church history which I've never really had. Anyway I graduated in 2002.

Shortly before that, when I was still at Wesley we started an Education for Ministry group at Christ Church and I think we read St. Luke. It was a four-year study just during the school year. The first year you study the Old Testament, the Hebrew Bible and then the New Testament, then church history and finally theology in the fourth year.

We had an amazing group, Bill Burns, Eve Barsoum, Anne Roulhac, and Davis Robinson, and two people who died while we were doing this course, Kitty Cochrane and amazing Steve Kurtz, who had been the headmaster at Exeter.
There were several other people during the time, but I don't think I've ever had such a close communion with people.

You talked about things you don't usually talk about, and you had to do a presentation, and somebody did, and it was a getting together of souls and fun as well as very spiritual.

**Tom**: I found even from myself that those small group opportunities are so essential to having an experience with a few others that as you say that we wouldn't have otherwise.

**Tooey**: If you knew people kind of on the periphery, but then when you are together talking about your own life and things you've been studying, it was just amazing.

Let me see what I did next. I was on the vestry when Rita was here. I'm not quite sure. Maybe it was the end of the beginning of 2000s.

**Tom**: It was in early 2000, yes.

**Tooey**: Wonderful Steve Hadley was on it too. It was amazing. There were other great people. I particularly remember him. I was a troublemaker then sometimes, too. We were talking about the shelter. I couldn't believe that Christ Church didn't have a shower or a washing machine.

I really fought for that. Others did too. I remember causing much too much of a fuss. How could we be a church helping the homeless without doing that?

**Tom**: It actually was such a key service because the Georgetown Ministry Center, which was our partner in serving the homeless, did not have showering facilities. You see?

**Tooey**: I wasn't sure.

**Tom**: We really opened up ways to serve people that weren't there at all. Kudos for pushing the levers.

**Tooey**: Others did too.

**Tooey**: Now, let me think. Sometime around there, in the early 2000s, Rita asked me to get involved with SOME, So Others Might Eat, which was serving breakfast only five times a year when there was a fifth Tuesday of the month. Bill Burns helped with SOME too.

I remember at the early point we served French toast and sausage or something. Bill Burns and I would meet over at some food place in Virginia that had one-day-old Wonder Bread. That was one of our servings.

Thank goodness, after a while, they moved to healthier food. They had eggs, and sausage, and biscuits or something good. That went on for a couple years. Rita asked me to be the head of So Others Might Eat. That lasted probably eight or nine years.
That was wonderful too. It was basically getting people to show up at 6:00 in the morning. Again, that was a community. They were a wonderful group of young and old who showed up and cooked. I finally passed that on to Rich Bland. He is now the head of it. He's done a really good job with people who he's worked with and served.

Tom: We got used to, year, after year, after year, hearing the announcement from the pulpit. "When you're looking for volunteers for So Others Might Eat, contact Tooey Cameron." [laughs]

Tooey: People were really nice. There were many wonderful people...Corky Stone. It was a very good group of us who did that. That was really so satisfying and nice.

I was only disappointed that we didn't serve. Basically, we cooked. You really didn't get to meet the homeless there. That was a disappointment to me. We had a little bit of contact with them.

Tom: It's a good ministry.

Tooey: In early 2000s, Juan and I went to Egypt and to Jordan. When we were driving around Amman we saw all the refugee camps that were right there covering the hillsides and everything.

I was in total despair about that. I came back, and I asked Stuart, "Stuart, can't we do something for the Middle East and for these refugees?" We got a group together, called the Middle East Mission Group. We supported various different groups there. Mainly the American Friends of The Episcopal Diocese in Jerusalem, which helped Palestinians.

It had schools and hospitals. Based in Jerusalem was where St. George's Cathedral was, which is the American Episcopal Diocese.

In 2009, the cathedral organized a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. I went on that. I don't remember if anybody else from Christ Church went on that. That was just life-changing. John Peterson, who had been the canon at the cathedral. He'd also been the head of St. George's College in Jerusalem for many years. He led our group.

We went around Jerusalem, mostly the Palestinian part. We went into Palestine. We went into Nazareth and to the Sea of Galilee. We had an amazing local guide whose name was Iad Quamry. He was just getting started with John.

John knew everything about the history, and the Bible, and the story. Iad became his right-hand man. The next year, 2010, we had a group from Christ Church that went. That was fabulous. I really helped pull that together. John was the leader, and Iad was too.

I think all of us were Betsy Rackley, Rae Wine, Juan, Andrew Hamilton, Bob Norris, and John and Nina Richardson. There were several others.

Tom: You stirred up people to join the group?
Tooey: Yeah. I got to talk about how great it was. We did more that time than we had done the year before. Since the year before they had done a lot of excavation of this town up near Nazareth, where they thought that Joseph and Jesus had worked. Joseph as a carpenter.

Both years, we went to Nazareth, to the convent there -- a Catholic convent -- where they had discovered in the basement, something had fallen down at one point in the convent. Underneath the convent was this huge basement. They think that is the street where Jesus lived. That was mind-boggling. It was really, really great.

One of the best things about those pilgrimages was that we had many talks from local people about the Palestinian issue. We'd drive and look at all the walls. Iad would talk about trying to get through the checkpoints. Of course, now, eight years later, it's 100 times worse. It gave us a flavor. We were a very pro-Palestinian group. Which Iad and John both were

Tom: It's valuable to have that exposure, to see for yourselves.

Tooey: 2016, there had been all this talk about refugees being brought into this country. Tim Cole wasn't here then. I had spoken to Kristen Hawley. I said, "Kristen, do you think we could support a refugee family?" She said, "Well, I think that's a great idea." Morgan Hodgson, and Ann Emmitt, and Janet McClelland and I got started with that. It just happened that parishioners at St. John's Georgetown and at All Souls Memorial Church wanted to do the same thing. The three parishes joined together, and we formed the refugee group.

We supported the Afghan family who arrived in September of 2017. They were amazing. Shall I tell you about them?

Tom: Sure, tell us a little bit about them.

Tooey: His name is Habibullah Habib. He speaks good English. He worked for six years for the Army Corps of Engineers in Afghanistan. He has a wife. He arrived with his magnificent wife and two little girls, aged two and four. She got off the plane and it was announced that she was pregnant.

During the nine months that we'd been working with them, including Lorraine Cole, who was a really good English teacher, because she teaches dyslexics. She worked a lot with teaching Shahida her English.

Jane Newport was probably the best at doing the English. She had worked in ESL. There were several people from the other parishes, and there were super members from Christ Church. The whole group got Habib a beginning job in a company out of Maryland. He was testing concrete.

It wasn't all that he would wanted to do. It was only part-time. He didn't get as much pay as he needed, but it was a start. We really needed to get him a car. One of our wonderful parishioners, Leezzee Porter, offered $5,000 to be matched by others at Christ Church. We raised $10,000 and got him a car. Morgan did a huge amount in that. That was really good.
The older girl went to the public school, which was about a quarter of a mile away. She could walk and is doing pretty well in English. The little girl stayed home with her mother. Shahida grew up with five or six sisters. Everyone always was together.

I think it was hard for her in the United States to not have family around. Especially when the baby was born on May 3rd and she didn't have her mother there to help her. Our three parishes have done a lot to help her. Because she had a cesarean, she couldn't do as much. We are still working hard.

The little girls are sharp as tacks and very nice. Extremely well-brought-up children. The family, I just can't speak more highly about this family, really, really nice.

**Tom:** It's wonderful to have our church work in partnership with other parishes on a project like this.

**Tooey:** Exactly. I had known people at St. John's because I'd been there years ago. I'd never known anyone from All Souls. It's wonderful. We've all fit together. The six, seven leaders meet together once a month and talk about what's gone right and what's gone wrong, and how to deal with it.

That has been an amazing experience. It's been challenging in a small way, but not hugely. We had the family to lunch at Christ Church in January. They got to meet all the other volunteers from Christ Church, and Tim and Lorraine Cole. That was really fun. It's a great group.

**Tom:** They live in Silver Spring, do they?

**Tooey:** No, they live in Mount Rainier, which is near Hyattsville. The Lutheran Social Services is the group that finds these families and works together with the churches. They're near Lutheran Social Services.

**Tom:** All works very well.

**Tooey:** Yeah. You bet it does.

**Tom:** Tooey, it sounds like with all of these various activities that you've engaged in over the years, that what you might have experienced as your own spiritual growth, I would guess, has come through these activities.

**Tooey:** Right. That's very true because I've always wanted to do things with other people, help other people. We're so privileged. That's who Jesus is. It's helping other people. If you can't do some of that, what is church for? Church is a leader. Social services and social justice are very important to me.

That's one of my displeasures with Christ Church, is that I never really knew that politics was supposed to be left at the door at Christ Church. Only one time did I ever hear Stuart say anything about a social issue. He said at the pulpit, "I'm all for the minimum wage to be increased. I want that to happen."
He had gotten that from John Graham, who wrote a newsletter every week. Stuart picked that up from John Graham. I think Stuart got a lot of criticism, if you can believe it. I was so pleased to hear him say something.

In that vein, maybe you shouldn't even say that. This year I've been very disappointed with the social justice issue at Christ Church. With all the school shootings, first of all. I understand Tim's belief that schism is worse than heresy.

Bill Burns, and Kitty Hempstone, and Linda Gill, and I wanted...they were going to have the vigil at the cathedral for the kids..

We wanted Christ Church to put an announcement of that in the bulletin or from the pulpit. Absolutely not. The two leaders of the Vestry came, and said, "No. Politics have to be left at the door." That was really disappointing, upsetting. I understand, but I just don't think that that is...who are we called to be if we're supposed to be Jesus?

I don't think that hunger and poverty, and racism are political issues. Sermons from the pulpit talk about them indirectly, which is good. Maybe I'm the only one who hears the indirect comments about it. I don't think you have to bring politics in. We should be talking more about who Jesus is and what he stood for.

**Tom:** What he wants for us to do. It's interesting because even in the world of politics, the word "politics" is thrown around so often. "Oh, you're getting political." That kind of thing. It's so often in the ears and mind of those who are thinking about it. What it really is there for us.

**Tooey:** Isn't politics the art of consensus?

**Tom:** It should be.

**Tooey:** That's what it is. As Christians, we have a consensus, it seems to me, about who we should be.

**Tom:** Following Jesus.

**Tooey:** Exactly. The changes at Christ Church that I've seen...My daughter got married there in 2001, it was red carpet all through.

**Tom:** That's right.

**Tooey:** Not too long thereafter, we got the beautiful tile floor and the chandeliers. When we first started saying The Peace, I thought, "Oh my gosh. I'm not into that. I'm too restrained." It's wonderful now. It's really nice to be able to turn around and say peace to somebody you don't really know, which is great.

Another thing I miss at Christ Church in the service is the prayer, "We give the most humble and hearty thanks for all of that goodness and loving kindness to us." Basically, the gratitude is who I
want to be. I miss that prayer. Although Tim has included it on occasion. That's something that I miss.

**Tom:** Has the congregation changed much over those years that you've been coming? Except that we're the older ones now. [laughs]

**Tooey:** Yeah. I don't know as many people as I used to, but I still know a lot. I like that there are younger people. I love the Sunday afternoon service where there are a lot of different constituents. People don't have to get dressed up. Even in the church services, people don't get all dressed up. They don't have to.

I like to get dressed up because I don't get dressed up all the time. That's really nice. It's great. I'm glad to see new people. I don't know how many parishioners we have, but I'm always hoping that it's going to grow. How to make it grow is not my business. I have my own ideas. The clergy has better ideas. At the 11 o'clock, there are young couples. That's just really great.

**Tom:** Yeah. They bring their friends, which is nice. You talked about the prayer of humble contrition, have there been other kinds of changes in the liturgy since you first started coming? Sanford Garner was the rector then.

**Tooey:** I honestly don't remember. The peace was the thing that I remember.

**Tom:** Yeah, the big change.

**Tooey:** Otherwise, it's a beautiful liturgy. The liturgy is one of the most important parts of the church to me, the service. I love the words. That's really how I felt that I got to know God, was through the liturgy. The music is amazing, too. Music today is just out of this world, beautiful. It's very, very spiritual, exciting, comforting, and just very deep. Deep, deep feeling.

**Tom:** That's true. It is that way. Now, your two children grew up here.

**Tooey:** They did, but they don't go to church, unfortunately.

**Tom:** Did they go to Sunday school?

**Tooey:** No, I don't think they did. They went to Sunday school a little bit at St. John's. Juan and I made a mistake when we didn't make them go to Sunday school. We lost that one.

Nonie was confirmed at Christ Church when she was about 13. Rory has never been confirmed. I mention it to him every once in a while. [laughs] I'm not a good representative of the Sunday school.

**Tom:** You're making up for it enough. You're rather engaged.

**Tooey:** I don't know. I went to church as a young person.

**Tom:** I was going to ask...
**Tooey:** I went to church when I was in Louisville, Kentucky. I went to Sunday school.

**Tom:** Was it a church like Christ Church?

**Tooey:** No. It was a small, country church mostly, where Trudie Musson’s father was the minister. Nina and I were in the choir. It was a small church. It was really, really nice. My grandmother in Kentucky always went to church. My parents did not go to church. They sent us to church.

I went to a boarding school where every morning we had prayers. Every Sunday night, we had hymns. Every Sunday, we went to Episco, Congo or Catho church.

**Tom:** [laughs]

**Tooey:** That was just how it was. I went to college. Until I got married, I didn't go very much around here. One morning, I was married. We started going to church.

**Tom:** Most of us in those college years and early adult years stepped away for a few years.

**Tooey:** That's true. I'm so glad I married someone who church was very important to him too. That was lucky. Juan died nine years ago. Maybe a year or so afterwards, I was sitting in a pew and I just knew he was sitting right beside me. I just felt his presence. That was a wonderful experience.

**Tom:** It's lovely to have a place right here in our neighborhood where we can have those experiences.

**Tooey:** Exactly. He's buried in the columbarium at Christ Church and my name is right next to his. I feel lucky about that. It's so great.

**Tom:** Tooey, this has been a wonderful time to hear about your experiences there, which is a lot of things that I never knew about. Other people would be so interested to learn all of these things.

**Tooey:** I've been so lucky. I forgot about the altar guild. Oh, my heavens!

How could I have forgotten about the altar guild? Which again, is a wonderful, wonderful service at the church.

**Tom:** What does that really involve?

**Tooey:** Every church service — all four Sunday services, and Wednesday Eucharist in the morning, and Friday Eucharist at noon — there's a member of the altar guild who sets up the vessels for communion. Puts out the veil, and the wine, and the water.

Then you help with weddings and funerals. There's a big group of us. On Saturday, there's a group that sets up for Sunday. They make sure all the linen is pressed and hanging out there.
I love the altar guild. I do the eight and the nine o'clock on Sunday. The nine o'clock is really fun because you get to see all the young families come up and go. Altar guild is wonderful. To take care of all the silver. Make sure it's beautiful and shiny. Glenn bought and I gave a...what are they called? The little bowls that Tim rinses his hands in holy water before he serves.

That's in memory of Juan. That's nice. How could I have forgotten the altar guild?

**Tom:** That's lovely. It's something you're doing all the time.

**Tooey:** Yeah. Really only once a month. Twice a month.

**Tom:** This is why I see you going back and forth to church all the time. [laughs]

**Tooey:** That's right. I've forgotten morning prayer too. I've been morning prayer leader for about eight or nine years. I'm so sorry I forgot that. I'd say in 2011 or '12. I think Stuart said they were looking for more people to lead morning prayer. I volunteered.

Glenn showed me exactly what to do, and what to say and how to say it. It's absolutely lovely. It's very quiet. You read a Psalm and the prayers. There are usually only three or four people there. Of course, the church has noonday and evening prayer too. Morning prayer is a wonderful way to...how could I have forgotten that? I'm so sorry. Those are duties in the church.

**Tom:** That's right. Not just the mission.

**Tooey:** Yeah, not just the mission, exactly. I'm very lucky to do that. Tim brings his dog in the morning, which is great. It's a wonderful, wonderful church in every way. I'm so lucky to be there. It wouldn't be great to have a big rabble rouser. You've got to do this, you've got to do that. I'm ambivalent about that.

**Tom:** It serves us in so many ways.

**Tooey:** The church serves us in every way.

**Tom:** Thank you very much. This has been a lovely time.

**Tooey:** Thank you so much for having me. I'm embarrassed that I forgot the altar guild.

**Tom:** There's one more thing, Tooey, you wanted to talk about.

**Tooey:** I've been very remiss not to say what a major impression Stuart made in all our lives by the assistants he chose over the years. From Rita, and Deirdre, and Lupton.

**Tom:** Tom Murphy.

**Tooey:** Tom Murphy. Oh my God, Tom Murphy.

**Tom:** Kristin Hawley and Elizabeth Keeler.
Tooey: Kristin and Elizabeth, who ran the church alone for a year. Stuart has a knack, knows just what's right. Congratulations, Stewart.

One of the most important people at Christ Church all these years is Glenn Metzdorf, who has the nicest way about him, is so careful and thorough. He is there to help with any kind of an issue. From opening the safe for the altar guild to making sure the plate is out in the right place. He is a lovely, lovely man, besides being a good administrator.

Stuart has always been fabulous. When he was in Iraq, that was a very moving time. A very scary time. Everyone was so proud of him that he did that. Years later, John Richardson, my brother-in-law, had been the property person at Christ Church for many years.

Never charged Christ Church for his time, and was devoted to keeping the church up to par. When John Richardson and Nina's son got married in Kentucky, Stuart came down and officiated at the wedding, which was so wonderfully kind.

Tom: That really was a great thing for everybody...

Tooey: That was fun.

Tom: ...to have the continuity and that connection.

Tooey: It was really nice. There are so many stories about Christ Church. I'm so glad lots of people are talking about all the different ones.

Tom: They are. And yours will be right there.