

# Centennial Conversations

~ interview by Clara & Steve Williams

## Meet Sarah Tatum



Sarah Tatum grew up on the south side of Chicago near Lake Michigan, recalling that Martin Luther King said Chicago was one of the most segregated cities he ever visited. An only child, her early memories include fishing in Lake Michigan with her mother, and taking the “L”, the subway and buses to navigate the city with her friends to the movies, and shopping downtown. Sarah attended Hyde Park High School which was a “feeder school” to the University of Chicago, which she attended, sharing “I thought I was going to be a doctor, so I majored in biology.”

In the early 1960’s her extended family made the decision to move to California because “we had friends and relatives here in California, and the weather was much better than in Chicago.”

Their first house was on Walnut Street where Parsons is now and Sarah remembers that “the freeway came in and knocked out a lot of houses. I was teaching biology at St. Andrew’s School at that time, and the priest said, “I love freeways, but this is wrong, knocking down all those houses.”

Asked about what brought her to All Saints Church, Sarah recalls “We were going to Friendship Baptist Church and I was teaching Sunday School when I heard about the good nursery school at All Saints. I enrolled Liz there and somehow became head of the parent committee. I would write the little notices that let parents know what’s going on at the church.

One day the rector, George Regas, and his associate, Houston Horn, came to visit the parents. They wanted to tell us all about the various services they had and invited us to come. The first service I went to was a rock mass. Then after that I went to a Thanksgiving service, and then to Christmas. I saw the cute little Minisingers with their little plaid skirts and walking around singing. I said, ‘Gee, my kid could do that.’ So I called the choral director and asked her if Elizabeth could join. So she did, and that’s where we’ve been ever since.

I love the liturgy and the processions, and when I learned about all the social issues that they were trying to fight. One of the things they were working on was racism and I thought that was very important. Another thing that was happening was Margaret Sedenquist asked George Regas why there were no women ushers. He didn’t have a good answer for that, so he changed the rule, and I was recruited as one of the first ones.

Then I got involved with Parish Council planning events and all that. Then when COLORS (Christians Offering Love to Overcome Racism in Society) started at the time of the police brutality against Rodney King, I was able to join that and I always liked it.

We joined forces with a church in Los Angeles [Praises of Zion Missionary Baptist] to help them with things they needed after the riots. They came to All Saints at least one Sunday and we also went to their church. COLORS was a resource for understanding at All Saints and I was glad to be part of it.

**What's one of your favorite memories of your time at All Saints?**

One thing I did was work on getting more images of people of color on display around the church. I wanted to have photos of the people who won Nobel Prizes, like Martin Luther King, Jr., Desmond Tutu and Rigoberta Menchú. I was able to get those in by fussing and complaining, and with the help of Marty Coleman. We went to a staff meeting – I think we brought them pizza, or something – and made our case. And I was able to get pictures of the black bishops up, too – I think they're in the office. Bishop Talton (Suffragan Bishop of Los Angeles 1991-2010) saw them and asked whose project that was. Liz was there and she said, "My mother's." So that was good. At least if you keep trying, people listen.

**What hope do you have for All Saints Church in the next 100 years?**

Well, I hope they'll still keep working on more visible ethnic representation. It seems like there's plenty of space for people of color to be able to tell their own story, so there isn't just a void. Because you know, really good African American people have come through that church and have done really good things.

