

MISSION AT THE EXIT RAMPS OF THE REFUGEE HIGHWAY IN AN AGE
OF GLOBALISATION: INTEGRATING REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS
INTO THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

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Abstract

In the face of globalisation, one of the challenges for Christians ministering to asylum seekers and refugees in the United Kingdom is the question of integrating Christian asylum seekers and refugees into the Christian community. British churches and para-church organisations that are involved in refugee ministry have to decide whether they want to support the formation of independent refugee churches or the integration of refugees and asylum seekers into local indigenous churches. This thesis examines these options from a missiological perspective. Two social research projects form the heart of this study. One compares the life and ministry of two mature minority ethnic churches, the other investigates the integration process at a British church that has been involved in refugee ministry for almost a decade.

Contrary to the widespread view that the establishment of homogeneous churches is crucial for the mission of the church in postmodern British society, the findings of this research suggest that the integration of asylum seekers and refugees into indigenous British churches is the better option. They further demonstrate that it is not the mono-ethnic refugee church but the multi-ethnic church which makes the greater contribution to the integration of Christian asylum seekers and refugees and to the *missio Dei* in Britain. In a multi-ethnic church, asylum seekers and refugees serve as role models to British Christians and especially as effective agents of mission. These research findings also show that the integration of asylum seekers and refugees is promoted through the *congregation within the congregation* model and an incarnational approach to mission. However, they equally indicate that various stumbling blocks can hinder the integration process. These include a low ecclesiology, a conversionist approach to mission, a lack of awareness of globalisation, and a reactive leadership style and church culture.

Key terms:

Asylum seekers, globalisation, hospitality, incarnational mission, integration, international migration, immigration models, leadership styles, minority ethnic church, multi-congregational church, multi-ethnic church, racism, refugee highway, refugees

Declaration

Student Number: 3590-596-4

I declare that

'Mission at the Exit Ramps of the Refugee Highway in an Age of Globalisation: Integrating Refugees and Asylum Seekers into the Christian Community in the United Kingdom' is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

Signature:.....

Curriculum Vitae

Thorsten Prill was born on 1st October 1965 in Duisburg, Germany. After graduation from grammar school in 1985 he took part in a banking trainee programme. He then studied economics at the University of Duisburg from 1988-1994 and gained the degree of Diplom-Volkswirt. From 1994 to 1999 he worked as a senior manager for Bank für Kirche und Diakonie, a bank owned by the Protestant Church in Germany. During this time he trained as a non-stipendiary minister in the Protestant Church of the Rhineland and was ordained in this church in December 1997.

In 1999 Thorsten Prill moved to England. He studied theology at St John's College, Nottingham and Christian leadership and missiology at Cliff College, a Methodist training college in Calver, Sheffield. He holds a Master of Theology degree (Open University), Certificate in Theology and Ministry (University of Nottingham), and a Postgraduate Diploma in Leadership, Renewal and Mission Studies (University of Sheffield).

From 2001 to 2006 he served as assistant pastor in the German-speaking Synod of Lutheran, Reformed and United Congregations in Great Britain. In 2004 he also became Lutheran and International Chaplain at the University of Nottingham. Since October 2006 he has been minister of the Nottingham Chinese Christian Church.

Thorsten Prill has published articles on evangelism, spiritual renewal and Lutheran ethics. He is married to Kerstin, who works as a personnel administrator in Nottingham.

For my family

*Land der dunklen Wälder
und kristall'nen Seen,
über weite Felder
lichte Wunder geh'n.*

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Abbreviations

AIC	African Initiated Church
BBC	British-born Chinese
BSA	British Sociological Association
CBCEW	Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales
COCM	Chinese Overseas Christian Mission
CofE	Church of England
CPCE	Community of Protestant Churches in Europe
CRC	Conference of Rhine Churches
CTBI	Churches Together in Britain and Ireland
EA	Evangelical Alliance
EKD	Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland / Evangelical Church in Germany
ELCE	Evangelical Lutheran Church of England
ESGB	Evangelische Synode deutscher Sprache in Großbritannien / German-speaking Synod of Lutheran, Reformed and United Congregations in Great Britain
EU	European Union
GLCN	German Lutheran Congregation Nottingham
HERO	Higher Education & Research Opportunities in the UK Ltd.
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IRC	International Rescue Committee
LCWE	Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
MCDSR	Methodist Church Division of Social Responsibility
NAAR	National Assembly Against Racism
NAMB	North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention
NASS	National Asylum Support Service
NCCC	Nottingham Chinese Christian Church
RHP	Refugee Highway Partnership
SDSRO	Southwell Diocesan Social Responsibility Office
UK	The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
UNDESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency
UoN	University of Nottingham
WCC	World Council of Churches
WEA	World Evangelical Alliance
WEAMC	World Evangelical Alliance Missions Commission

All biblical quotations and references have been taken from the New Revised Standard Version.

1. Introduction

1.1 Research background and purpose

The increased cross-border movement of millions of people, which is a common feature of globalisation, impacts British society and the church in Britain. Since the mid-nineties the UK has seen a significant number of forced migrants entering the country in order to seek refuge and apply for asylum. Migrants have been both Christian and non-Christian. Some forced migrants were Christians before they came to the UK, others embraced Christianity following their arrival in the UK. They face two immediate challenges: integration into British society and establishment in the Christian community.

The purpose of this study is to contribute to the UK debate on how best to integrate Christian asylum seekers and refugees into the Christian community in an age of globalisation. In particular, the study examines forms of integration which foster Christian mission in Britain. This dimension of mission has not been researched so far.

As the literature review will show, UK data mainly deals with pastoral issues and the practical needs of asylum seekers and refugees. The integration of asylum seekers and refugees into the church, and their contribution to religious life in Britain, are treated in general terms only. In contrast, this study begins by exploring the steps which need to be taken for successful integration but then goes on to examine the specific contributions which Christian asylum seekers and refugees can make to the life and mission of the Church. This has particular relevance in post-Christian, postmodern Britain.

1.2 Personal motivation

The starting point for this investigation was my placement with International Teams in the summer of 2001 as part of my theological training at St John's College, Nottingham. International Teams is a para-church organisation involved in church planting, relief and

community development projects, urban poor ministries, and medical care as well as ministry to asylum seekers, refugees and ethnic minorities. I chose this placement for three reasons. Firstly, coming from a family with a refugee background, I felt drawn to this form of ministry. Secondly, I identified the fact that the arrival of increasing numbers of asylum seekers and refugees would challenge the Church in its mission in Western Europe. Thirdly, I saw the importance of assisting colleagues in their attempts to grapple with the complex issues surrounding forced migration.

After my graduation I continued to be involved with refugees and ethnic minorities in Nottingham in a variety of roles. Between September 2001 and September 2006 I served as assistant pastor of the German-speaking Lutheran Congregations in the English Midlands. In 2004 I was appointed part-time International Chaplain at the University of Nottingham, working not only with international students and scholars but in partnership with two local minority ethnic churches and indigenous churches, each exercising their own international ministry. Over the last five years I became the regular guest speaker at meetings of Christian refugees and asylum seekers from Iran and Eastern Africa. This engagement with refugees and ethnic minorities highlighted the importance of integrating asylum seekers and refugees into the local Christian community.

1.3 Review of relevant literature

1.3.1 Asylum Seekers, refugees and the British church

In 2003, Churches Together in Britain and Ireland published *Asylum Voices* (Bradstock & Trotman 2003:65) in an attempt to articulate the views of asylum seekers in Britain. It featured interviews with individual asylum seekers and their families from many different ethnocultural backgrounds (:65). The authors, in eight chapters, identify the reasons why they leave their countries for the UK and explain the asylum support system (:1-32). They also look at a number of questions including integration (:48-51), detention (:33-40), and health (:52-59) and reflect theologically on them. Bradstock and Trotman conclude that ‘a more humanitarian, compassionate and fact-based response’ to asylum is needed (:63), and take up

the practical suggestions of the Churches' Commission for Racial Justice on how this might be achieved (:63-64). These recommendations include the following: increased cooperation between the British Government and other Western countries and international organisations in tackling the causes of forced migration and the provision of better language teaching facilities for asylum seekers (:63-64). National church bodies are urged to intensify their political lobbying on behalf of asylum seekers (:63). Local congregations and their leaders are encouraged to develop their understanding of the issues by consulting the growing body of information on the subject, especially data on the root causes of forced migration (:63).

Asylum Voices asserts that Christians should recognise the human experience behind the statistics and God's call to respond. The authors claim that the right to work, which asylum seekers are denied, is essential for integration into British society (Bradstock & Trotman 2003:48) given the fact that work gives human beings 'purpose, fulfilment, worth, and satisfaction' and the opportunity of 'co-creating with God' (:48). However, what is missing in their chapter on integration is a discussion on the integration of Christian asylum seekers into the Christian community. The authors fail to mention this issue at all, even though some of their interviewees were Christians.¹

In her article *Welcome the Stranger*, Helen Jaeger (2003) tells the story of three Christians and their work with asylum seekers in Manchester, Glasgow and Birmingham. She details the practical, emotional and spiritual help that forced migrants receive from these Christian workers (:36). She also identifies some of the problems that asylum seekers and their helpers experience in the UK, such as racism, a lack of financial funding, and unjust decisions by the authorities (:36). One of the workers featured in Jaeger's article argues that education is important for the integration of asylum seekers into British society (:36). Another Christian refugee worker, a former asylum seeker himself, emphasises the need of refugees to be

¹ One asylum seeker from Iran spoke about the religious persecution that he had suffered in his home country. He said: 'I was working in Korea, four years, and going to church every week. When I was back in Iran, I carry on to the church again. After one year, the security forces in Iran arrested me (:7-8). Another asylum seeker from Zaire identified himself as a Roman Catholic Christian (:57), while a Romanian asylum seeker told the researcher: 'In the Bible, it says that God protects the widow and the orphan, and this country have the same law...' (:57).

integrated into the Christian church on the grounds that they have much to contribute (:37).

Jaeger finishes her article with a strong appeal:

Dave, Margaret and other Christians are working sacrificially to welcome strangers to our shores. What will our church and individual response be to the asylum seekers who arrive in our town, at our church, in our society? If we take Christ's words seriously and seek to obey we must welcome them (:37).

While *Asylum Voices* and *Welcome the Stranger* are concerned about the plight of UK asylum seekers, Nick Spencer's (2004) book *Asylum and Immigration – A Christian Perspective on a Polarised Debate* has its focus on concepts, principles, and policies. Spencer examines the British asylum system and the reasons behind the increase in UK asylum applications (:15-36), to which he applies a biblical analysis using such concepts as nation, ethnicity, unity, and diversity, together with different Hebrew terms for 'alien' (:85-123). Spencer concludes that there are a number of biblically based 'overarching principles' which should be translated into government policy (:124-125). These principles are: the unity of humankind (:125-126), the reality of nations (:126), the openness of borders (:126-127), the obligation to love foreigners (:128), basic rights and responsibilities of immigrants (:129), a willingness to integrate and to accept integration (:130-131), the exercise of compassion for those who are vulnerable (:131-132), and the role of the Christian church as a 'model of a cross-cultural community' (:132). Spencer describes the church as role model in the following terms:

The Church should transcend all national borders and act as the model for an international community. It should be prepared to challenge government policy if that policy flouts gospel principles. It should exemplify the welcome and hospitality and humanising attitude to the stranger that Christ so powerfully speaks of in Matthew 25. It should, in short, be the model of an international, inter-ethnic, locally active, belonging community (:132).

Spencer is right to argue that the church has a prophetic task in challenging government where, for example, secular authorities separate asylum seeker parents from their children in order to force them to leave the country - the *clausula Petri* of Acts 5:29 applies (Prill 2005a:20). However, it is quite another question on how far Spencer's principles can form the basis of government policy in a postmodern society where the Christian faith continues to lose influence. And what he does not do is to elaborate on how the church in the UK can serve as a

cross-cultural role model on a local, regional and national level. He limply writes: 'Exactly what this entails will be debatable' (Spencer 2004:132).

In 2004 *Welcoming Asylum Seekers* was published in the Grove ethics series. In this booklet Stephen Burns (2004) reflects upon his experience of working with both Christian and non-Christian asylum seekers and refugees in an Anglican parish in the north east of England. As the title indicates, Burns' main focus is on the initial reception of refugees and asylum seekers rather than on their integration into the local Christian community. He identifies several problems or barriers that churches may face. These problems include: racism both outside and within the church community (:22), cultural homogeneity of the local church (:20), the lack of sufficient resources (:17), and the fear of local people that they might be displaced by the new emphasis in mission (:17-18). Burns claims that some of these problems are closely linked to the fact that asylum seekers are often placed in socially deprived areas with churches that are stretched to their limits (:23). 'They are likely to be churches in areas', he writes, 'in which forms of socio-economic deprivation are already entrenched, and which are perhaps heavily burdened by the multiple pressures of their difficult context' (:23).

As a result of his own observations and reflections Burns (2004:23) formulates three theological convictions that he considers to be important for ministry among refugees and asylum seekers. Firstly, he argues that the *doctrine of the community of saints* requires practical solidarity of the wider church with those local congregations involved in refugee ministry (:23-24). Secondly, he believes that the sacrament of Holy Communion can play a central role for the practice of hospitality to asylum seekers (:24). And finally, he claims that it is important to practise the hospitality of Jesus which is characterised by a self-effacement that encourages people to seek Jesus' presence in the unimportant and marginalised (:24-25).

Burns' understanding of refugee ministry is predominantly that of a need-based ministry (2004:19). Both Christian and non-Christian asylum seekers and refugees are almost exclusively seen as people who need the practical and spiritual support of the British church (:17&20). That asylum seekers and refugees can actually contribute something to the life of their host community is referred to only briefly when he speaks of the 'great joy' that he

experienced during the visit of a group of Muslim asylum seekers from Afghanistan (:19-20). He fails to mention the contribution which Christian asylum seekers and refugees can make to the mission of the church in Britain.

The same is true in *Changing Society and the Churches: Race* by Kenneth Leech (2005), an Anglican theologian and former Race Relations Officer for the Church of England's Board for Social Responsibility. Leech devotes one chapter of his book to the issue of immigration in which he critically analyses the claims that Britain is a 'soft touch' for asylum seekers and refugees (:46-47). He also points out that the issues of race and immigration are closely related. 'Although the debate on immigration has focused on numbers,' Leech writes, 'the colour and the character of the immigrants has always been a factor, usually the major one' (:49). For Leech the role of the churches in this debate is clear:

Christian and other faith communities will have a major task in trying to develop a rational and humane debate on the issue, in combating racism and hysteria in immigration policy and rhetoric, and in providing support for the victims of these policies (:67).

In contrast to Burns (2004) and Leech (2005), the Church of England's (2005:53-55) report *A Place of Refuge*² recognises that asylum seekers and refugees can contribute to the life of the church in the UK. Contributions can be made by both Christian and non-Christian asylum seekers and refugees. The report claims that '[i]nteraction between those of the same faith, or those of different faiths or no faith, may challenge and cost, but will also bring great gain and the joy of relationship' (:55). The greatest gain, the authors of the report claim, comes through the establishment of personal friendships (:55).

Though the authors of *A Place of Refuge* (CofE 2005) see asylum seekers and refugees as agents of change, they consider these changes to be on a personal, individual level. Personal friendships with asylum seekers and refugees, they argue, can help British Christians 'to offer solidarity and compassion' to forced migrants (:55). In other terms, *A Place of Refuge* does not see Christian asylum seekers and refugees as equal partners in mission, but rather as those in need of support from the British church. A similar view is expressed in an interview with Sally Richmond of *Enabling Christians in Serving Refugees*, a network set up to help Christians to

² The report will be further discussed and analysed in chapter seven.

reach out to refugees and asylum seekers in the UK (Lifeworlds 2005). The interview, published as part of an article in *Interact*, focuses on the needs of refugees and asylum seekers. When being asked what churches or individual Christians could do for forced migrants Richmond answered:

Just as there's a whole spectrum of needs there's a whole spectrum of responses, so one thing that we can do is educate ourselves. There is a lot of misinformation at the moment, so we can find out what the facts are and make sure that we're not caught up in the whole myth-making process. We can be responsible with the language that we use and make sure we talk about refugees and asylum seekers in an appropriate way. We can pray, we can give. And then each of us can give different things (Lifeworlds 2005).

1.3.2 Mono-ethnic and multi-ethnic churches in Britain

In *Building Multi-Racial Churches* John Root (1994:7), an Anglican parish priest, asserts that the local church expresses God's will only when it reflects the ethnic diversity of its neighbourhood. He argues that 'unity-in-diversity' was a characteristic of the early church (:8-9).

Root (1994:14-15) identifies racism as the main barrier to the creation of multi-racial churches, especially racism against Black Christians. He identifies five symptoms of racism: (1) verbal racial abuse by White church members, (2) refusal to welcome Black people to the church, (3) refusal of White church members to change, (4) refusal to recognise the gifts of Black Christians, and (5) refusal to ask Black Christians to take on leadership responsibilities within the church (:15-21). Root writes about barriers to leadership in the following terms:

Racism is bound up with power. No people in world history have been as powerful as white people of western Europe and North America have been. This experience of power over other peoples developed a sense of superiority, of the rightness of such a situation. Dismantling this sense of superiority is fundamental to overcoming racism, and it is most threatened when it comes to non-whites taking power of whites (:20).

Having identified the obstacles for building multi-racial churches, Root (1994:25) goes on to argue that while there is no blue-print for success there are a number of conditions which optimise this possibility. Firstly, church leaders need to own the vision of a multi-racial church and develop a 'positive enthusiasm in welcoming and appreciating' Christians of other races. Secondly, churches need to identify the gifts that ethnic minorities can bring to them

(:28). Thirdly, churches need to reach out to younger Afro-Caribbean and Asian people who have no links with the Christian faith, through evangelism (31-32). Fourthly, churches need to develop 'multiple leadership' (:39). Multiple leadership, Root argues, strengthens the leadership of a church and helps ethnic groups to identify with their church leaders (:39). Finally, churches who want to be multi-racial churches need to find ways in which different cultures can live together in one church including sharing in one common worship service. He argues that this can be done in four different ways: (1) by blending, e.g. by using different types of music in the service, (2) by offering alternatives, e.g. by allowing people to dress for church meetings according to their individual preferences, (3) by parallels, e.g. by singing the same hymn together in different languages, and (4) by making choices, e.g. by deciding one standard of time-keeping for the services.

Root's (1994) analysis of church discrimination against Black Christians has been widely accepted. Thus, in the year 2000 the General Synod of the Church of England published a report entitled *Called to Lead: A Challenge to Include Minority Ethnic People* (Stephen Lawrence Follow-up Staff Group 2000), which confirms Root's findings more generally in the Church of England.³ However, despite his success there are weaknesses in Root's approach. Firstly, there are other obstacles to the formation of multi-racial churches than he identifies, different spiritual expectations and values being a case in point (cf. Wells 2004:2). Secondly, the resistance of church members to change may not only be due to racism, but can be accounted for in other ways: an expression of their personality or lack of experience with ethnic minorities.

Like Root (1994), Bob Jackson (2002:87), an Anglican research missionary with *Springboard* – the Church of England's evangelism initiative, argues that the Church of England must be multicultural. In *Hope for the Church – Contemporary Strategies for Growth* he claims that it is the calling of the national church in England to be there for the whole nation and not to withdraw into 'a small, sub-cultural ghetto based around a particular book,

³ The report states the following about Black people in the Church of England: 'Respondents felt that Black people in the Church of England today were considered, similarly to most institutions, to be few, marginalised and poorly treated. It was remarked that 'the name, Church of England says it all, only for English people' and felt that there were no Black priests and 'white people want a predominantly white-led church' (CofE 2000:18-19).

liturgy, type of music or preacher' (:87). Jackson believes that this is a 'gospel imperative'. Further, he claims that there is empirical evidence that multicultural churches in the UK are likely to reach more people than mono-cultural churches. Referring to the findings of the 1989 and 1998 Church Census Jackson writes:

[O]nly 20 per cent of all-white churches grew in the period, but 23 per cent of those with a 1-24 per cent ethnic mix, and 27 per cent of those with at least a 25 per cent ethnic mix. The richer the mix, the more likely a church is to grow and the less likely it is to shrink (:87).

Unlike Root (1994), Jackson (2002:89-90) does not consider inclusive worship an essential multicultural mission strategy. When services are used to express unity, Jackson warns, conflict is often unavoidable (:90). There is the danger that different groups in the church fight for control of the worship agenda, and those who lose are likely to leave the church. For Jackson, there are other models that can offer a diversity of culture in worship, fellowship and nurture and at the same time maintain unity: the multi-congregational model and the cell model (:89-90).

In the multi-congregational model, a local church offers a variety of services which all have their own distinctive styles (Jackson 2002:90). Such a strategy can, for example, lead to a situation where a church has a family congregation, a youth congregation, and a modern Eucharist congregation (:90). In such a church unity can be established through a shared church vision, a common leadership that affirms the various worship styles, occasional joint services, and mingling in the church's fellowship groups (:90). In contrast, the cell model offers only one single worship service for the whole church but in addition a number of cells or small groups of differing styles (:90). The benefit of cells is that they offer worshippers a place where they can belong, serve and receive pastoral support.

Some of Jackson's (2002) views are shared by other British theologians. Michael Moynagh (2004:54), for example, calls for the formation of 'rainbow' churches. These are emerging churches, and like chameleons change their colour according to context. Rainbow churches manage to balance diversity with unity (:53). In contrast to Jackson (2002), Moynagh (2004:51) believes there are dangers in being too prescriptive. He prefers the natural evolution of groups and gives as an example a church that has congregations for children, teenagers and

adults which meet twice monthly as separate congregations but on other Sundays start together and split for the second part of the service (:54). Moynagh stresses the variety of options in bringing different Christians together in one church: social events, holidays, weekend retreats, and evening courses (:54).

In *Intelligent Church* Steve Chalke and Anthony Watkis (2006:142) call diversity ‘one of the key principles of effective mission’ in a multicultural society. To reach diverse people, they argue, it is essential to have different forms of mission and forms of church (:142) and these are grounded in the fact that ‘God is diverse’ (:135), i.e. that God is a community of three distinctive persons (:136). However, they explain that a diverse mission strategy should not lead to the establishment of separate homogeneous churches:

While homogeneity is useful for groups within churches (for example, young people’s groups and young parents’ groups), these should always be part of a multifaceted approach to making church diverse. An intelligent church makes room for these different groups not only to engage in mission with those like them but also to meet together and learn from one another (:145).

What Jackson (2002), Moynagh (2004), and Chalke/Watkis (2006) have in common is that they all argue for culturally diverse or heterogeneous churches which consist of homogeneous groups or congregations. While applying the Homogeneous Unit Principle they recognise, as Michael Nazir-Ali (2001:124) puts it, that ‘the universality of the church’ demands a heterogeneous ecclesiology.⁴ Despite this affirmation, however, none mention specific groups or congregations for ethnic minorities. When Chalke and Watkis (2006:133) describe the diversity of the Christian community in the UK, they list ‘teachers, builders, college students, doctors, lawyers, factory workers, health workers, shopkeepers, [and] artists’, while Jackson (2002:90) and Moynagh (2004:54) write about congregations for adults, children, and teenagers. Diversity is based on age, or social status but not ethnicity.

A variation of these views can be found in Mark Sturge’s (2005) book *Look What the Lord Has Done*, which tells the story of Black majority churches in the UK. Sturge is an

⁴ Michael Nazir-Ali (2001), Pakistani-born Bishop of Rochester, stresses how important it is to provide places where members of homogeneous church groups can come together: ‘Even where language, liturgical tradition and music divide, ways must be found for people to come together regularly, as well as to be distinctive. It is absolutely right for churches to make provision for people from different backgrounds and even with different tastes, but this cannot be at the expense of the church’s unity. There must be times and places for togetherness and times for distinctiveness’ (:125).

advocate of the homogeneous church model, i.e. of congregations that consist of one ethnic group alone (:39). He distinguishes between *open* and *closed* homogeneous churches. Closed homogeneous churches are churches that deliberately exclude Black Christians because they consider themselves to be racially, intellectually, and morally superior (:42-43). These churches, he argues, are 'a betrayal of the cross of Christ and sinful to the core' (:43). Open homogeneous churches are churches that are formed by Black Christians in response to this racially motivated exclusion. They serve the particular needs of a minority ethnic group and can hardly be considered 'illegitimate' (:42&43). Furthermore, Sturge sees them 'as instigated by God, his intervention being necessary in order that his righteousness and justice should be properly reflected to the world' (:43).

Sturge marshals several arguments in favour of the homogeneous church model. Firstly, he claims that there is empirical evidence that growing churches in the UK use mission strategies that are based on some form of homogeneity (:41). Secondly, he argues that homogeneous churches are compatible with Scripture (:48-51). Referring to the words of Jesus in Matthew 9:16-17, he writes that it is his 'contention that homogeneous units are in fact a way to preserve the unity of the church' (:49). 'Jesus', he continues, 'saw that the only way to preserve old wineskins was to protect them from new wine, and vice versa. We ignore this at our peril' (:49-50). Thirdly, Sturge asserts that leaders of White churches are ineffective in meeting the needs of minority ethnic Christians in the way they should because of their lack of cross-cultural experience (:44). In consequence, White church leaders are unable to provide the pastoral care and ethical teaching required (:44). In addition, White church leaders often fail to expound Scripture in a way that is relevant to Black Christians (:44). Fourthly, Sturge claims that in homogeneous groups personal gifts and leadership skills are better developed than in an ethnically mixed congregation (:46).

For Sturge (2005:44-45) the best example of the homogeneous church model is the longstanding church planting strategy employed by the Kensington Temple in London. At one time Kensington Temple had over 100 satellite churches with a total of over 2,500

worshippers.⁵ Sturge notes: '[M]any of these churches and their leaders were emerging from the homogeneous groups. For me, this is a true model of inclusive diversity, and not a mere concession' (:45-46).

Like Root (1994) before him, Mark Sturge (2005) affirms that racism is the main barrier to the formation of multi-ethnic churches. His criticism that White British church leaders often fail to value Black people and address issues relevant to them is confirmed by the Church of England's research report *Called to Lead: A Challenge to Include Minority Ethnic People* (Stephen Lawrence Follow-up Staff Group 2000:22-23). Thus, the report states that '[m]inority ethnic non-churchgoers feel the Church is 'lukewarm' about issues of concern to them, and 'elitist' (:23). However, he claims that this problem is not insurmountable if White church leaders were given cross-cultural training and by calling members of minority ethnic groups into the leadership, as suggested in *Called to Lead* (:24). Unlike Root (1994) and Moynagh (2004), Mark Sturge does not address the question of how homogeneous groups in one church, or satellite churches of a larger church, can practise church unity. Finally, Sturge's criticism of those who reject the homogeneous church model is pejorative: 'Sadly, many of those objecting to the homogenous church principle have no idea of what it means to be on the margins of society; they have never joined the chorus for justice, or to plead for better treatment for vulnerable minority groups' (2005:48).

In June 2006 a conference entitled *Ethnic Churches in Europe – a Baptist Response* was held in Prague. The papers presented at this conference were edited by Peter Penner (2006), director of the Institute of Contextual Missiology at the International Baptist Theological Seminary, and published under the same title. The conference looked at the issue of migration and its implications for the mission of Baptist churches in Europe (Peck 2006:10). One of the key questions was: Should Baptist churches plant mono- ethnic or multi-ethnic churches?

⁵ In 2000 Kensington Temple London City Church, a large Elim Pentecostal church, changed their church planting strategy (Kensington Temple 2006). Inspired by the G12 Vision from Bogota the church decided to adopt the cell church model. Since then the number of cells has grown from 400 to 900. The church claims to be 'one of the most ethnically diverse and racially integrated churches that you can come across anywhere in the world'.

Kathryn Morgan (2006:193) of the Baptist Union of Great Britain reports that UK immigration has led to a situation where new mono-ethnic Baptist churches are developing, while second and third generation immigrants can be found in multi-ethnic churches. This development requires a response from the Baptist Union. Morgan writes: 'In general we are glad to embrace this diversity and note that much of the growth in numbers of BUGB in the last decade is due to ethnic congregations, particularly black African congregations in London' (:193).

However, Morgan argues (2006:193) that institutional racism within the Baptist Union and its member churches is a major problem, and might be the main reason why attempts to establish multi-ethnic churches have failed. The Baptist Union has taken action in several areas to eradicate racism and promote multi-ethnicity (:193-194). Thus, the Union decided that all committees and working groups must include at least one ethnic minority member (:194). Furthermore, it decided to train and accredit clergy from ethnic minorities in the same way as British-born Baptist clergy (:194). Equally, they insist that every Baptist Union minister takes part in a Racial Awareness programme (:193). A 'Specialist Mission Networker' was appointed to work with Portuguese speaking Baptist churches in the UK, and minority-ethnic Baptist churches have been encouraged to join the Baptist Union and its regional Associations (:194).

In his case study, Graham Brownlee (2006:199), a regional minister from Yorkshire, examines a variety of issues raised for Baptist churches in their attempts to welcome minority ethnic churches. He advises that where a Baptist Union church hosts a minority ethnic church it is important to draw up a document that clarifies the expectations and responsibilities of both churches. When discussing the recognition of minority ethnic clergy as Baptist ministers (:201-202) he identifies the need for 'clear and flexible routes' for the training and accreditation of these ministers, who often already have a wide experience in teaching, pastoral care and evangelism (:202). When minority ethnic churches wish to affiliate to the Baptist Union, he lists a number of issues for consideration including the following: Baptist principles, the meaning of congregational church government, cultural differences, and legal support in matters such as constitutions, insurance and child protection policies (:201).

Like Sturge (2005) and Root (1994) the representatives of the Baptist Union of Great Britain identify racism as an obstacle to the formation of multi-ethnic churches. However, their context is the integration of minority ethnic Christians into the regional and national structures of the Baptist Union.

1.4 Research methodology

1.4.1 Research designs and methods

In order to develop an effective mission strategy for the integration of Christian asylum seekers and refugees into the local Christian community in the UK four main sources are authoritative: (1) indigenous British churches that have experience with the integration of asylum seekers and refugees, (2) established minority ethnic churches in the UK, (3) secular migration theories, and (4) the biblical witness on the character and mission of the New Testament church.

To test the claim that these four sources are the foundations upon which a theology of refugee ministry can be achieved a variety of research designs and methods are employed. Two qualitative organisational studies form the heart of this research. One takes the form of a single case study while the other has a comparative design. The single case study investigates the integration of Iranian asylum seekers and refugees into a large indigenous British church with a multi-ethnic character. The multiple case study compares the life and mission of two longstanding minority ethnic churches in Britain. For both studies the research methods of participant observation and qualitative interviewing are applied.

In addition, secular immigration models are tested in the form of a scenario test. The aim of this testing-out research is to establish how far these models can be applied within the framework of Christian mission in general and Christian refugee ministry specifically.

Finally, a biblical exegesis is carried out in order to establish a biblical missiological mandate for Christian refugee ministry and to identify biblical principles for the integration of

asylum seekers and refugees into the Christian community. The focus of this investigation is on five passages in the Book of Acts as well as on the Letter to the Galatians chapter two.

1.4.2 The empirical-theological praxis cycle

Since empirical research forms a significant part of this study the empirical-theological praxis cycle developed by Tobias Faix (2003&2006) is applied. Faix's empirical-theological praxis cycle combines missiology and social sciences (Faix 2003:90-91). It is based on Johannes van der Ven's intra-disciplinary approach to empirical theology (Faix 2006:49&79). According to van der Ven (1990:117-118) the methodology of the social sciences should become an integral part of practical theology. This means, that the concepts, methods and tools used by social scientists become the concepts, methods and tools of practical theologians.

The empirical-theological cycle developed by van der Ven (1990:138-179) consists of five steps: (1) development of the theological problem and goal, (2) theological induction, (3) theological deduction, (4) empirical-theological testing, and (5) theological evaluation.⁶ Each stage is characterised by a variety of actions (:138). The second step, theological deduction, for example, comprises the process of theological conceptualisation, the development of a theological conceptual model and the operationalisation of the theological concepts (:148).

In contrast to van der Ven (1990), Faix's (2006:390) empirical-theological praxis cycle consists of six steps, all of which are closely interwoven which each other. These steps are: (1) research planning, (2) praxis field, (3) conceptualisation, (4) data collection, (5) data analysis, and (6) research report (:79-80).⁷ ⁸ Together these six steps form the 'big cycle' of the praxis cycle, while each step constitutes a 'small cycle' in itself (:81). The 'small cycle' is characterised by either one, or by a combination, of the following three methodological processes: deduction, induction, and abduction (:82). The first two steps of the 'big cycle', or the research

⁶ Van der Ven speaks of 'Theologische Problem- und Zielentwicklung', 'Theologische Induktion', 'Theologische Deduktion', 'Empirisch-theologische Überprüfung', and 'Theologische Evaluation'.

⁷ Faix speaks of 'Forschungsplanung', 'Praxisfeld', 'Konzeptualisierung', 'Datenerhebung', 'Datenanalyse', and 'Forschungsbericht'.

⁸ The first version of Faix's cycle was a seven step cycle: (1) research interest, (2) praxis field, (3) conceptualisation, (4) research planning, (5) data collection, (6) data analysis, and (7) research report (Faix 2006:389).

planning and praxis field, form the context of discovery, while conceptualisation, data collection and data analysis form the context of justification (:80). The last step forms the context of application.

Faix's empirical-theological praxis cycle is a positive development of van der Ven's cycle. Firstly, it is much more flexible than van der Ven's approach. Whereas van der Ven's cycle has two separate steps of theological deduction and induction (steps two and three), Faix gives room for deductive and inductive reasoning at every stage of the research process. Secondly, Faix (2006:69) takes Ziebertz's criticism of Popper's view on the context of discovery into account. For Popper it is not the context of discovery but the context of justification which is important (Rodman 1980:455). It is exactly this view that Faix (2006:69) criticises when he writes that the epistemological process has already begun in the stage of problem and goal development.⁹

1.4.3 Research questions

The research questions used in this study are summarised below:

(1) Overall research question:

- Should British churches and para-church organisations involved in refugee ministry help Christian asylum seekers and refugees establish their own independent refugee churches or integrate into indigenous British churches?

(2) Subsidiary research questions (Single case study)

- Why should asylum seekers and refugees join an indigenous church in preference to forming a church of their own?
- What strategies are employed to integrate asylum seekers and refugees into an indigenous church and what are their strengths and weaknesses?

⁹ Faix writes: 'Der Erkenntnisprozess der Forschung beginnt bereits mit der theologischen Problem- und Zielentwicklung und nicht erst im Begründungszusammenhang des Zyklus.'

- Are there any hindrances impeding the integration of refugees into indigenous churches and if so, how can they be overcome?

(3) Subsidiary research questions (Comparative case study)

- Why do people attend or join a minority ethnic church?
- What is the mission of a minority ethnic church?
- How does a minority ethnic church fulfil its mission?

(4) Subsidiary research questions (Testing-out research)

- Which of the secular immigration models can be used for the development of a mission strategy for integrating refugees into the Christian community?

(5) Subsidiary research questions (Biblical exegesis)

- If it is true that the multi-ethnic church is the New Testament standard model of church, as some scholars claim (e.g. DeYoung, Emerson, Yancey & Kim 2004:22), what biblical guide-lines are there that can be applied to the integration of asylum seekers and refugees into the church?

1.4.4 Limitations of the study

When considering this study and its contributions, it is important to recognise a number of contextual limitations. Firstly, both case studies are general in the sense that they research particular ethnic groups rather than individuals. Secondly, this study does not examine the differing motives for immigration of these groups. Thirdly, all churches researched are free churches, two of them in the evangelical tradition. Fourthly, the research took place in a conurbation and fails to address rural issues. Finally, the nature of both case studies was explicitly cross-cultural and demanded competency in cultural understanding.

1.4.5 Ethical principles and decisions

My research takes account of the fact that in qualitative research a variety of ethical dilemmas may arise (Bulmer 2003:55). To maintain ethical constancy I used the relevant guidelines laid down in the *Statement of Ethical Practice for the British Sociological Association* (BSA 2002). Thus, all interviewees were fully informed about the nature, purpose and length of the research. Furthermore, in order to protect the privacy of the Iranian research participants only pseudonyms have been used in research notes, the research journal and the interview transcriptions. All other interviewees declined the offer of pseudonyms because anonymity was not important to them. In consequence their names remain unchanged, as do the names of research locations. In addition, all interviewees were given the opportunity to comment on the main research findings.

1.5 Definitions

The terms ethnicity, race and culture are widely used in everyday day speech (Ballard 2002:1). The precise meaning of these words, writes Ballard, 'is still surrounded by clouds of conceptual confusion' (:1). Daniel Hiebert (2005:235) calls ethnicity 'one of the most difficult concepts in the social sciences to define', and Steve Fenton (2003:50) points out that the words *race* and *ethnic groups* are used differently in different contexts. Thus, the use of these words changes both externally between different countries and internally within the same society (:50). Against this background, it is not surprising that terminology differs between authors when describing churches with a significant ethnic mix or 'shared origins and traditions' (Lincoln 2003:177).¹⁰ The most common of these terms are: *multi-ethnic churches* (e.g. Aadne 2006; Garriot 1996; Lupton 1996; Ortiz 1996) *multi-racial churches* (e.g. DeYoung, Emerson, Yancey, Kim 2004; Root 1994), *multi-cultural churches* (e.g. Law 1993; Rhodes 1998; Sheffield 2002; Woodley 2004), and *intercultural churches* (e.g. Brynjolfson & Lewis 2004). Correspondingly, churches which consist of people of the same ethnic group are variously called *mono-racial* (e.g. DeYoung, Emerson, Yancey, Kim 2004), *mono-cultural* (Woodley 2004), or *mono-ethnic* (e.g. Monney 2006).

¹⁰ Lincoln (2003:177) writes about 'ethnicity' in the Oxford Concise Dictionary of Politics: 'The only working definition of ethnicity is that it involves the common consciousness of shared origins and traditions.' Similarly, Fenton (2003:23) speaks about race and ethnic groups as 'descent and culture communities'.

For this study I have decided to use the term *multi-ethnic churches* for churches with a significant ethnic mix, unless authors who use different terminology are quoted. There are two reasons for this decision. Firstly, as Fenton (2003:50) points out, the term *ethnic* is the preferred term of British public discourse, though the media can use the words *ethnic* and *race* interchangeably. Secondly, ethnicity and culture may not necessarily be the same (Fenton 2003:20-21). Culture can be both narrower and wider than ethnic group (:21). It can be narrower in the sense that in every ethnic group different cultures can be found. An example of this is a community of people who share the same descent and traditions but who speak different languages and adhere to different religions (:21). But culture can also be wider in the sense that a specific culture can be found in different ethnic groups. The example that Fenton gives is that of religious cultures like Islam or Christianity which are present in many different ethnic groups around the globe (:21).

For a church that is made up of members from one ethnic minority the term *minority ethnic church* is used throughout this thesis. Minority ethnic churches that are made up of asylum seekers and refugees are called *refugee churches*.

1.6 Structure of the thesis

Chapter one of this thesis describes its research purpose and general research methodology. Further, it contains a survey of recent descriptive and discursive literature focussing on the integration of forced migrants into the British church and the range of models used to describe this process.

Chapters two to four explore the socio-political context of the study and the phenomena of globalisation, global migration, the refugee highway, asylum, and racism. The examination of these phenomena serves a two-fold purpose. Firstly, it underlines the relevance of the general research question, and secondly, it clarifies the key terms used in the study.

Chapters five to eight are concerned with the theological context of the study. Chapter five gives an overview of the theme of migration in the Old and the New Testament. Chapter

six investigates the features of the New Testament church. Chapter seven presents and analyses recent Christian responses to forced migration. Chapter eight is concerned with missiological perspectives on migration in an age of globalisation. Collectively, these investigations deliver two outcomes: they help to clarify terms and establish a framework for the interpretation of the findings of the two organisational research projects.

The same is true for chapter nine, which explores the extent to which secular immigration models can be applied to Christian mission in general and Christian refugee ministry in particular. This part of the study takes the form of testing-out research. Chapter 9.1 describes methodology, while chapter 9.2 presents the findings of the scenario tests.

Chapter ten focuses on the two case studies which form the main part of the research work. It describes in detail the methodology applied, gives an analytical and theological description of the three research sites, and presents the findings of the case study research.

In chapter eleven the chief findings of the two case studies are discussed in the light of the results of the biblical investigation and the testing-out research.

Chapter twelve contains a summary of the chief findings, offers practical suggestions and recommendations for the integration of asylum seekers and refugees, and makes proposals for further research.

2. Theories of globalisation

2.1 Introduction: Globalisation - a buzzword

Global-talk has become increasingly popular over the last decade. Today, it is common to call the world a global village, to use the term global warming to describe worldwide climate change and to speak of multinational companies as global players. Another of these global-speak words is globalisation. Globalisation has become not only a buzzword in political science, economics, sociology and other disciplines but also a catch-phrase for politicians, business people and journalists (Ellwood 2006:8; Osterhammel & Petersson 2005:vii). As a theoretical concept globalisation is fairly recent. Most of the literature on globalisation has been published within the last twenty years. The 1996 edition of the *Oxford Concise Dictionary of Politics* (McLean 1996), does not mention it at all, while the 2003 edition dedicates three pages to it (Hurrell 2003:223-225).

The concept of globalisation has become integral to discussions within the Christian Church in general and by those involved in mission specifically. Over recent years Christian ethicists, missiologists and mission practitioners have shown an increasing interest in globalisation and its meaning for the mission of the church. In 2002, for example, Peter Heslam (2002), director at the London Institute of Contemporary Christianity and lecturer in mission studies at Ridley Hall Cambridge wrote a booklet entitled *Globalization – Unravelling the New Capitalism* and Cynthia Moe-Lobeda (2002) from Seattle University published *Healing a Broken World: Globalization and God*. A year later, in June 2003 the Missions Commission of the World Evangelical Alliance met for a consultation on globalisation in Canada (LCWE 2003), and the 2004 Lausanne Forum for World Evangelization, which took place in Thailand, looked at the same subject under the title *Opportunities and Threats to the Gospel Generated by Globalization* (LCWE 2004). In *Connections*, the journal of the WEA Missions Commission, Richard Tiplady (2003a) offers the following definition of globalisation:

Globalization refers to increasing global interconnectedness, so that events and developments in one part of the world are affected by, have to take account of, and also influence in turn, other parts of the world. It also refers to an increasing sense of a single global whole (:11).

While there is agreement among scholars that globalisation is about an increasing global interdependence (Hurrell 2003:223), it must be said that this definition seems to be too simple as it does not say anything about the causes and consequences of globalisation let alone its chronology or scale. So how best can we define globalisation in terms which are relevant for this study?

2.2 Conceptualising globalisation

Globalisation is, as I. Clark (2002:16) from the Cambridge Centre of International Studies argues, not only a salient contemporary theme but also a much disputed one. The German sociologist U. Beck (2001:19) calls globalisation ‘the most rarely defined, the most nebulous and misunderstood’ keyword, and J.A. Scholte (2000:39) from the Centre for the Study of Globalisation and Regionalisation at Warwick University states: ‘[T]he only consensus about globalisation is that it is contested.’ According to Scholte (:15-16) there are five general conceptions of globalisation, i.e. internationalisation, liberalisation, universalization, westernisation and deterritorialization, whereas Held, McGrew, Goldblatt and Perraton (2003:2) distinguish between three main globalisation schools, namely the hyperglobalists, the sceptics, and the transformationalists. As it turns out both distinctions, as we will see, have much in common.

2.2.1 Hyperglobalists and the global free market

According to Held and his colleagues (Held, McGrew, Goldblatt & Perraton 2003:3-4) hyperglobalists see globalisation primarily as an economic phenomenon. They define it as a new era in the history of humankind which is dominated by a global economy, the emergence of institutions of global governance and the global diffusion and hybridization of national cultures. It is an age in which traditional cultures are replaced by a world-wide consumerist culture and in which the nation-state loses power and influence, since it becomes increasingly unable to control its borders, i.e. the movement of goods, money and services. In other words,

hyperglobalists identify globalisation with economic liberalisation and universalization. The latter is defined by Scholte (2000:16) as 'the process of spreading various objects and experiences to people at all corners of the world'. A typical example of a hyperglobalist definition of globalisation is that of G. Soros (2003:vii) who equates globalisation 'with the free movement of capital and the increasing domination of national economies by global financial markets and multinational corporations'. Such an economic understanding of globalisation can also be found among Christian mission experts. R. Valerio (2003:15), a member of the Globalisation Working Group of the WEA Missions Committee, writes:

Economic globalisation works on the politics of trade liberalisation, privatisation, and financial market deregulation. It is believed that free trade between nations,...is the most effective way of increasing global wealth and lifting poorer countries out of their poverty.

And Valerio continues: 'This global system only works where there is growth; thus, the economics of globalisation is profit-driven to the extreme' (:15).

Held, McGrew, Goldblatt and Perraton (2003:3-4) identify different groupings within the hyperglobalist camp, namely neo-liberals and radicals, who share the belief in the existence of a global economy but who differ considerably in their evaluation of globalisation. While this is true, R. Gilpin (2000), a neo-liberal supporter of globalisation himself, goes a step further and differentiates between three perspectives in the debate over globalisation. For the proponents of economic globalisation, he argues, globalisation is leading to a more efficient use of scarce worldwide resources and thus to the economic benefit of all peoples (:296). The populists or nationalists in the industrialised countries, he writes, blame globalisation for high levels of unemployment, the destruction of their national cultures, the loss of national autonomy and the increase of crime, while the communitarians fear the domination of multinational companies and the ecological consequences of a global capitalism (:297-298). They believe that globalisation will create 'a hierarchical international economic and political system composed of the rich core of developed economies and the exploited, impoverished periphery of less developed economies' (:300). Examples for these two groups of opponents can be found in Britain too. There is the extremist, right-wing British National Party, whose former leader N. Griffin (2004) blames global capitalism for mass immigration, ethical decline and the loss of sovereignty. And there are others like M. Woodin and C. Lucas (2004:46), both members of

the Green Party in England and Wales, who write about inequality and poverty in a global economy:

The gap between rich and poor, both between and within countries, is widening...The income gap between rich and poor has accelerated during the current period of rapid economic globalisation. The richest fifth of the world's population had an income 30 times greater than that of the poorest fifth in 1960, rising to 60 times greater in 1990, and 74 times greater in 1997.

2.2.2 The Sceptics and the myth of globalisation

According to Christian ethicist and missiologist P. Heslam (2004) there 'is a general consensus that contemporary economic globalization means the increasing integration of national economies into a global market'. The second school of globalisation which Held, McGrew, Goldblatt and Perraton (2003:5) call 'the sceptics' would certainly disagree with this statement. Like the hyperglobalists 'the sceptics rely on a wholly economic conception of globalization equating it primarily with a perfectly integrated global market' (:5). In contrast to the hyperglobalist view, the sceptics doubt that such a globalised market actually exists, and they strongly disagree with the notion of the demise of the nation-state, as it has been most prominently argued by K. Ohmae (1996:5), who calls the traditional nation states 'unnatural, even impossible, business units in a global economy'. Therefore, they consider globalisation in the hyperglobalist sense as a myth. Instead, most of them prefer to speak of globalisation as of 'heightened levels of internationalization' (Held, McGrew, Goldblatt and Perraton 2003:5). In essence, they regard the world economy as an international economy but not as a global, fully integrated one. It is rather an economy which is shaped by regional trading blocs.

Well known sceptics who have promoted this view are P. Hirst and G. Thompson as well as L. Weiss. In her book *The Myth of the Powerless State*, Weiss (1999:175) argues that the world today is undoubtedly much more connected than it used to be, but that the magnitude of change has been clearly overstated by the advocates of globalisation. With the exception of the money markets, Weiss writes, one cannot speak of a globalised economy. International trade, production and investment show no such tendencies (:187). Weiss admits that individual governments are under pressure due to the increasing internationalisation of the world economy. It is much harder for them to make and implement certain policies, but in

contrast to the hyperglobalists she believes that governments are able to adjust to these changes and constraints and to continue to play an important role as an economic and political actor (:189, 212). Hirst and Thompson (2003:280), who share this view, put it this way:

An international society as an association of states cannot rely on supranational bodies to make and enforce laws but requires states that accept constitutional limitations above and below them... In this sense the state as the source and the respecter of binding rules remains central to an internationalized economy and society.

While Held and his colleagues are right that most sceptics, such as Hirst, Thompson and Weiss, understand globalisation first and foremost in terms of internationalisation, it must be pointed out that there are other sceptics who rather conceive it as westernisation. Scholte (2000:45) defines westernisation as a process through which 'the world becomes western, modern and, more particularly, American'. A vivid description of this view is given by A. Shipman (2002:29) in his book *The Globalization Myth*, when he writes:

The ends of the earth aren't far enough away to escape McDonald's golden arches, Ford's blue oval, Benetton's united colours or Nike's swoosh. If you ever find a bar not serving Heineken or a car not powered by Shell, you're either in a Disney theme park or under the influence of Monsanto's more exotic GM herbs.

2.2.3 Transformationalists and new spatial entities

The third approach to globalisation, mentioned by Held, McGrew, Goldblatt and Perraton (2003:7) is that of the transformationalists. The transformationalist school holds that globalisation 'is a central driving force behind the rapid social, political and economic changes that are reshaping modern societies and world order' (:7). Transformationalists regard globalisation as a long-term historical process, whose contemporary patterns of economic, political, ecological, technological, cultural and migratory flows are historically unique (:7). In contrast to the hyperglobalists, supporters of this school believe that there are new patterns of global stratification in which some countries, societies and communities become more and more integrated in a global world while others are increasingly pushed to the edge of a new world regime. Consequently, one can no longer speak of a classical North-South division but must recognise that North and South, First World and Third World can be found within most

regions or major cities of the world (:7-8). M. Castells (2000:134) speaks of 'global networks of value making and wealth appropriation', to which people either belong or do not belong.

This reshaping of patterns of global stratification is closely linked with the concept of deterritorialization or superterritoriality, which Scholte (2001:14) defines as 'a shift in geography whereby territorial places, territorial distances and territorial borders lose some of their previously overwhelming influence'. Like Scholte, Rosenau (2003:176) sees different processes of deterritorialization at work. In a world of satellite television, the internet and jet aircraft, the concept of territory as a bound land mass, he argues, is undergoing revision. It is increasingly questioned by the emergence of new spatial entities such as offshore banks or transnational organisations, which cannot be linked to a single geographic place (:176). In addition, Rosenau argues that these processes of deterritorialization have had different influences on peoples' identities. On the one hand deterritorialization has encouraged some people to link themselves to transnational organisations or movements. On the other hand it has increased the sensitivities of others to their local communities or nations which they regard as their territorial home (:176). Rosenau concludes:

Thus, whereas the former have experienced a lessening of the salience of their historic links to territory, and instead have evolved business alliances, social movements, and a host of transborder networks, the latter are inclined to experience deterritorializing processes as threatening (:176-177).

In summary, there are two contradictory forces at work: one that fosters the development of global relations and one that works against this. Rosenau (2003:15) speaks of the integrating forces of globalisation and the fragmenting forces of localisation. Both, he argues, are interwoven with each other, they are products of one another.

2.2.4 Globalisation – an evaluation

Most hyperglobalists and sceptics understand globalisation first and foremost in economic terms. At the heart of their understanding lies the notion of fully integrated global free markets. Globalisation is seen as the process of integrating national economies into a global economy through international trade, investment and labour. While globalisation, conceived

in such a way, is undoubtedly a comprehensible idea, it is also a problematic one. There are three main points of criticism.

Firstly, the conceptualisation of globalisation as a process of international economic integration through market forces is anything but new. The concept of free trade is indeed fairly old. It can be traced back to economists and philosophers such as Adam Smith (1723-1790), David Ricardo (1772-1823), and John Stuart Mill (1806-1873). These early adherents of capitalism believed that trade flourishes best when it is left completely free of any state intervention (Koch 1992:134). Ricardo, for example argued, that every country should export those goods in which it has a comparative advantage and import those goods in which has a comparative disadvantage. As long as it does this it will gain from trade (Koch 1992:99-100). Consequently, there is no need for people today to speak of globalisation when what they really have in mind is economic liberalisation or internationalisation. The same is true for those who equate globalisation with universalization or westernisation. These, too, are not new concepts. Western colonialism and imperialism have been strongly criticised for more than a hundred years.

Secondly, to define globalisation as the process through 'which the whole world becomes a single market', as the *Oxford Dictionary of Economics* (Black 2003:197) does is to give a very narrow definition. Such an understanding of globalisation falls short of the various social, ecological, and technological changes we have seen in recent years. It presumes that there is only one economic process which produces interconnections between national economies, whereas there is a whole set of different processes which generate global interdependencies in other areas. A good example of another global process is the so-called greenhouse effect. An increased build up of carbon dioxide, it is argued, has led to a rise of global temperatures at an unprecedented rate (Humphrey 2003:225). One of the main reasons for this development is seen in the high levels of carbon dioxide emissions in the industrialised countries, such as the USA or the member states of the European Union (:225). Climate change models predict that this global warming is leading to rising sea levels, desertification and deforestation (:225).

Closely linked with this is the third criticism. Both hyperglobalists and sceptics consider globalisation as a straightforward process, which has its cause in capitalism and which will result either in the disappearance of the nation-state or the establishment of regional trading blocs. What both seem to overlook is that the process of globalisation is more complex than this. There are not only forces of global integration but also global forces of fragmentation at work. These forces of fragmentation express themselves in many different ways. Clark (2002:26) mentions 'autarchy, unilateralism, disintegration, heterogeneity, and separation'. An example of this paradoxical character of globalisation is the attitude towards the English language. While English is becoming the *lingua franca* and many countries, such as China, recognise this and encourage their nationals to learn English, other countries, such as France, try to minimize the spread of English within their own boundaries.

The transformationalist school avoids these deficiencies of the hyperglobalists' and sceptics' approach. Proponents of this school recognise that globalisation is a complex process with multiple causes, dimensions, and interdependencies. Furthermore, they do not claim to know the exact outcome of this process but instead focus on the extent, intensity and speed of global economical, political and social changes. They also take the view that the traditional idea of territory has lost its importance. Given the fact that the debate on the nature of globalisation is ongoing, for the rest of this thesis a transformationalist view is adopted because of its openness and its emphasis on process.

2.3 Dimensions of globalisation

J.A Scholte (2000:50), a member of the transformationalist school, who understands globalisation as the rise of superterritoriality, distinguishes between different dimensions of globalisation or, as he calls them 'transborder activities in contemporary social life'. These activities are related to communications, markets, production, money, finance, organizations, and social ecology, as well as consciousness (:51-54). When considering communications, for example, he mentions air transport, mass media, telecommunications and global publications (:51). He notes that due to global communications people are able to have almost immediate

contact with one another anywhere in the world (:51). Of course, this is only true for those who have access to it and can afford it.

However, one aspect of globalisation which Scholte fails to mention is migration. In contrast, Rosenau (2003), Pellerin (1998) and others see migration as significant dimension of the contemporary globalisation process. Thus, Rosenau (2003:63) speaks of a 'mobility upheaval' that is currently taking place. By this he means a gigantic movement of people around the whole world which includes any movement 'from business to professional travel, from tourism to terrorism, from political asylum to the search for jobs, from legal to illegal migration' (:63). Pellerin (1998:81) admits that migration is not a new phenomenon but she, too, sees some unique aspects in present worldwide migratory flows. Many of today's migrants, she argues, are both objects of change and agents of change. They are objects of change insofar as they are forced to move under deteriorating circumstances. And they are agents of change insofar as they actively take part in the transformation of societies (:81). Pellerin writes: 'Their movement, and the conditions surrounding it, imply change in the organization of production, in the territoriality of societies, as well as in the social production of ideas and identities, both in regions of origin and destination' (:81).

The next chapter substantiates the claim that migration in general and forced migration in particular are important aspects of globalisation.

3. Globalisation and international migration

3.1 Defining migration and migrants

The *Oxford Dictionary of Geography* defines migration as ‘the movement of people from one place to another’ (Mayhew 1997:281). Such a movement can be voluntary or involuntary; it can be permanent or temporary (:281). Depending on whether such a change of residence involves the crossing of national boundaries or takes place solely within a certain country, one also has to distinguish between international and internal migration (:281). In this chapter the main focus is on international migration and forced migration.

There have been various attempts by migration scholars to classify international migration and international migrants (Böcker & Havinga 1998:2). Some of these classifications are based on the reasons for migration, the motives migrants have or a combination of both (:2). Thus, W. Petersen (1970:55-63) suggests five broad classes of migration: primitive, forced, impelled, free, and mass migration. Others, such as Kliot (2000:177), classify international migrants according to their legal status in the receiving country. Kliot distinguishes between legally admitted permanent immigrants, legally admitted temporary migrants, illegal migrants, asylum seekers and refugees (:177-178).

The terms *refugee* and *asylum seeker* have wide variations in usage. Refugees can be understood in a very broad sense as people who are in flight to freedom and safety; who try to escape from intolerable conditions or personal circumstances (Goodwin-Gill 1996:3). Other definitions are more specific. The *United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, which was formally adopted in July 1951 and amended in 1967, perceives refugees as any person

owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his or her nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail him- or herself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it (UNHCR undated:16).

Convention refugees, i.e. refugees as defined by the 1951 Convention, are protected by the principle of non-refoulement. Non-refoulement prohibits the removal of refugees to a territory where their lives or freedom are at risk because of the reasons mentioned in the Convention definition (Lauterpacht & Bethlehem 2003:89). This protection is granted to every Convention refugee whether he or she has been formally recognised as a refugee or not (:116). What the Convention does not contain is the right to asylum (Gorman 1993:44). Only states have the right to grant or to deny asylum, whereas refugees have only the right to seek it (:44). Refugees who have filed a formal request for asylum but who have not yet received a positive decision, i.e. the formal recognition of being a refugee, are called asylum seekers (Böcker & Havinga 1998:3).

The 1951 United Nations Convention gives a very clear definition of who a refugee is, but this definition is not unproblematic. Thus, it restricts refugee status to those who flee from persecution. People who escape to a foreign country from other conditions, such as war, civil war, natural catastrophes or inadequate economic living conditions are not covered by this definition (Dummett 2001:32). The same is true for so-called displaced persons, i.e. people who are forced to leave their home but stay within the borders of their home country. Sztucki (1999:58) identifies three other deficiencies of the Convention definition. Firstly, he points out that the definition does not say anything about the agents of persecution. Because of this, he argues, some signatory parties to the Convention 'have often interpreted 'persecution' as related exclusively to state organs' (:58). Secondly, Sztucki writes, the status of family members of refugees is not reflected in the definition (:58). And last but not least, he argues that the concept of 'membership of a particular group' is very vague (:59). Partly in response to these criticisms two more generous definitions were formulated by the Organization of African Unity in 1969 and the Organization of American States in 1985 (Hathaway 1991:16-20). The latter defines refugees as

persons who have fled their country because their lives, safety, or freedom have been threatened by generalized violence, foreign aggression, internal conflicts, massive violations of human rights or other circumstances which have seriously disturbed public order (quoted by Hathaway 1991:20).

In the same way as there are different definitions of forced migrants there are different attempts to explain the migration phenomenon.

3.2 Causation theories of migration

There are many different migration theories, such as the neoclassical economic theory of migration or the neo-Marxist dependency theory, but the idea that migration is affected by so-called push and pull factors is still the most widely accepted approach among migration researchers today (Weeks 1998:238). According to this theory, there are two kinds of pressures, one causing people to leave their country of origin and another drawing them into the country of destination (Overbeek 1982:162). While J.I. Clarke (1980:140-141) differentiates between demographic, economical and political push and pull factors, others, such as Petersen (1970:55), also specify ecological push forces, such as floods, droughts and earthquakes. Other push forces include lack of employment, poverty, or persecution that is politically, racially or religiously motivated. Employment opportunities, political stability or good educational and health facilities are seen as significant pull factors (Black 2003:298-299). When we compare these forces with each other it becomes obvious why Klot (2000:176) writes that the pull forces 'which attract migrants to a certain destination are very often the result of forces opposite to the "push"'. J. Galtung's (1998) version of push and pull theory is expressed in terms of *direction* of human migration. Thus, he identifies three general directions of human mass migration: from low to high human-rights implementation regions, from low to high economic well-being regions, and from low to high cultural identity regions (:177). In other words, there are not only political and economic factors of migration but also cultural factors of migration, such as language or customs.

When considering refugee movements, Jones (1990:237-239) argues that there are five main intermediate causes, namely wars of independence, international conflicts, internal revolutions and civil wars, ethnic conflicts, and the partition of states. Current examples are the war of independence in Chechnya, the civil war in Sudan, and the oppression of the Kurdish minority in Turkey. Jones asserts that these five intermediate causes of worldwide refugee movements are determined by global economic and political conditions (:239). In

addition, he claims that there are three major fundamental conditions. Firstly, many developing countries are politically and economically weak, because of the political and economic underdevelopment in their colonial times. Many of the borders of these countries are arbitrary and ignore the distribution of ethnic groups. Furthermore, many colonial powers often favoured a certain ethnic group (:239). This still causes tensions within countries in Africa or Asia. The recent war in Eritrea and the conflict between Hutu and Tutsi in Rwanda and Burundi are examples for this. Secondly, Jones points out that internal fights are often stirred up by hostile neighbouring countries or by political super-powers that pursue their own interests (:239). Finally, poor economic conditions and environmental problems, such as droughts, aggravate internal conflicts (:240).

The strength of these migration theories is that they attempt a more complete explanation of the conditions that cause people to leave one country and to move to another. What these theories do not do is to explain certain patterns of migration and their interconnections with global economic, social or technological changes. Furthermore, they do not take into account the role that family and friendship ties or ties between the country of origin and the receiving country can have for choosing a particular destination. Finally, they do not say anything about the effects of migration. In the next two paragraphs we will have a closer look at these issues.

3.3 Effects of international migration

There is widespread agreement among migration scholars that international migration has profound economic, demographic and social consequences, both for the country of origin and the country of destination (cf. Castles & Miller 2003:92; Overbeek 1982:165). Our discussion of the consequences of international migration will be limited to the effects upon the receiving country with the main focus on integration and ethnic minority formation.

Ogden (2000:504) points out that the growth and composition of a country is determined by migration as well as by fertility and mortality. International migration increases the population and leads to changes in the sex-age composition of the receiving country

(Overbeek 1982:166-168). Another significant demographic effect is the increase of the ethnic diversity in receiving countries, when immigrants are distinct from the indigenous population. Differentials include many factors: physical appearance, customs, traditions, language, political and religious convictions, and levels of education (Castles & Miller 2003:14). UK immigration since World War II has led to a greater spectrum of ethnic diversity in British society. Historically Britain's mono-culture had remained unaffected by immigration (Harris 2003:17). With the exception of 100,000 Huguenots from France and 150,000 Jews from various European countries, Britain had not seen large scale immigration for several centuries (:17). Today 7.9 per cent of the population belong to an ethnic minority group, while 92 per cent of the population are White (Office for National Statistics 2004a). The largest of the ethnic minority groups are Indians (1.8 per cent), followed by Pakistanis (1.3 per cent), Black Caribbean (1 per cent), Black African (0.8 per cent) and Chinese (0.4 per cent) (Office for National Statistics 2004a).

While it is true that most migration leads to greater ethnic diversity in receiving countries as a whole, it is also true that immigration impacts some more than others, depending upon their geographic location and social class. It is important to recognise that most statements on immigration depict a macro view of the receiving country. In the United Kingdom the non-White population is concentrated in London and other large urban centres such as Birmingham, Leicester, Nottingham, Sheffield, Leeds and Bradford (Office for National Statistics 2003). Rural areas, such as Devon or Cumbria, are far less affected by immigration and retain their homogeneous character.¹¹

Castles and Miller (Castles & Miller 2003:32) distinguish between the short-term and the long-term effects of immigration on the societies of receiving countries. They assert that the impact of immigration becomes more and more visible at the end of the migration process when migrants settle permanently and create discrete identifiable groups. The long-term effects, they argue, depend on the immigration policy of the government and the general attitude of society towards immigrants (:32). Castles and Miller write:

¹¹ In 2001 45 per cent of the non-White population lived in London, where they comprised 29 per cent of all the population. Source: Office for National Statistics, 'Focus on Ethnicity and Identity', <www.statistics.gov.uk?cci/nugget.asp?id=457> date of access: 24th October 2004.

At one extreme, openness to settlement, granting of citizenship and gradual acceptance of cultural diversity may allow the formation of *ethnic communities*, which are seen as part of a multicultural society. At the other extreme, denial of the reality of settlement, refusal of citizenship and rights to settlers, and rejection of cultural diversity may lead to the formation of *ethnic minorities*, whose presence is widely regarded as undesirable and divisive (:32).

Castles and Miller (2003:34) also assert that creating boundaries between social groups is a two way process: self-definition and other-definition. Other-definition means that a group is assigned a subordinate position in society by dominant groups. Self-definition means that the people of a group feel that they belong together because of a common culture, language, history or religion (:34).

Castles and Miller (2003) emphasise the fact that national governments and other social agents play a significant role in incorporating immigrants into the social, economic, and political life of the country. Their response is crucial for the success of immigration. If immigrants are seen as a threat by the indigenous population and are refused the benefits and rights the indigenous population have, they will be less willing to change their own identity. M. Weiner (1996:53) comments: 'As long as the host culture regards immigrants as permanent aliens and denies citizenship, then migrants will cling to their existing identities'. But in contrast to Castles and Miller, Weiner sees ethnic minorities or enclaves not necessarily as something negative or dangerous. Enclaves, she argues, can be both havens which help migrants with their adjustment to their new lives and half-way stations which enable them to move into the larger society of the host country (:53). It is only when enclaves become permanent ghettos that they can lead to conflicts in society. Significantly, Weiner recognises that the commitment of immigrants to their new society is a crucial factor for their successful integration (:46). Again, this is in contrast to Castles and Miller (2003) who put the onus for integration success solely on the government and the host population. Other research indicates a spectrum of immigrant attitudes towards their host country, both positive and negative (Rosenau 2004:42-43). Immigrants who value the host culture but not the culture they come from, seek to be assimilated as quickly as possible. Alternatively, when they value their heritage above that of their host culture they tend to follow a separatist strategy. It follows that immigrants should not be viewed stereotypically as a homogeneous group. Rosenau (2004:43) affirms that: 'Depending on the circumstances of the communities into

which they move and the orientation they bring with them, immigrants can vary considerably’.

3.4 Trends in international migration: The globalisation of migration

In his book *Ethnicity* Steve Fenton (2003:118) writes that there is a consensus among migration commentators that in the last few decades migration has become globalised. Woodward (2003:145) and Dwyer (2003:290), for example, see current migration movements as an integral part of globalisation while Held, McGrew, Goldblatt and Perraton (2003: 283) call human migration the most ubiquitous form of globalisation. M. Tehranian (2004:14) speaks of the ‘third wave of globalized migration’ and Castles and Miller (2003:1) state that ‘international population movements constitute a key dynamic within globalization’. A similar view is expressed by Christian mission expert Rose Dowsett (2003:148) who comments: ‘While migration is as ancient as the human race, globalisation has intensified, diversified, and fed the movement of people’. The claim that current migratory flows and patterns are a significant aspect of globalisation requires further analysis. The *World Migration 2003* report of the International Organization for Migration (IOM 2003) seeks to justify this assertion by stressing four characteristics of current international migration.

3.4.1 Extent of migration

Firstly, the IOM (2003:27) points out that migration today is more extensive than it was in the past. There are more countries of origin, countries of transit and countries of destination involved in international migration than ever before. For example, many Eastern European countries that were closed for decades to major migration have in recent years become countries of substantial transit, emigration, or immigration. The country which absorbed more immigrants from Eastern Europe after the fall of the Iron Curtain than any other country was Germany. Between 1989 and 2002 Germany received 2.72 million East European emigrants (Dietz 2004). A more recent trigger for emigration push has been the extension of the European Union in 2004. Thus, more than 91,000 nationals from the new EU member states joined the UK workforce between May and September 2004 (Home Office 2004a).

Besides this increase in voluntary emigration from Eastern Europe many Eastern European states have also seen an increasing number of refugees and asylum seekers. While in the 1990s there had been hardly any asylum seekers in Eastern Europe, in 2002 8,461 people applied for asylum in the Czech Republic, 6,412 in Hungary, 5,153 in Poland and 3,152 in Slovakia (UNHCR 2004a:47-49).

3.4.2 Ties between sending and receiving countries

Secondly, the IOM (2003) argues that traditional ties between sending countries and receiving countries are gradually losing their importance. These ties are more and more replaced by human networks. The report says:

New networks are creating circuits that no longer have any traditional ties with the countries of destination: Iranians in Sweden, Romanians in Germany, Vietnamese in Canada and Australia, Senegalese in the United States, Bangladeshi or Brazilians in Japan' (:27-28).

While this is true for voluntary migration, closer examination shows that traditional ties between countries of origin and countries of destination seem still to play an important role in the area of forced migration. A recent research into the asylum migration to the European Union (Böcker & Havinga 1998) shows that colonial and historical ties are an important factor when it comes to the choice of destination. Colonial ties, the research shows, result almost always in overrepresentation, i.e. the number of asylum seekers from former colonies applying for asylum in a former mother country is higher than the number applying in other EU countries (:38). A. Böcker and T. Havinga, who carried out this research for the European Union, have identified three main reasons for this phenomenon: mastery of the language, familiarity with the culture, and an idealised view of the former mother country (:52).

3.4.3 New forms of migration

Thirdly, the IOM (2003) argues that new forms of migration have emerged. While in the past the majority of migrants were poor, today the number of qualified middle class migrants is increasing (:30). Figures for immigration to the United States support this. The World Bank (2003:72) confirms the professionalisation of immigration to the U.S.A:

Unlike 100 years ago, when peasants made up 80 percent of migrants, today professionals, skilled workers, and those with some university training make up more than half the migrants into the United States. The lowest skilled workers come from Mexico, the highest skilled workers from Asia and Africa.

Another trend in contemporary migration identified by the IOM (2003) is the feminisation of migration. More and more migrants, it argues, are women, many of them single women (:6). However, recent research carried out by the United Nations Population Division (Zlotnik 2003) notes that the worldwide portion of female migrants today (48.8 per cent in 2000) is only slightly higher than it was 50 years ago (46.6 per cent in 1960). The same appears to be true for the number of female refugees. About half of the current world refugee population are female and half are male. There is no proof for claims that up to 80 per cent of all refugees are women (Spijkerboer 2000:16-17). Consequently, it is doubtful whether one can really speak in general terms of a feminisation of world migration in line with the IOM report. H. Zlotnik (2003) from the United Nations Population Division points out that one must rather differentiate between female migrants from developed countries and those from developing countries. Thus, 49 million female migrants are currently living in developed countries, while 32 million can be found in developing countries. In the developed countries of Europe and Northern America they often outnumber men among international migrants, whereas in developing countries female migrants are still outnumbered by male migrants. In 2000 52.4 per cent of all migrants in Europe were women compared to 42.8 per cent in Northern Africa (Zlotnik 2003). Even if the term 'the worldwide feminization of migration' is unjustified, female migrants continue to play a major role in migration. Zlotnik concludes: 'Clearly, female migration is a key constituent of global migration' (2003).

3.4.4 Intensity of migration

Fourthly, the IMO (2003) report claims that the intensity of current international migration is unique. 'Global population mobility', it says, 'is greater today than at any other time in modern history and is unlikely to decrease substantially in the near future' (:97). However, in contrast to the IMO, Held, McGrew, Goldblatt and Perraton (2003:307&326) argue that contemporary migration patterns are slightly less intensive compared to the great population movements of the modern era, i.e. the period between 1760 and 1945. This apparent

contradiction is deceptive. Closer scrutiny shows that they are not necessarily contradictory. Held and his colleagues are right to assert that the modern era has seen massive migration movements which dwarf migration movement of today. Thus, between 1815 and 1890 15 million people emigrated from Northern and Western Europe to the United States of America, and another 15 million immigrants came from Southern and Eastern Europe between 1890 and 1914 (Overbeek 1982:176-177). But if global population mobility is understood in absolute terms the IMO conclusion is also right. In 1965, for example, the estimated absolute migrant stock was 75 million people, while 25 years later in 1990 this figure was up to 154 million people (UNDESA 2002:2, 11). Again 10 years later in 2000 175 million people, or 3 per cent of the world population, resided outside the country they had been born (:11). This means that the number of migrants has more than doubled within 35 years.

One of the main reasons for the growth in international migration, the IMO (2003:97) report argues, is the increase of forced migration. The statistics from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR 2004b) seem to support this view. At the beginning of the year 2003 the UNHCR counted 20.6 million uprooted people or people of concern as the UNHCR also calls them, compared with 19.8 million in 2002. Included in this figure were 10.4 million refugees, 1.0 million asylum seekers, 2.4 million returned refugees, 5.8 million internally displaced persons and 951,000 others of concern (:14). The number of asylum applications filed worldwide increased between 2001 and 2002 by 60,000 (:7).

**Number of asylum applications submitted
in selected industrialised countries in 2002:**

UK	110700
USA	81100
Germany	71100
France	50800
Austria	37100
Canada	33400
Sweden	33000
Switzerland	26200
Belgium	18800
Netherlands	18700
<i>Source: UNHCR 2004b:8</i>	

In addition to refugees, asylum seekers and displaced people under the mandate of the UNHCR there were another 4 million refugees under the mandate of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency in the West Bank, Gaza, Lebanon, Syria and Jordan in 2003 (UNRWA 2004).

In summary, we can say that the greater extent and intensity of contemporary migration, and the emergence of new forms of migration, justify the term *globalisation of migration*. Other characteristics of contemporary international migration reinforce this view.

3.4.5 Ironies of globalisation

Claire Dwyer (2003:289) claims that the effects of globalisation are incongruent. She speaks of an irony of global migration. On the one hand there are increased migratory flows and reciprocities of trade, but on the other hand there are major attempts by more affluent countries to stem physical migration from poorer countries (:289-290). Dwyer cites the member states of the European Union who have reduced the internal migration barriers and at the same time taken action to make immigration from outside more difficult (:290). This approach has become known as *Fortress Europe* (:290). For Dwyer it signifies that there are 'contradictions in the globalization of migration' (:290).

Protectionist policies, like *Fortress Europe* can severely affect asylum seekers and refugees. The United Nations' *International Migration Report 2002* comments:

While restrictions on asylum have become quite common in both developed and developing countries, some Governments of developed countries such as the United Kingdom, have adopted measures aimed at preventing the arrival of asylum seekers, as a means of restricting asylum. The implicit assumption of such policies is that most asylum seekers are in fact economic migrants (UNDESA 2002).

Four years on, the *Fortress Europe* policy, Liz Fekete (2006) writes, is refined but not given up. The zero immigration approach is replaced by a managed immigration programme, which differentiates 'between 'good immigrants' (who form an orderly queue and enter through legal routes), and 'bad immigrants' (who jump the queue and seek asylum)' (2006).

3.4.6 Transnational communities and global cities

Another feature of global migration today is the emergence of transnational social relations and communities. Tehranian (2004:14) speaks of 'millions of global nomads' who are travelling around the globe as transnational business people, government officials, refugees or tourists. Because of the globalisation of telecommunication and transport these groups are able to keep in touch with 'a community which is spread out across national boundaries' (Dwyer 2003:290). Satellite television, the internet and cheap international flights make it easier for these migrants to retain their links with their own culture.

As some commentators have pointed out this phenomenon of transnational communities is not entirely new (Dwyer 2003; Castles & Miller 2003). Thus, the traditional term for such transnational communities is *diaspora*, which is the Greek word for dispersion (Dwyer 2003:291; Castles & Miller 2003:30). In Old and New Testament times the term was used for those Jews who lived outside their homeland (France 2002:753). These Jews of the diaspora were influenced by Egyptian, Greek, and Roman host cultures, but they never gave up their distinctive religion and culture. Winn Leith (2001:312) writes about Jews who lived in Egypt during the Persian period (539-332 B.C.):

Despite their apparently syncretistic worship, these Egyptian Jews were not isolated. They corresponded with Jerusalem and Samaria on religious matters, appealing to both cities for assistance in rebuilding their temple when it was burned in local riots and promising as a condition of aid not to sacrifice animals in it.

Many of today's transnational communities can be found in so called world or global cities. World or global cities are not so much distinguished by the size of their population but rather by their economic, political and cultural power or influence (Hamnett 1995:104-109). According to Sassen (2002:8) global cities are not only centres of global management, i.e. places with a high concentration of headquarters of transnational companies, but also centres of global servicing activities. The latter can be embedded in company headquarters but increasingly they are carried out by a growing network of specialised multinational accounting, legal, or advertising firms, which are familiar with different national legal systems, accounting systems or advertising cultures (:8). Sassen writes:

These agglomerations of firms producing central functions for the management and coordination of global economic systems are disproportionately concentrated in an expanding

network of global cities. This network represents a strategic factor in the organization of the global economy (:8).

Among international migrants who are attracted by these global cities are two quite distinct groups (Hamnett 1995:122). On the one hand, there are highly qualified managers and professionals and on the other hand there are those who work in low-paid service jobs, such as maids, waiters, security guards or office clerks (:123). Both groups may live within the same city but they usually lead totally different lives (Allen & Hamnett 1995:249). International migrants who come to a global city as professional people usually work alongside their indigenous colleagues and are able to speak the language of their host country. In addition, they are also likely to be familiar with a middle class culture or an occupational culture which goes beyond national boundaries. In contrast, unskilled migrants are often less part of the host society. They lack the language skills and they find it harder to integrate. Often they either bring their own social networks with them or try to recreate these networks in new ways (:249).

3.4.7 New patterns of migration

A characteristic of recent international migration has been its new or slightly changed flow patterns. Over recent years new routes of migration with new places of origin and destination have emerged. Today, the countries of origin lie in Asia, Africa, South America and Eastern Europe, while the countries of destination can be found among the oil-producing states of the Middle East, Western Europe, Northern America, Australia and New Zealand. Between 1995 and 2000 the more developed countries of the world received 12 million migrants (UNDESA 2002:2). Out of these 12 million migrants 6 million went to Northern America, 4 million to Europe and 450,000 were absorbed by Oceania (:2). In the year 2000 the country with the largest international migrant stock was the United States of America (35 million). The European countries with the largest number of international migrants were the Russian Federation (13.3 million), Germany (7.3 million), France (6.3 million) and the United Kingdom (4.0 million) (:3). Countries with the highest percentage of international migrants were the United Arab Emirates (73.8 per cent), Kuwait (57.9 per cent), and Jordan (39.6 per cent) (:4). As a result of the new migratory patterns, traditional emigration countries, such as

Italy, Greece, Spain, or Portugal, have become immigration countries, and vice versa traditional immigration countries, such as Brazil, have become sending countries (:23).

Top twelve countries with the largest international migrant stock in 2000 (thousands):

USA	34998
Russian Federation	13259
Germany	7349
Ukraine	6947
France	6277
India	6271
Canada	5826
Saudi Arabia	5255
Australia	4705
Pakistan	4243
UK	4029
Kazakhstan	3028
<i>Source: UNDESA 2202:3</i>	

These new migratory patterns can also be found in the movements of refugees and asylum seekers. At the end of 2002 Asia hosted the largest refugee population (39.5 per cent of the world refugee population), followed by Africa (31.6 per cent), Europe (22.1 per cent), Northern America (5.8 per cent) and Oceania (0.7 per cent) (UNHCR 2004a:15).

Refugee population by region in 2002 (thousands):

Africa	33437.7
Asia	41881.1
Europe	43361.1
Latin America & Caribbean	40.9
North America	615.1
Oceania	70.1
Total	10594
<i>Source: UNHCR 2004a:15</i>	

Compared to the size of the national population the main refugee hosting countries at the end of 2002 were Iran (1.3 million), Pakistan (1.2 million), Germany (980,000) and the United States (486,000). The refugee population in the United Kingdom was 260,000 (:16). Eighty-two per cent of the world's refugees in 2002 originated from developing countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America, while only 10 per cent came from developed countries. Fifty-two per

cent of all refugees were nationals of so-called least developed countries, i.e. the world's poorest regions (:17).

Before the 1980s political asylum was, as Loescher (1996:93) puts it, 'an exceptional event' in Western Europe and North America. In 1977, for example, only 30,000 asylum seekers entered Western Europe. Since then the situation has changed significantly. In 1987 186,000 asylum seekers arrived in Europe (European Council on Refugees & Exiles 1994:6). The peak was reached in 1993 with more than 500,000 applicants. Between 2000 and 2002 approximately 400,000 asylum applications were submitted every year (European Council on Refugees & Exiles 2004:2). The five countries recording the highest numbers of asylum applications in 2002 were the United States (110,700), the United Kingdom (81,100), Germany (71,100), France (50,800) and Austria (37,100), with the majority of asylum seekers coming from African, Asian and Latin American countries such as Zimbabwe, Somalia, Iraq, China, Mexico or Columbia (UNHCR 2004b:8).

Today, refugees and asylum seekers travel over land, by air or sea (cf. De Haas 2006). They travel with or without passport and visas; they travel on their own or in groups. Some travel with the help of professional smugglers. The routes which refugees and asylum seekers use to flee from certain circumstances and to get to their destinations are sometimes called the *refugee highway*.

4. Refugee Highway – a Christian catchphrase and a world reality

4.1 The term *refugee highway*

The term *refugee highway*, which describes the routes on which refugees and asylum seekers travel, is almost exclusively used in Christian circles and in Christian literature. It is difficult to establish the origin of the term. Probably one of its earliest references can be found in a publication of the World Council of Churches. In *The Stranger Within Your Gates*, published by the WCC in 1986, A. Jacques (1986:viii) speaks of ‘highways of fear’ and ‘paths of hunger’. In recent years *refugee highway* has become a technical term of the evangelical refugee ministry community. It is found in publications of the World Evangelical Alliance such as their missiological journal *Connections* (Orr 2004:102-103; Tunncliffe 2002:52-53), as well as in material published by evangelical mission and relief agencies such as International Teams (2003) or European Christian Mission International (2004).

Thomas Albinson (2003:59), director of refugee ministries for International Teams, comments: ‘The Refugee Highway is a scar that wraps itself around the globe betraying the wounds in the world today. It is paved with tears of loneliness, fear and discouragement’. Stephen Mugabi (2003:59-60), executive secretary of the Association of Evangelicals in Africa – Commission on Relief and Development, describes the experience of refugees on the highway:

The challenges faced by the exodus of refugees are enormous. They range from hopelessness, violence, abuse, desperation, fear, high vulnerability/risk, lack of provision of basic necessities, social and economic depravity, and the passionate desire to locate a new home.

To determine the accuracy of this evaluation of the refugee highway we now examine the main features of the global paths by which refugees travel. A special emphasis will be placed on the so-called *exit ramps* of the refugee highway.

4.2 Features of the refugee highway

4.2.1 On the highway: Refugees and basic human rights

Theoretically, refugees are supposed to be protected by international law as soon as they enter another country in order to seek refuge (Loescher 1996:143). They are not only under the protection of the 1951 Convention but also of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Goodwin-Gill 2004:2-3). According to the latter, the status of refugee guarantees human rights (:2-3), which include the following: the right to stay alive, not to be tortured, physically abused, mistreated or abducted by force (Eggli 2002:2). Eggli asserts that host or transit countries frequently disregard these rights (:2). Loescher (1996:143) argues that this is especially the case when poor countries with insufficient legal and security institutions are involved. Eggli (2002) points out that the protection of refugees is difficult to guarantee when displacements take place in huge numbers: 'Most countries', she writes, 'are effectively unable to cater suddenly for large numbers of refugees on their own' (:1).

A typical example of insufficient refugee protection caused by a mass influx and the inability of the host country to provide for the physical needs of refugees are the refugee movements which have taken place in central Africa within the last decade. In his article 'Living on a Knife-Edge' published in the *Missionary Herald* G. Hunter (2000:14) describes what happened when refugees from the Republic of the Congo (Congo Brazzaville) poured into the Democratic Republic of Congo (Congo Zaire) in the year 2000:

First the Brazzaville population fled to the south to seek refuge in the tropical forests, but they found themselves, together with the local population, victims of indiscriminate violence. They had no access to food or medical care and fleeing in ever-greater numbers further south and west they crossed the border in their thousands into the Bas region of the Democratic Republic of Congo. They preferred to stay near the border but it was difficult to get help to them in some of the remote parts and the DRC government wanted to avoid the security hazard with Congo Brazzaville militia crossing the border. Consequently they moved on down to the river of Luozi....UNHCR officials came in with food and supplies and set up camps but soon found that they couldn't cope with such large numbers.

However, even when given optimum support by the UNHCR and other agencies in the form of food, accommodation, and medical treatment, refugees are still left in physical danger. When refugee camps are situated in insecure border regions armed attacks against these

settlements and their inhabitants are a common occurrence (Gorman 1993:173). Thus, Sudanese refugees in northern Uganda have been affected by the activities of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) since the 1990s (Bagenda & Hovil 2003:14). The LRA is a rebel group that not only fights the Ugandan government but also terrorises the population in the northern parts of the country. The rebels attack villages, rape women and conscribe child soldiers (:14). Again and again, Sudanese refugee settlements have become the target of brutal attacks carried out by LRA rebels (:15). Bagenda and Hovil give the following report about an attack on the Achol-Pii refugee settlement: 'On 5 August 2002, LRA rebels once again attacked the refugee settlement, killing an estimated 60 refugees and abducting 19 people, including four staff members of the International Rescue Committee' (:15).

Another fairly common phenomenon of the refugee highway is that of militarised refugee camps. In this case refugee communities become the base for guerrilla groups from which they conduct their military operations. Thus they become vulnerable to attack by government troops. In their report entitled *The State of the World's Refugees* the UNHCR (2000) describe the implications for civilian refugees that the presence of militia had in countries such as West Timor, Sierra Leone or Liberia in the 1990s. The report states:

It has made them vulnerable to intimidation, harassment and forced recruitment by armed groups. It has also exposed them to armed attacks on refugee camps and settlements by enemy forces, the mining of areas in which they live, infiltration by enemy forces, kidnappings and assassinations (:248).

The most vulnerable groups among the population of refugee camps are women and children. In an article on the Dafur crisis Roberta Cohen (2005:7) reports that many women and girls are raped while they search for firewood outside refugee camps. Sexual violence in form of rape and forced marriages are common features of refugee settlements (El-Bushra 2000:6). The UNHCR's *Guidelines on the Protection of Refugee Women* state that 'refugee women and girls have special protection needs that reflect their gender: they need, for example, protection against manipulation, sexual and physical abuse and exploitation, and protection against sexual discrimination in the delivery of goods and services' (1991:1). According to an assessment carried out by the International Rescue Committee in Tanzania in 1996, 26 per cent of all Burundian female refugees between 12 and 49 years of age had

experienced some kind of violence since becoming refugees (Nduna & Goodyear 1998:3) Between April and December 2000 the International Rescue Committee (IRC 2002) provided services to 231 Burundian refugee women in Tanzania who had become victims of sexual and gender-based violence. 33 per cent were cases of rape in and around the refugee camps, 13 per cent rape before arriving in the camp, 13 per cent attempted rape, 7 per cent sexual harassment, 2 per cent forced marriages, and 31 per cent gender-based violence.

Another notable feature of the refugee highway is the increasing number of refugees and asylum-seekers who are brought to Europe by professional smugglers and traffickers. The UNHCR (2000:160) sees this development as a direct result of a stricter refugee and asylum regime in many Western European countries. As smuggled migrants, refugees are transported across borders illegally for profit (Gallagher 2002:25). In the same process smugglers and refugees become business partners. The smugglers offer a service and the refugees pay for this service (:25). But as A. Gallagher points out, this is often a very unequal partnership: 'All going well,' writes Gallagher, 'their relationship with the smuggler ends at the destination country and they may even manage to survive the ordeal with only financial damage' (:25). Egyptian refugees, for example, pay up to 3,000 Euros to smugglers in order to be taken in small boats across the Mediterranean Sea to Greece or Italy (Baumgarten 2004), while it costs Iraqi Kurds US\$ 5-6,000 to be smuggled to Britain (Bradstock & Trotman 2003:21).

That smuggling can be an acutely dangerous business is shown by the case of 60 Chinese refugees who tried to enter the United Kingdom with the help of smugglers in June 2000. When British customs officers opened a container in the port of Dover they found the dead bodies of 58 Chinese; the 54 men and 4 women had suffocated as they had used up all the oxygen in the sealed and airtight container (McAllister 2000).

4.2.2 At the exit ramps of the refugee highway: Refugees and asylum seekers in the United Kingdom

That refugees and asylum seekers encounter danger when they reach the end of the refugee highway, the so-called exit ramps in Europe, Northern America or Australia, is certainly the exception. But the fact that they have reached their destinations does not necessarily mean

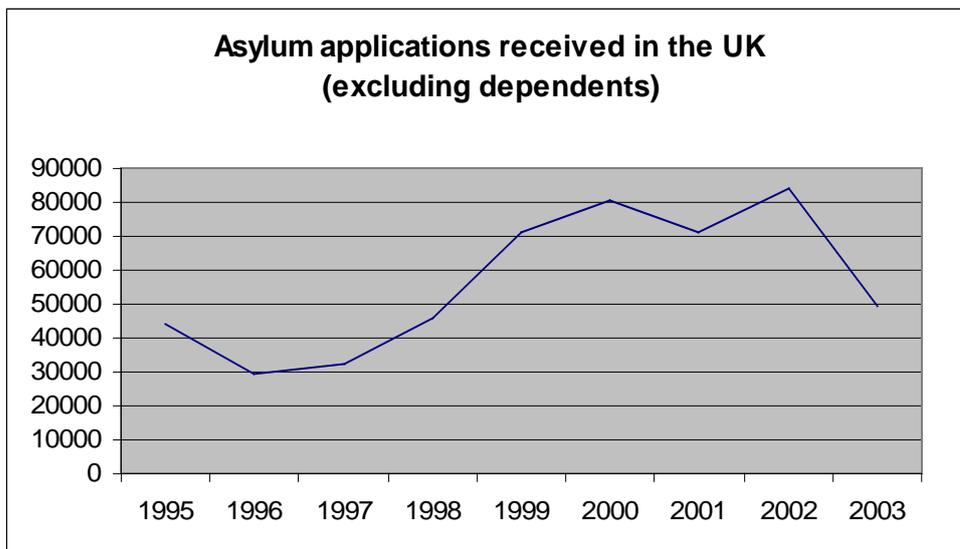
that their ordeal is over; their lives might not be in danger but they still face severe problems, as a more detailed examination of the situation of asylum seekers and refugees in the United Kingdom shows.

4.2.2.1 Asylum seekers and refugees in the UK – an overview

Political asylum and immigration have been hotly disputed issues in the United Kingdom for some years now. According to a poll carried out by MORI (2004), the largest independent market researcher in the UK, asylum and immigration are rated by the British people as the second most important issue facing their country today after defence and international terrorism.¹² And though there are many different views on asylum and immigration, the public debate has become politicised and highly polarized. In simple terms, there are those who argue that the British asylum regime is too strict and there are those who argue the opposite, that it is not strict enough. What unites them is their aversion to current British asylum policy and practice. A prominent representative of the former view is the Refugee Council, an umbrella organisation for 180 groups involved in refugee work, while the latter position is held most prominently by organisations such as Migration Watch UK or Civitas, two politically conservative think-tanks.

When we look at the absolute figures behind the current British asylum debate it is evident that there has been a significant increase in asylum seekers since the mid 1980s. Whereas in 1985 approximately 4,000 people applied for asylum in the UK (dependants excluded), ten years later in 1995 the number of asylum seekers was almost 44,000 (Home Office 2004b:43). Between 1995 and 2003 the UK received a total of 508,155 asylum applications or an average of 56,461 applications per year. The highest number of asylum applications was filed in 2002 with over 80,000 while in 2003 the number of applications was down to 49,405 (or 60,045 including dependants) (:43).

¹² Research Methodology: For this poll MORI interviewed 1,982 adults (18+) at 186 sampling points across the UK. The fieldwork was carried out face-to-face on 21-27 October 2004 (MORI 2004).



Source: Home Office 2004b:43

Sixty-nine per cent of these 49,405 applicants were male compared with 74 per cent in 2002 and 76 per cent in 2001 (Home Office 2004c:7). In 2003 16 per cent of all applicants were granted either Asylum (i.e. refugee status/Indefinite Leave to Remain), Humanitarian Protection or Discretionary Leave, compared to 31 per cent in 2002 and 33 per cent in 2001 (:16). 13,005 applicants were removed from the UK in 2003 (:5).

In 2003 the top five countries of origin for UK asylum seekers were Somalia (10 per cent), Iraq (8 per cent), China (7 per cent), Zimbabwe (7 per cent), and Iran (6 per cent) (Home Office 2004c:6). In the previous year the nationalities accounting for the most applicants had been Iraqi (17 per cent), Zimbabwean (9 per cent), Afghani (9 per cent), Somali (8 per cent), and Chinese (4 per cent) (:30).

UK asylum applications in 2003: The top ten countries of origin

Country	Applications
Somalia	5090
Iraq	4015
China	3450
Zimbabwe	3295
Iran	2875
Turkey	2390
India	2290
Afghanistan	2280
Pakistan	1915
DR Congo	1540

Source: Home Office 2004c:29

These figures indicate that the majority of asylum seekers to the UK came from countries with well-recorded histories of serious human rights abuses, discrimination of minorities, civil wars or ethnic conflicts. For pro-asylum groups, such as Refugee Action (Frequently Asked Questions), this is a clear indication that the majority of asylum seekers are genuine. For Refugee Action military conflicts, persecution, and political instability are the main push factors in the asylum process (Frequently Asked Questions).

In contrast to these views Migration Watch UK (2004) argues that the institution of asylum can be still abused, even if asylum seekers come from countries which are well known for persecution. For Migration Watch UK the majority of asylum applicants are not genuine asylum seekers. Migration Watch UK holds that in most cases economic pull factors dominate a person's decision to leave her or his home country and to apply for asylum in the UK: 'Most asylum seekers are in fact economic migrants and their claims and appeals are frequently rejected because on investigation the evidence given in support of their claims/appeals is shown not to be believable' (2004). A similar view is taken by Steve Moxon, a former Home Office immigration officer. In his book *The Great Immigration Scandal* Moxon (2004:151) writes: 'The 1951 Geneva Convention on Refugees..., as implemented in Britain, is far more abused than it is used'. Moxon goes on to say that the British government fails to remove those who have been rejected or where the grounds for granting asylum in the first place no longer exist (:151). He also questions whether the 1951 Convention makes sense in a world

with a huge potential of asylum seekers (:152). For him there is only one way out, namely a radical change of the asylum system, Moxon writes:

Asylum,..., is a problem that has to be tackled at the source. Helping people to feel safe and economically at least subsistent, if not with real prospects, in their home countries is the way to a happier world for all of us. This is the logic we should apply and it demands a radical reappraisal of asylum policy (:154).

The journalist Myles Harris (2003) also urges radical changes to the asylum system. In a Civitas publication he demands the abolishment of the Human Rights Act, which he sees as 'the major cause of our asylum crisis' (:77).

It can be argued that Moxon (2004) and Harris (2003) fail to make the case for abolition. Evidence for the fact that the asylum system is being abused by asylum seekers does not mean that the institution itself is wrong in principle, *abusus non tollit usum*. The actual or potential scope for failures to the systems managing asylum may simply argue for its reform and improvement. In their conviction that the whole system needs to be abolished Moxon and Harris disregard the problems which asylum seekers and refugees face in Britain - whether they are genuine asylum seekers or not.

4.2.2.2 Racism, xenophobia and the British press

In 2000 a campaign entitled 'Speak out against Racism – Defend Asylum Seekers' was launched by the National Assembly Against Racism (NAAR 2004). The campaign was supported by various refugee support groups, such as Refugee Council and the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants. In the campaign statement, the organisers claimed that there was an 'atmosphere of xenophobia, discrimination and racism against refugees and asylum seekers' in the UK. Unsurprisingly, such claims have been vehemently rejected by members of the *anti asylum* camp. Moxon (2004:154), for example, comments: 'It is usually made out that the public's attitude to asylum seekers is xenophobia that gets it wrong on all counts, but this is not true'. Moxon seeks to neutralise the British term 'racism' by replacing it with his preferred phrase 'anti-racism hysteria' (:139).

Recent research has shown that the allegations of racism and xenophobia may be accurate descriptions of negative UK reactions to immigrants. Between October 2002 and March 2003 a joint working group of the Cardiff University based Cardiff School of Journalism and Article 19, a charity which promotes freedom of speech, carried out research into the representation of refugees and asylum seekers in the British media (Buchanan, Grillo, Mosdell & Threadgold 2003:3). The research included the monitoring of print and television coverage of issues relating to refugees and asylum seekers and qualitative interviews with asylum seekers and refugees about their experience of the British media, as well as interviews with journalists and representatives of refugee organisations (:45-46).¹³ The research project was funded by Oxfam, the British Broadcasting Corporation and the Body Shop Foundation (:3). In 2003 the results of the research were published in a 55 page strong report entitled *What's the Story? Results from Research into Media Coverage of Refugees and Asylum Seekers in the UK*. The report's main findings can be summarized as follows: Firstly, the media coverage of the asylum issue is characterised by a provocative and inaccurate use of language to describe those who come to the UK in order to apply for asylum. Altogether, the researchers counted 51 different labels used to refer to refugees and asylum seekers (:9). Among these were terms such as 'illegal immigrants', 'illegal asylum seeker', 'illicit migrant', 'fake asylum seeker', and 'asylum cheat' (:15).

Secondly, media reporting, especially in the tabloid papers, consistently fails to distinguish between refugees, asylum seekers and immigrants. Though these groups differ in their legal status the terms are used synonymously (Buchanan, Grillo, Mosdell & Threadgold 2003:9).

¹³ Research Objective and Methodology: The aim of the research was to examine the media representation of refugees and asylum seekers in the UK, and the impact of the media coverage on the daily lives of asylum seekers and refugees. The media monitoring was conducted over a 12 week period from October to December 2002. The print monitoring included editions of The Daily Telegraph, The Guardian, The Sun, The Daily Mirror, Daily Mail, Daily Express and Metro. The television monitoring was carried out on the basis of a longitudinal approach (May-June 2002, December 2002, February-March 2003). The BBC, ITV and Channel 4 evening bulletins were monitored across all three periods, Sky news in the first and last periods, the Channel 5 news bulletin was monitored in the last period only. The research group carried out in-depths semi-structured interviews with 45 refugees and asylum seekers from 22 different countries, 23 men and 22 women. The interviews were conducted in four cities/regions of the UK. All interviews were anonymous (Buchanan, Grillo, Mosdell & Threadgold 2003:45-46).

Thirdly, images used on the asylum issue are dominated by stereotypes. Almost all photographs and films show male asylum seekers and refugees, usually as individuals or groups, while women and children are hardly seen (Buchanan, Grillo, Mosdell & Threadgold 2003:9). The report comments: 'The dominant stereotype that emerged from both the print and broadcast coverage of asylum was that of the young dangerous male breaking into Britain and threatening our communities' (:24). Fourthly, the numbers of refugees and asylum seekers presented in the media are often exaggerated and given without any source (:9). Fifthly, the coverage on asylum relies heavily on politicians and official figures as sources of information. Out of 182 news and feature articles published in the seven newspapers monitored, only 14 articles quoted refugees as the main source (:30). Last but not least, the negative media coverage on asylum has a direct impact on refugees and asylum seekers. Thus, they feel alienated, misunderstood and offended by the press. Also, they see a connection between the negative press coverage and the negative attitudes they have experienced in their daily lives (:39). The report states: 'The interviewees were also sensitive to the fact that the media and by extension, the British public, believe that they only came to Britain to abuse the welfare system and to seek employment' (:38). And then it goes on to quote one of the asylum seekers interviewed, who said: '...it is a no win situation because if you work, you are accused of stealing jobs and if you do not work, you are seen as scroungers' (:38).

A poll conducted by MORI (2002) in June 2002 appears to confirm some of the findings of the research carried out by Cardiff School of Journalism and Article 19.¹⁴ Eighty-five per cent of all interviewees associated negative words and phrases with the media reporting on asylum seekers and refugees. Sixty-four per cent said that the media would use the term 'illegal immigrant' when speaking about refugees and asylum seekers. Other terms associated with media coverage were 'bogus', 'scroungers', 'foreigners' and 'desperate'. The poll also shows that there appears to be a lack of knowledge about the asylum issue in the British population. Thus, on average, the interviewees believed that the UK would host 23 per cent of the world's refugees and asylum seekers, while the real figure was 1.98 per cent, i.e. more than 10 times

¹⁴ Research Methodology: MORI (2002) interviewed a representative quota sample of 2,166 people aged 15+, in-home and face-to face, at 196 sampling points throughout the UK. The fieldwork was carried out among 15-18 years olds between 18-22 April 2002, and all adults aged 18+ between 2-7 May 2002. The data collected were weighed up to their correct proportions at the analysis stage (MORI Research Institute 2002).

lower than the believed figure. Finally, the poll confirms that there is a negative attitude towards asylum seekers and refugees among the British public. Only 26 per cent of all adults interviewed by MORI said that they would welcome asylum seekers or refugees in their local community. In the young age group this figure was even lower. Only 19 per cent of all interviewees aged 15-18 wanted to live in the same area as refugees or asylum seekers (MORI 2002).

4.2.2.3 The asylum support system and its deficiencies

In his book *'Race', Ethnicity and Difference* P. Ratcliffe (2004:56) mentions three characteristics of the British asylum system which he claims have caused hardship to asylum seekers in recent years: the voucher system, forced dispersal, and poor housing. All three areas mentioned by Ratcliffe are closely linked with the asylum support system.

Until 2000 most asylum seekers had been supported in an informal and uncoordinated way by many local authorities (Robinson 2003:122). Since the majority of asylum seekers had come to London and the South East of England there was a significant pressure on local authorities in these areas, which they were no longer willing to bear (:122). To bring relief to these local authorities the British Government set up the National Asylum Support Service, under the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, as a department of the Government's Home Office (:123). The task of the NASS is to provide welfare support, accommodation, and financial help for asylum seekers while their application for asylum is being considered by the Home Office's Immigration & Nationality Directorate. To implement the support arrangements for asylum seekers NASS co-operates with local and regional voluntary agencies which are funded by the Government (Home Office 2004d).

The new arrangements included the introduction of the voucher system in April 2000. Asylum seekers were given vouchers to buy food and other essential everyday items (National Information Forum 2001:11). These vouchers could only be exchanged at certain shops and supermarkets, but the asylum seekers would not get any change from the vouchers (Geddes 2004:143-144). The introduction of the voucher system was criticised on different counts;

firstly, it was argued that the government had no experience of operating such schemes. Secondly, it was pointed out that asylum seekers could be stigmatised when using their vouchers (:143-144). Both objections proved to be well-founded. An Oxfam survey on the voucher scheme and its impact on asylum seekers and the organisations working with them confirmed the damaging effect of the scheme. The results of the survey were published in December 2000 under the title *Token Gestures – The Effects of the Voucher Scheme on Asylum and Organisations in the UK* (Oxfam 2000).¹⁵ According to the survey 35 out of 50 organisations involved with asylum seekers (70 per cent) said that they had contact with asylum seekers experiencing hunger since the introduction of the scheme. 41 organisations (82 per cent) said that asylum seekers were not able to buy enough food while 48 organisations (96 per cent) reported that asylum seekers were unable to buy other essential items. 35 organisations (70 per cent) said that asylum seekers had complained to them about the way they had been treated by shops taking part in the scheme, and 32 organisations (64 per cent) had seen asylum seekers suffering because of the non-arrival or delay of vouchers (p:9). As a consequence of the massive criticism the voucher scheme had received it was abolished in April 2002 (Refugee Council 2002).

Another tool to manage asylum seekers introduced in 1999 was the policy of dispersal. According to that policy asylum seekers who request accommodation are dispersed across nine regions in England and Wales. The dispersal scheme has been sharply criticized by asylum support groups. Their main criticisms are that asylum seekers are sent to areas where they have no access to trained immigration lawyers, that the policy of grouping asylum seekers by nationality is gradually eroding and that many asylum seekers are provided with inadequate and inappropriate accommodation (Robinson 2003:136-137).

¹⁵ Research Methodology: The survey was carried out on behalf of Oxfam, the Refugee Council and the Transport and General Worker's Union. 50 organisations working with asylum seekers across the UK took part in the survey. The organisations were asked the following four questions: How well is the voucher scheme operating? How is the voucher scheme affecting asylum seekers? How has the voucher system affected your organisation? What are the specific concerns which asylum seekers have raised with you? In addition to these questions, the organisations participating in the survey submitted case studies, which were then analysed (Oxfam 2000:19-21, 24).

In 2001 Deborah Garvie carried out an investigation into the housing situation of asylum seekers in private rented accommodation.¹⁶ The results of this investigation were published by Shelter, the British homeless charity under the title *Far From Home* (Garvie 2001). According to this report 17 per cent of the 154 dwellings inspected were found not to be fit for human habitation. The most common reasons for unfitness were dampness, and inadequate heating, ventilation and lighting, as well as unsatisfactory cooking facilities (:43). Twenty-eight per cent of the occupied dwellings inspected were overcrowded and 25 per cent did not comply with fire safety regulations (:47&51). The report concludes: ‘The findings of the investigation confirm many of the problems that were suspected at the start of this project, in particular the number of asylum seekers living in shared, sometimes overcrowded, housing and the use of sub-standard, unfit and dangerous housing for asylum seekers’ (:52).

In 2003 the Home Affairs Committee of the House of Commons (2004) undertook an inquiry into the situation of asylum seekers and refugees in the United Kingdom. The Committee recognised the deficiencies of the asylum support system which had caused problems to asylum seekers and those involved in asylum support at a local level. In their report the Committee came to the conclusion that ‘an improvement in the performance of NASS is a very high priority’ (2004:59). It went on to say that ‘building bridges with local communities, to reduce hostility to asylum seekers and enhance social cohesion, is an essential part of the way forward’ (:59).

4.2.2.4 Female asylum seekers and health & safety

In common with female refugees in refugee camps in Africa, women are also vulnerable at the *exit ramps* of the refugee highway when they arrive in Britain. In 2002 Refugee Action, a

¹⁶ Research Objective and Methodology: The aim of the research was to gather information about the fitness and appropriateness of the private rented sector to accommodate asylum seekers, to explore possible reasons why asylum seekers might be placed in unsuitable private rented houses and flats, and to use the results to develop policy solutions to the problems found. For the investigation five local authority case study areas were selected. Between January and March 1999 environmental health officers in each of the five areas were asked to fill in questionnaires when they inspected private rented accommodation for asylum seekers. In addition, seminars were convened in each of the five areas. These seminars were attended by staff from local housing, social services, environmental health authorities, and race equality councils as well as specialist refugee groups. Last but not least contextual information was collected in the five selected areas through Shelter’s network of housing aid centres (Garvie 2001:11, 40-41)

voluntary agency that provides support to asylum seekers on behalf of the National Asylum Support Service, carried out research into the situation of female refugees in the UK. In December 2002 the results of the research were published in a report under the title *Is it safe here? Refugee Women's Experiences in the UK* (Dumper 2002).¹⁷ According to this report the majority of refugee women interviewed felt unsafe and isolated in Britain. Eighty-three per cent reported that they would not leave their accommodation after 7.00pm. Eighty-four per cent said that they lived in accommodation without a telephone. Thirty-two per cent stated that they walked everywhere because they could not afford public transport, and 28 per cent reported that they had been verbally or physically abused (:12).

Other areas of research included the health of refugee women and the provision of health services to refugee women. Eighty-four per cent of the women interviewed said that they always or sometimes needed an interpreter due to a lack of English, but only 52 per cent had access to interpreters when visiting their local surgery (Dumper 2002:15). Twenty-five per cent said that they had been diagnosed as suffering from psychological problems since coming to the UK. Forty-six per cent said that they found difficulties sleeping at night. The majority of these named nightmares, anxiety, or depression as the reasons for their sleeplessness (:17). The report concludes with the following words:

The psychological distress many are suffering needs to be addressed urgently. This stems from a variety of reasons. One key reason is the isolation experienced by refugee women. Once here, a significant number of refugee women are alone. They cannot rely on the support of compatriots in the regions, in the way that groups of single males of most nationalities can, because their numbers are too small. Often coming from highly segregated societies, they feel defenceless without the support of the family or a male protector. Their loneliness makes them vulnerable and they feel unsafe (Dumper 2002:20).

4.2.3 Conclusion: A more fundamental question

In conclusion, the research outlined above confirms Albinson's and Mugabi's evaluation of the problems encountered by refugees and asylum seekers on the refugee highway. The

¹⁷ Research Objective and Methodology: The aim of the research was to document the impact of British asylum policy on the lives of women who had come to the UK to apply for asylum. 149 refugee women were interviewed between July and August 2002. The interviews were conducted by eleven women, mostly from refugee backgrounds. A questionnaire was used which had been tested out beforehand. Three quarters of the interviewees were below the age of 35, two thirds of the interviewees were married. Two thirds described themselves as Muslims and one third as Christians. 70 per cent of the women had applied for asylum in their own right (Dumper 2002:5-8).

situation of refugees and asylum seekers is characterized by a high vulnerability and uncertainty at almost every stage of their flight. This is especially the case with female refugees and asylum seekers. Analysis of the refugee highway raises fundamental issues about the reception of refugees by Christians. It specifically questions methods by which refugees may be integrated into the local church. Research into the refugee highway challenges churches in Britain to re-examine their theory and practice of mission.

5. Migrants, refugees and strangers in the bible – an overview

In his book *Asylum and Immigration – A Christian Perspective on a Polarised Debate* Nick Spencer (2004:85) rightly points out that the concept of asylum cannot be found in the Bible. But this does not mean that both the Old and the New Testament have nothing to say about forced migration and forced migrants. Apart from the Book of Daniel and Psalms 78 and 137, wisdom literature and psalms are silent on the issue of migration. However, the theme of forced migration is very prominent in the Pentateuch and the history books. In the New Testament the theme of wandering and homelessness plays an important role.

5.1 Migrants and refugees in the Old Testament

5.1.1 Abraham and his family

One of the most prominent stories of migration in the Old Testament is the story of Abraham and his family. The book of Genesis tells us about their journey of migration. In chapter 12 we are informed that Abram, originally from Ur in Mesopotamia, is called by God to leave Haran and to go to Canaan. David Cotter (2003:90) writes about Abram's call:

Abram is commanded to leave three things: country, kindred, and his father's home. Thus, he is to leave behind the past, everything and everyone familiar to him, all the previous supports and influences he has known, and to depend on God alone.

However, God's command to go to an unknown country is accompanied by a promise. As Claus Westermann (1987:98) points out, the significance of this promise goes far beyond Abraham and his family: God will make him a great nation through which all families on the earth will be blessed.

Walter Brueggemann (1982:121) depicts Abraham's migration as a metaphor of a journey that characterizes the life of faith. Abraham's journey, he argues, must not only be understood as a physical movement (:121). It stands for the life of faith. It is the life of faith which keeps Abraham and his descendants in pursuit of the land that God has promised them (:122). According to Brueggemann this metaphor of a journey is not only radically different

from our modern western ideologies which long for 'settlement, security and placement', it also reflects something of God's character (:122). Brueggemann writes: 'Thus Yahweh is understood not as a God who settles and dwells, but as a God who sojourns and moves about' (:122).

Chapters 12:10-20 explain that severe famine was the reason for Abram not immediately settling in Canaan, and the cause of his flight to Egypt. Here, he asks his wife Sarai to pretend to be his sister. This is, as Turner (2000:65-66) writes, a lie. He continues: 'Not only is it intrinsically improbable, but 11.29 which told us of Abram's marriage also told us that his brother Nahor married his niece' (:66). Turner concludes that any blood relationship between Abram and Sarai would certainly have been mentioned too (:66). According to J. Gibson (1990:34) it was simple cowardice of Abram that caused him to ask his wife to pose as his sister. Amos (2004:79) considers his behaviour as pure selfishness. She writes:

Abram's next actions don't cover him with glory either. He is selfishly far more concerned with his own safety (*they will kill me*) than with protecting his wife Sarai or preserving her dignity. Abram acknowledges that her life would never have been in danger: *they will let you live*. Sarai is treated merely as a chattel to be traded for Abram's own advantage.

Gibson's and Amos' judgement appears harsh but there were good reasons for Abram's fear. Firstly, as an alien in Egypt he was powerless and especially vulnerable as a Hebrew (Hamilton 1990:380). Secondly, it was not unusual for powerful rulers to abduct married women. Janzen (1993:24) points to the Mesopotamian king Gilgamesh and to King David, who acted exactly in this way. Thirdly, Wenham (1987:291) writes that Abram's fear that he could be killed but his wife would be spared was quite realistic. This was exactly the practice of a later King of Egypt (Exod. 1:16) (:291).

Lack of rain for extensive periods automatically induced famines in the agrarian societies of the ancient Near East. Old Testament accounts of famine record dramatic rises in the cost of food (2 Kgs. 6:24-25) and cannibalism (Lam. 2:20). Sometimes famines even led to the breakdown of whole societies and migration to other countries. In addition to Abram the Old Testament cites the examples of Isaac who leaves his home country for Gerar (Gen. 26:7) and Joseph's family who seek refuge in the Egyptian district of Goshen (Gen. 47:4-6) (Hudiburg

2000:455-456). Westermann (1987:103) speaks of famines as 'one of the fundamental experiences of human misery'.

5.1.2 The exodus

The first chapter of the Book of Exodus tells the story of the Israelites' oppression in Egypt. After a long and prosperous period the Israelites are forced into slavery. Two reasons are given by the narrator. Firstly, a new pharaoh comes to power. Ashby (1998:9) speaks of 'a new dynasty as a result of some sort of coup'. Some scholars, such as Clements (1972:11), Coggins (2000:5), Cole (1973:43), Noth (1962:22), and Sarna (1991:4), believe this new ruler to be Rameses II. Others think that the new pharaoh was either Rameses II or his predecessor Seti (cf. Davies 1973:40). Meyers (2005), however, argues that the name of this pharaoh was left out deliberately by the author. He notes:

It is more likely that the pharaoh is intentionally unnamed. The anonymity of key figures in biblical narratives can serve rhetorical purposes. By not having a specific name, the pharaoh who subjugates the Israelites can represent all such oppressors. At the very least, denying him a name may serve to demean him (:34).

With this change of regime the situation for Jacob's descendants has radically changed too. The writer informs us that the new ruler does not know Joseph (Exod. 1:8). In other words, he is not obliged to respect any commitment to a group of foreigners within his territory (Durham 1987:7; Fretheim 1991:27). Secondly, the expansion of the Hebrew population is seen as potentially damaging in two ways: the new regime fears that they could ally themselves with foreign powers and that they could diminish the workforce by leaving the country (Exod. 1:9-10). Meyers (2005:34) points out that the bondage pharaoh prescribes for the Israelites is not slavery as such but rather forced labour. Sarna (1986:21) speaks of a 'state slavery' which imposes 'forced labour upon the male population for long and indefinite terms of service under degrading and brutal conditions'. What the narrative does not explain is how the new Egyptian regime expected the forced labour to impede the increase of the Hebrews (Childs 1974:15). Janzen (1997:19) notes that by enslaving the Israelites, the Egyptians had obtained a cheap labour source for improving their infrastructure. In verse 11 we can read that the Israelites had to build supply cities for the Egyptians. In sum, the oppression of the Israelites appears to be politically and economically motivated. This oppression reaches a new level

when the new Egyptian ruler orders the death of every newborn male child (Exod. 1:15-16). Van Seters (1994:23) comments that the term genocide 'seems to deal more directly with the threat of Israel's increased population in Exodus 1'.

The biblical evidence gives clear grounds for the rise of nationalism and racism in Egypt of the 13th century BC. A political climate is created which is ripe for manipulation. G. Ashby (1998:10) argues that the Egyptian king 'plays on the prejudices and fears of his own people to justify his own racist attitudes'. He goes on to say that the story of the exodus presents a classical example of racial conflict. It shows how racial prejudices lead to persecution and oppression, coupled with economic exploitation, and thus to forced migration (:10).

According to Garrett (1990:656), the exodus from Egypt, which is told in chapters 12 to 18, was the 'paradigm of historical renewal' for the early Israelites. For Gustavo Guterrez Israel's exodus forms a paradigm for liberation theology (Tombs 2002:128). Guterrez (2001:154) sees it as a political event. He writes: 'The liberation of Israel is a political action. It is the breaking away from a situation of despoliation and misery and the beginning of the construction of a just and comradely society. It is the suppression of disorder and the creation of a new order.' Guterrez is undoubtedly right that there is an element of political liberation in the exodus story. However, there is also a strong spiritual aspect (Prill 2005b:326). Thus, the starting point of Israel's liberation is that 'God remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob' (Exod. 2:24). The basis of this covenant is an act of faith. Genesis 17:7 tells us that God not only established a covenant with Abraham, who believed in the Lord (Gen. 15:6), but also with his descendants. In other words, God entered into a covenant with Abraham's descendants on the basis of his faith.

5.1.3 The Babylonian exile

Another Old Testament example of migration is the Babylonian Exile. In this instance it is a foreign power that forces people to leave their home country. The author of 2 Kings gives an account of two deportations of people from Judah to Babylon. The significance of the first deportation was that the people taken to Babylon all belonged to the ruling class, the

Jerusalem establishment (Hobbs 1985:352). Thus, the deportees were members of the royal family, officials of the royal court, soldiers, and skilled craftsmen (2 Kgs. 24:16). Only the poorest people remained in Jerusalem (24:14). Robinson (1976:237) identifies the reason for these deportations:

Nebuchadnezzar did not depopulate the city. He removed those who might assist in a future rebellion, *the officers and fighting men* who would provide the army, and *the craftsmen and smiths* who would make weapons for them to use.

After Zedekiah's rebellion against Nebuchadnezzar a second deportation took place. This time there were three groups of people who were exiled: those who were left in Jerusalem, the deserters and the rest of the population (25:11). Again we are told that only some of the poorest people were allowed to stay. They were left to look after the vineyards and the farmland (25:12).

The fundamental reason for the Babylonian invasion and the deportations lies in Nebuchadnezzar's hunger for power. It was his aim to subdue the Philistine cities and to get control over Judah (Jones 1984:633). Removal of social elites reduced the possibility of future revolt. But there was also an underlying economic agenda in operation. It is striking that the rich, the educated and the qualified people are deported to Babylon, while the poor are left behind in Judah. Only those are taken into exile that are of use for the Babylonian economy in general and the war economy specifically. At the same time the economic basis for the state of Judah is almost completely destroyed. That the Babylonians have a special interest in Israelite human capital is demonstrated in the story of Daniel and the other young Israelites of royal descent. These young men are valued by the Babylonians because of their wisdom and knowledge. They receive further training and function as advisers to the Babylonian King (Dan. 1:3-8).

Psalms 137 reveals something of the feelings of the exiled people of Judah. It shows the sufferings of a people who experienced the destruction of their homeland, who were deported to a foreign country, and who, upon their return, have to live in a ruined city (Weiser 1962:794). The psalm speaks about pain and homesickness. There is the pain of being separated from one's homeland. There is the pain of being cut-off from one's religious centre.

The exiled people of Judah find it difficult to practise their religion: 'How could we sing the LORD's song in a foreign land? If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand wither' (Ps. 137:4-5). Hans-Joachim Kraus (1989:503) comments:

The songs of Zion glorify Yahweh. But such Yahweh hymns cannot be sung in a foreign land. Cultic practice is not possible here (cf. 1 Sam 26:19; Hosea 8:3ff.). The land is unclean (cf. Ezek. 4:13). And yet, this explanation in v.4 does not preclude having a service of lamentation in a foreign land (cf. 1 Kings 8:46ff.).

Furthermore, Psalm 137 speaks about wrath and revenge: 'O daughter of Babylon, you devastator! Happy shall they be who pay you back what you have done to us' (:8). According to Schaefer (2001:323), this curse should not be understood literally. It is rather 'an overflow of feeling beautifully captured in a restrained composition'. Other scholars interpret verses 8 and 9 differently. Weiser (1962:797) writes that it is a real outburst of hatred that can be found in these verses while Knight (1983:315) speaks of a cruel prayer and Stuhlmueller (2002:144) of a scandal. Rogerson and McKay (1977:150) argue that one cannot deny the vindictive character of these words. However, they must be seen in the context of the Jewish belief in a just God and in Jerusalem as God's dwelling place. Rogerson and McKay continue: 'The Israelites could not conceive that a nation that had lifted up its hand to destroy God's sanctuary would escape punishment' (:150). Broyles (1999:480) points out 'that Psalm 137 is in the mouth of powerless victims, not powerful executioners' while Berlin (2005:69) argues that these verses not only contain thoughts of retaliation but are a kind of retaliation themselves. Instead of receiving the songs of joy that the captors have asked for they receive a song of doom. Berlin goes on to say that the 'rock' is a synonym of Edom itself. She concludes: 'The gist of verse 9 is that the rock-fortress protecting Edom will be the instrument for Edom's own punishment' (:70). In whatever way one understands these verses, Psalm 137 makes clear that refugees are people with feelings, sometimes with very strong feelings. Those who wish to help them need to empathise with their emotional and spiritual states.

5.1.4 Ruth and Naomi

In his commentary on Judges and Ruth Victor Matthews (2004:215) writes that '[a] large portion of scholarship on Ruth has centred on legal issues, especially the terms of levirate marriage or obligation'. Thus, Sakenfeld (1999:6) identifies the levirate marriage as one of the

central customs underlying the story, while Younger (2002:399-403) considers the levirate marriage and the kinsman-redeemer concept as the central background issues. For Sakenfeld (1999:11) there are two main theological themes: firstly, the joy of community life; and secondly, loyalty in one's personal relationships. The latter is also mentioned by Fuerst (1975:8), Larkin (1996:49), and Younger (2002:393). Moore (2000:300), however, points to another theme: wandering and restoration.

Two examples of migration can be found in the Book of Ruth. The book begins with an account of Elimelech's migration to Moab, which is economically motivated. Because of a famine in the land of Judah, Elimelech and his family leave their home town of Bethlehem and settle in their neighbouring country (Ruth 1:1-2). Further, chapter one gives an account of a second migration. Having heard about the end of the famine, Elimelech's widow Naomi decides to return to Judah (:6-7), and Ruth, her daughter-in-law insists on going with her: 'Do not press me to leave you or to turn back from following you! Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God' (1:16). Ruth's decision is not motivated by economic but by personal, cultural, and religious reasons.

Firstly, there is a strong family bond between Ruth and Naomi. Sakenfeld (1999:31) writes that her 'commitment to go with Naomi and to lodge with her incorporates the personal dimension of the companionship and support Ruth offers to her mother-in-law.' Being confronted with the painful choice between her love for Naomi and the hope of a second marriage in her home country, she decides to stay with her husband's mother (cf. Atkinson 1999:45-46). She is willing to give up the security of a husband in order to help her mother-in-law to find a new security in Bethlehem (Hamlin 1996:19).

Secondly, Ruth, the Moabitess feels a strong affiliation with the people of Israel. Hubbard (1988:117) writes that with the declaration 'your people shall be my people' Ruth renounces her ethnic origin and adopts the nationality of her mother-in-law. This view is shared by others scholars. Coxon (1989:26) writes that Ruth's confession 'Judaizes' her. Matthews (2004:222) speaks of an 'assimilation ritual'. He stresses that Bethlehem will be Ruth's new social place and that she will have to comply with the social norms of that place (:222). In

contrast to Hubbard, Coxon, and Matthews, Sakenfeld (1999:32) argues that Ruth's commitment to Israel does not go that far. '[The] story of Ruth,' writes Sakenfeld, 'does not claim that she totally assimilates or abandons her cultural identity.' Sakenfeld continues: 'The repeated references to her Moabite ancestry point not only to resistance in Bethlehem, but also to her legitimate claim to participate as a Moabite in the life of the Bethlehem community' (:32).

Thirdly, Ruth not only commits herself to Naomi and the people of Israel, but also to the God of Israel. This view is held by the majority of scholars (cf. Atkinson 1999:49; Bush 1996:87; Fischer 2001:147; Hamlin 1996:19; House 1998:457; Hubbard 1988:117; Matthews 2004:222; Nielsen 1997:49; Younger 2002:424). House (1998:457), for example, writes that like Rahab (Josh. 2: 8-14) and Naaman (2 Kgs. 5:1-18) Ruth converts to covenantal faith. Sakenfeld (1999:32) suggests that there is a difference between Ruth's commitment to the people of Israel and the faith of Israel. She writes:

Ruth's formal commitment to a different religious faith is a still more momentous decision, for in the case of religion...an abandoning of the former faith is expected. In Jewish tradition, Ruth is remembered as the paradigmatic example of conversion. Rabbinic writers interpreted her speech as a declaration of conversion and deduced from her words requirements to be accepted by all converts.

Some commentators, such as Smith (2007:244-245) and Moore (2000:322), have challenged the notion of Ruth's conversion. Moore (2000:322), for example, writes that one cannot say what Ruth means exactly by God. He continues:

While many translations (including NIV) singularize and capitalize *elohim* as "God", it is just as likely that Ruth speaks to Naomi as Naomi earlier spoke to her, as one Syro-Palestinian to another, using theological language more at home in the polytheistic world of Mesha, Balaam, and Micah (Judg. 17-18) than in the monotheistic world of the Mishnah or the NT (:322).

While Moore is right that the term *elohim* can be translated both as 'God' or 'Gods' (cf. McLaughlin 2000:401-402), he seems to overlook the fact that Ruth's faith in the God of Israel is confirmed by her actions (cf. Younger 2002:425). Younger (2002:425) summarises the meaning of Ruth's declaration well when he writes:

'[T]he essence of the oath is that only death will separate Ruth from Naomi. Her commitment to Naomi transcends even the bonds of racial origin and national religion: Naomi's people and Naomi's God will henceforth be hers.' Atkinson (1999:49), Fischer (2001:147), and Hamlin

(1996:20) stress that Ruth's commitment to Naomi goes even beyond life. Hamlin notes: 'Orpha went back to her own people and would be buried with her ancestors, but Ruth's solidarity with Naomi extended even to death and burial by her side, as foremothers of the people of Israel' (:20).

According to J. Craghan (1982:198), the Book of Ruth is a study in God's providence. It shows that the God of Israel cares for people who face dangerous situations. He provides by urging others to react to human tragedy. Hubbard (1988:69-70) comments:

[If] the story presumes divine action at all, it must be through human agents. Thus, while posting a sign of God's presence at the beginning, the author spoke of his subsequent activity with startling indirectness. Far from downplaying God's providence in the story, however, the indirectness only heightens the reader's awareness of it. As a powerful stylistic device, extreme understatement served as effective overstatement to stress forcefully that Yahweh is indeed very much at work.

E.F. Campbell (1999:663) points out that God's care is a 'care for those in danger of being left on society's margins'. Campbell goes on to say that in the Ruth story this is typified by the two widows, one an Israelite and one a foreigner (:663). LaSor, Hubbard, and Bush (1982:615) argue that the author stresses Ruth's ethnic origin. Thus, the author identifies Ruth as a Moabitess in several places where her national and cultural origin is actually of no real interest (Ruth 1:2, 2:2, 4:4, 4:10). By doing so, he underlines the fact that God's love and providence are not limited to the people of Israel but go beyond ethnic boundaries.

5.2 Refugees and migrants in the New Testament

5.2.1 Jesus - a refugee and migrant

The most prominent refugee story of the New Testament can be found in the Gospel of Matthew. In Matt. 2:13-23 the cause of migration is cited: after having been warned by an angel, Joseph takes Mary and Jesus and together they flee to Egypt in order to escape from King Herod who wants to kill their newborn child. M. Davies (1993:38), and others, argue that it is unlikely that this flight really happened. E. Schweizer (1976:44) points out that the Jewish historian Josephus, who accurately writes about the cruelties of Herod, does not mention the slaughter of infants. F.W. Beare (1981:82) argues that Matthew introduces the story only so that

he can quote from Hosea 11:1. 'There is no reason to believe,' writes Beare, 'that it has any historical basis.' Ulrich Luz (1989:146) comments on the historicity of the periscope as follows:

It is inexplicable why the devious fox Herod would wait so long until a politically mass murder was feasible. Our narrative is connected with the almost certainly unhistorical Bethlehem tradition and has no analogy at all in Luke. Only one point must be taken seriously: One has to ask whether there is perhaps a kernel of truth behind the tradition of Jesus' stay in Egypt: Judaism is aware of this tradition, and that in a form, it seems to me, in its oldest shape excludes dependence on Matthew.

Other scholars like Hagner (1993), Albright and Mann (Albright & Mann 1971) hold that the story is quite plausible. Albright and Mann argue that if one accepts the historicity of the birth narrative in the Gospel of Luke, then even a rumour of the events described in Luke 2:1-19 would certainly have caused a violent tyrannical reaction like that of Herod (:17). Hagner's thesis supports this view when he writes: 'The story is consistent with what we know of Herod and reflects the way he would have responded to the announcement of the magi' (Hagner 1993:35). Hagner claims that the fact that there are no references to the killing of infants in other historical sources is not surprising, since the number of children slaughtered by Herod was probably relatively small (:35). D. Senior's (1998:47) commentary on Matthew points out that in biblical times Egypt was not only the place of Israel's enslavement but also a traditional place of refuge for Jewish people. The same point is mentioned by Davies and Allison (2000:259). Blomberg (1992:66) even speaks of Egypt as 'a natural haven for first-century Jews', while Albright and Mann (1971:17) put it in this way: 'The OT abounds in references to individuals and families taking refuge in Egypt, in flight either from persecution or revenge, or in the face of economic pressure'. Thus, 1 Kings 12:40 records the fact that Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, fled to Egypt because King Solomon tried to kill him. The cause of conflict was Jeroboam's rebellion against the king (1 Kgs. 11). Jeremiah 41:16-18 cites a further example: a group of soldiers, women and children under the leadership of Johanan, son of Kareah, went to Egypt to escape Babylonian captivity.

The reason for the flight to Egypt, as Matthew presents it, is the fear of persecution. Herod the Great's persecution is politically motivated. Hagner (1993:27) writes that the title 'king of the Jews', that is used by the magi in chapter 2, verse 2, has a political connotation. King Herod was a cruel and vindictive ruler, who was well versed in power politics. He had

secured his position as king over Palestine by manipulating Marcus Antonius. Fearful of plots to overthrow him, he also murdered several members of his own family (Mounce 1998:12). It would be normal for him to be suspicious of a new 'king of the Jews'. Herod did not want rivals and so he decided to kill the newborn Jewish 'king'.

Besides the political context for Jesus' escape to Egypt there is a religious dimension. In verse 15 Matthew tells us that the flight to Egypt fulfilled an Old Testament prophecy: 'This was to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, 'Out of Egypt I called my son.'" The Old Testament quotation is taken from the book of Hosea chapter 11. According to Davies and Allison (2000:263) this verse, in its original context, undoubtedly refers to the people of Israel. Blomberg (1992:67), who shares this view, emphasises the fact that it is not a predictive prophecy but a recalling of God's love for Israel at the time of her exodus from Egypt. Blomberg draws attention to the spiritual aspect of both Israel's exodus and the arrival of the Messiah when he writes: 'Just as God brought the nation of Israel out of Egypt to inaugurate his original covenant with them, so again God is bringing the Messiah, who fulfils the hopes of Israel, out of Egypt as he is about to inaugurate his new covenant' (:67). The same view is expressed by Luz (1989:146) when he writes that Israel's exodus from Egypt is repeated and completed in Jesus. Luz continues: 'The catchword "Egypt" is thus for Matthew just as decisive as the catchword "Son". This is the Matthean thought: salvation happens once more anew.'

With the story of Jesus' escape to Egypt and the quotation of Hos. 11:1 Matthew aligns Jesus and his family with Israel and her refugee experience (Senior 1998:47). Jesus, the son of God, has to leave his birthplace. He flees from persecution. But even when his persecutor is dead, the danger is still there. Jesus' family returns from Egypt, but they cannot stay in Judea. They have to move on to Nazareth in Galilee. Brendan Byrne (2004:31) comments: 'The family of Jesus have to yield before the naked force of worldly power. Like refugees today, they have no control over where they may safely live but face constant uprooting as circumstances determined by those in power change.' According to Schweizer (1976:42) Matthew gives geographical data to stress the fact that Jesus' life 'is destined to be a life of homeless wandering'. A confirming passage in Matthew's gospel stresses the fact that Jesus' followers will

be wanderers just like him (cf. Gnllka 1986:311). In chap. 8 v. 20 Jesus speaks the following words to a scribe who wants to become one of his disciples: 'Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.' In other words, Jesus does not have a place where he can sleep. He does not have what many people would consider basic - a place where one can rest (Morris 1995:200-201). He is, as Schweizer (1976:219) puts it, 'devoid of all middle-class security'. He is homeless on earth and anyone who follows him will experience the same homelessness (Mounce 1998:77).

5.3 The attitude towards foreigners

5.3.1 The treatment of foreigners in the Old Testament

In the Old Testament a foreigner who lived permanently among the Israelites is called a *ger*, which is often translated as *sojourner*, *resident alien*, or simply as *stranger* (Willis 1993:20). The same term is also used for Israelites living in a foreign territory. J.R. Spencer (1992:103) notes:

In the biblical texts the term *gēr* is used in two basic ways: to describe the experiences of the Israelites themselves when they are living among foreigners; and to describe those non-Israelites who live among the Israelites. However, this distinction becomes confused when the claim is made that the Levites are *gērīm* (sojourners) among the Israelites. In all these cases, there are certain expectations of both the native population and the sojourners.

According to Collins (1994:840) sojourners or resident aliens formed a class within the Israelite community that descended from the old Canaanite population, from foreign servants and prisoners of war and from refugees, as well as other immigrants who wanted a new place in which they could live. Kellermann (1973:984) and Zehnder (2005:280) mention three main reasons for the forced migration of *gerim*: famine, war, and the fear of being taken into debt-slavery. The group of voluntary migrants among the *gerim*, writes Zehnder, consisted mostly of merchants, craftsmen, mercenaries, or agricultural workers (:280). However, the popular view that *gerim* were descendants of the Canaanite population is rejected by some authors (:281). Thus, in his commentary on Leviticus Noth (1965:131) writes that the *gerim* mentioned in 17:8-9 consisted both of Israelites and non-Israelites: 'Besides this, vv8-9 expressly place alongside the settled population the group of 'strangers', i.e. the group of those, whether Israelites or non-Israelites, who lived without any stake in the land among the settled

population.’ C. Bultmann (1992) goes even a step further. He argues that in the oldest Deuteronomic laws the term *ger* does not describe people of foreign origin but underprivileged Israelites, who similar to widows and orphans, lack the solidarity usually practised by the kinship group (:43-44).

The other category of alien residents is the *toshav* or *ger toshav* (Zehnder 2005:282). Some scholars believe that these immigrants were in no way distinctive from the *gerim*, while others claim that they were less integrated into the social and religious life of Israel (Zehnder 2005:283). N. Spencer (2004:88), for example, notes that in Leviticus and Numbers the term is used to describe social outsiders.

Finally, there is the group of *nokrim*, who are different from resident aliens (Zehnder 2005:283). These were foreigners who lived only temporarily among the Israelites, had no desire to assimilate into Israelite society, and enjoyed no special legal protection (:283). Konkel (1997a:109) writes that they were ‘usually perceived as dangerous and hostile’ and Spencer (2004:94) speaks of a less hospitable attitude towards them. This view is rejected by Bultmann (1992:102), who argues that there is no proof from the Deuteronomic law that the *nokrim* were seen as a threat. However, there is a good reason for the lack of special treatment: in the eyes of the law-giver the economic situation of these foreigners did not require any special support measures or protective legislation (Zehnder 2005:370). Bultmann (1992:102) mentions that economic independence was one of the main features of the *nokrim*.

According to scholars, one of the main characteristics of resident aliens was their landless status (cf. Bultmann 1992:55; Konkel 1997b:837; Rendtorff 2002:79; Wright 2004:94). Konkel (1997b:837) writes: ‘The sojourner does not possess land and is generally in the service of an Israelite who is his master and protector (Deut 24:14).’ Wright (2004:94) points out that they were completely dependent upon employment by land-owning Israelite households. Wright notes: ‘As long as the host household retained its land and was economically viable, the position of these dependents was secure. But without such protection they were very vulnerable indeed (:94).’ Resident aliens who lacked the protection of a land-owning family

were in a similar position to many widows or orphans, who had to rely on acts of charity (Wright 1990:103).

According to Exod. 23:12 and Deut. 5:14, resident aliens in Israel enjoyed equal status with the Israelites in observing the Sabbath rest (Rowell 2000:1235). Deut. 16:11&14 mention that they were to be included in the festival of weeks and the festival of booths. Konkel (1997b:837) writes that the participation in these feasts 'assumes the acceptance of circumcision,' but Zehnder (2005:364) argues that the participation in these festivals was more of a formal nature. They were not expected to worship the God of Israel. Furthermore, resident aliens were entitled to fair treatment and legal protection (Rowell 2000:1235). In Deuteronomy 24:17 we find the following commandment: 'You shall not deprive a resident alien or an orphan of justice.' In his commentary on Deuteronomy Wright (1998:260) argues that this command reminds the Israelites to treat the legal cases of the poor people with equal care as those of the rich and powerful members of society. Other divine commands forbade the mistreatment or oppression of foreigners (Exod. 22:21, 32:9) or their economic exploitation (Deut. 24:14-15). Instead, the Israelites were called to love the strangers living among them and to treat them as citizens (Deut. 10:19, Lev. 19:25). There are two reasons given why Israel should treat foreigners in such a way. Firstly, Israel knew from first hand experience what it was like to live as strangers in a foreign country. They had experienced oppression and persecution in Egypt for a long time. And so some of the commands explicitly remind Israel of this (Deut. 10:19, Deut. 24:14-17, Exod. 22:21, Lev. 19:25). Secondly, they are told that God loves foreigners, and therefore he expects them to do the same (Deut. 10:18). Weinfeld (1991:439) notes: 'God does not show particularity in judgment and does not discriminate between the rich and the poor, the residents and the alien (cf. 1:16-17, also 2 Chr 19:7). Men should therefore imitate God and love the alien too (v19).' Zehnder (2005:344) points out that this love command comes without any condition of assimilation. Furthermore, the biblical authors make clear that the land the Israelites inhabit does not really belong to them. They have to regard themselves as foreigners living on God's land: 'The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine; with me you are but aliens and tenants' (Lev. 25:23). The Israelites are, as Porter (1976:201) puts it, 'permanent but non-property owning [,] residents'.

In other words, they are in the same position as the resident aliens and foreigners who live among them (Rendtorff 2002:79). This idea of being strangers on God's land can also be found in 1 Chronicles 29:15 and Psalm 39:12.

In sum, one can say that according to the Old Testament law codes resident aliens had a special position in Israelite society. They were granted 'rights of assistance, protection, and religious participation' (Konkel 1997b:837). Zehnder (2005:401) comes to the conclusion that the relationship between Israelites and resident aliens/foreigners was not characterised by any form of racial or ethnic discrimination. However, J.R. Spencer (1992:104) argues that resident aliens did not enjoy the same status in society as the Israelites, even though equal treatment for them was the norm. For Spencer, the fact that the resident aliens are singled out in the Old Testament legislation is proof enough that they were not full members of society but people of different and lower status.

5.3.2 The treatment of foreigners in the New Testament

One of the New Testament key passages describing the treatment of foreigners can be found in the parable of the sheep and the goats, which is told in Matt. 25:31-46. The parable points to the final separation of the righteous, who will inherit the kingdom of God, and those who will be deprived of this inheritance. The reason given for God's blessing of the righteous is their merciful response to other people's needs (Mounce 1998:236). Commentators differ in their interpretation of the term 'all the nations' (cf. Davies & Allison 2000:422). Stanton (1993:214), for example, favours the particularist interpretation of the phrase. He believes that Matthew is writing about all non-Christians. He finds the proof for this view in Matt. 24:30 which speaks of 'all the tribes of the earth' who will mourn at the coming of the Son of Man. Other scholars, such as Furnish (1972:80), hold that Matthew had all Christians in mind when he wrote about 'all the nations' that will be gathered before the throne of God. But the majority of scholars, it seems, interpret the judgment pictured in Matt. 25:31-46 as the final judgment of all humanity (cf. Beare 1981:493; Davies & Allison 2000:422; France 1999:354; Gaechter 1963:813; Gnllka 1988:371; Gundry 1982:511; Luz 2005:208; Nolland 2005:1024; Schlatter 1995:373-374; Schnackenburg 2002:256, Weber 1997:676). Byrne (2004:196), for example, writes that the

particularist interpretation implies a separate judgment for Christians and non-Christians, which runs counter to the announcement in Matt. 16:27.

Altogether, Matthew mentions six different situations of need. One directly refers to the treatment of strangers: 'I was a stranger and you welcomed me' (25:35). Nolland (2005:1030) in his commentary on Matthew points to the similarity between hospitality-to-strangers and Jesus' command to love one's enemies. He writes: 'The welcoming of strangers, while not radical in the same way, has a family likeness to love of enemies in Mt. 5:43-48: both cases transcend focussing on one's self' (:1030). The Greek word for stranger, which Matthew uses here, is *xenos*. Bietenhard (1975:686) points out that the Greeks used *xenos* for people who did not belong to their own community. Bietenhard adds that in Greek society 'it was a sign of barbarity, when strangers were treated as if they had no rights and people did with them what they pleased' (:687). According to Morris (1995:638) *xenos* can even mean people who are exiled from their own countries. The passage emphasises the importance of caring for foreigners who have left their own countries, for whatever reason, and who need some kind of accommodation. Jesus identifies himself with such people, and anyone who practices hospitality towards them serves him (Matt. 25:38-40).

Scholars differ in their interpretation of the phrase 'these brothers of mine' in verse 40. Some argue that it refers to anyone in need (cf. Beare 1981:495; Davies & Allison 1997:429; Hill 1972:331; Schweizer 1995:159); others limit it to Jesus' disciples, i.e. to all Christians (France 1999:357; Overman 1996:349) or to Christian leaders and missionaries (Davies 1993:174; Gundry 1982:514; Luz 1996:129; Suh 2006:228). The context allows for multiple interpretation (cf. Heil 1998:14). Harrington (1991:357) points out that in several Matthean texts the phrase seems to describe Christians. According to Nolland (2005) this is also the case in 25:40. Nolland writes:

Jesus has those who are literally his brothers and sisters in 12:46-47; 13:55. But more important is the fictive family created by Jesus' identification in 12:48-50 of those who do the will of his Father as his brothers and sisters (and mother); in this sense the phrase will appear again in 28:10. For Matthew the same sort of identification seems to be involved in 25:40 (and this implies that for him 'these' must relate to the group on the right) (:1031-1032).

Consequently, judgement is on the basis on people's response to Christians in need (Stanton 1993:227). For France (1999:355) this interpretation of verse 40 is much more in tune with the theological emphases of Matthew's Gospel as a whole. The purpose of Matthew 25:31-46, then, is to encourage Christian believers who face severe persecution and oppression (Stanton 1993:223). However, other scholars argue that the phrase 'these brothers of mine' is quite unique (cf. Gnilka 1988:375; Meier 1990:304). Schnackenburg (2002:258) writes that 'against the horizon of world judgment' it can be expanded to all people whether Christian or not. He goes to say:

To understand only Christians or Christian missionaries as among the "least", on the ground of places in which "little ones" refers to disciples of Jesus, Christian missionaries, or insignificant members of the community..., is to overlook the fact that "in the name of a disciple" (10:42) is absent here (:258).

In other words, the stranger might be anyone, and not just some other Christian brother or sister.

5.4 Summary

J. Maruskin (2000:197) writes that the 'Bible is the ultimate immigration handbook, a book written by, for, and about immigrants and refugees'. While the term 'immigration handbook' appears to be an overstatement, the examples above indicate that the Bible gives emphasis to people who were forced to leave their homes. It cites many examples of people who migrated to other countries in order to survive. They had to flee from political or religious persecution, economic exploitation, or natural catastrophes, such as famines. The biblical narrative is explicit and prescriptive when dealing with migration and its effects. It makes clear that God has a special concern for foreigners. He loves them and wants them to be treated with respect. Foreigners should be welcomed. These general biblical principles form the basis for further enquiry into the integration of refugees into the Christian community.

6. The multi-ethnic church and the issue of integration in the Book of Acts – an investigation into the nature of the New Testament Church

6.1 The multi-ethnic church – a working definition

As indicated above there are biblical principles and examples that underline the call of the church to be an inclusive and caring community. Examination of the New Testament church, as presented in the Book of Acts, shows how radical this inclusiveness actually is. The biblical evidence suggests two levels of inclusivity: general inclusiveness and specific inclusiveness. General inclusiveness means a welcome to all regardless of background. Specific inclusiveness means a particular welcome to the marginalized, including migrants. Both forms of inclusivity become radical when they lead to the total acceptance and incorporation of all groups into the life of the church. This radical doctrine and practice of the early church appears to be mandatory for the Christian community today. As indicated below, a closer examination of the New Testament Church verifies the claim that the multi-ethnic church is the biblical standard model of church and that from it we can deduce principles which can help us to develop an integration strategy for refugees and asylum seekers.

For this exegesis I have defined a multi-ethnic church as a church with a least two ethnically diverse groups of a substantial size. I deliberately chose a simple working definition. Some scholars have argued that a multi-ethnic church must have a certain percentage of different ethnic or cultural groups in order to qualify as a multi-ethnic church (cf. Ortiz 1996:22; DeYoung, Emerson, Yancey & Kim 2004:76), but I found that such a precise definition inhibited biblical investigation.

In order to test the claim I have undertaken an analysis of the churches that are mentioned in the Book of Acts with a special focus on the Jerusalem church and the so-called Pauline communities, i.e. churches founded by the apostle Paul and his co-workers. The Book of Acts has been chosen because it gives a historical account of the development of the early

church. To find out whether churches mentioned in Acts meet the definition of a multi-ethnic church above, each has been explored for its membership composition, and when described, the composition of its leadership and ministry teams. The following four passages have been explored in detail: Acts 6:1-7, 11:19-31, 13:1-3 and 16:1-40. To validate the interpretation of these passages they are compared with the teachings of the early church as presented in Acts 15 and Gal. 2.

For the investigation into the nature of the New Testament church, as described in the Book of Acts, the basic principles of biblical interpretation have been applied (cf. Martin 1997:226-229). Thus, the following have all been taken into account: the literary form, the historical background, the cultural setting of the passages, and the theological purpose of the author.

6.2 The multi-ethnic congregation and the early church

6.2.1 The church in Jerusalem – Hebrews and Hellenists (Acts 6:1-7)

First century Jerusalem was a bilingual and bicultural city (Witherington 2001:139). The two languages spoken were Aramaic and Greek. It is estimated that between ten and twenty per cent of the population spoke Greek while the rest used Aramaic or Hebrew in public (Hengel 1989:10). The influence of Greek culture on Jerusalem was immense at that time. The city had Greek-speaking schools and synagogues as well as Greek gymnasium and hippodrome (Witherington 2001:139). A significant number of its Jewish population had migrated to Jerusalem from all parts of the Roman Empire. Some of these Diaspora Jews had come in their old age so that they could be buried in Jerusalem; others had come as pilgrims for one of the religious feasts and had decided to stay (:139).

When the very first Christian church started in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost it was composed of Jewish believers and carried out its mission among Jews only, despite Jesus' commission to make disciples of all nations (Marshall 1999:29). As I.H. Marshall points out, Acts chapter 2 does not mention Gentiles being present on that day in Jerusalem but only Jews

(:29). Thus, Luke speaks of 'devout Jews from every nation under heaven' (Acts 2:5). While the first Christian church in Jerusalem was made up of Jews alone it would be wrong to assume that it was a completely homogeneous group. While it might be called homogenous in a racial sense the Jerusalem church was divided linguistically. The first church reflected the cultural mix found in the city of Jerusalem (Witherington 2001:179). Among the first believers were Hellenists, i.e. Jews who spoke Greek, and Hebrews who spoke Aramaic as their mother tongue (:180). According to Witherington, Hellenists spoke Greek only, while some of the Aramaic-speaking Hebrews also had some command of Greek (:180). Other scholars, such as Marshall (1999:125-126) and Wedderburn (2004:43) think that some of the Aramaic-speaking Jews knew a little Greek as well, as it was the *lingua franca* of the period. F.F. Bruce (1990:181) even argues that many of the Aramaic-speaking Jews were bilingual. In addition, there were proselytes, i.e. Gentile converts to Judaism, among the Greek-speaking Jewish Christians (Acts 2:10), such as Nicolaus of Antioch (Acts 6:6).

According to Hengel (1989:53) first century Palestinian Judaism was significantly Hellenized. By the time of the Roman occupation Palestinian Judaism had seen a more than three-hundred-year history of Greek cultural influence (:53). The adoption of Greek culture, language, literature and thinking, argues Hengel (1980:125), affected almost all groups in society and involved not only the political and economic but also the intellectual and religious areas of community life. Based on Hengel's research some scholars, such as Williams (1999:117-118), believe that the distinction between Hebrews and Hellenists in the Jerusalem church was simply one of language. This view is shared by Bauernfeind (1980:103), Fitzmyer (1998:347), Jervell (1998:216), Johnson (1992:105), Munck (1967:56), and Witherington (1998:241-242).

Traditionally some commentators have held that there were also theological differences between the two groups. Schneider (1980:414) writes that the Hellenists were more mission-minded than the Hebrews. Together with Conzelmann (1987:45) and Haenchen (1971:268) Schneider (1980:416) also thinks that it is quite possible that the Hebrews and the Hellenists interpreted the law in different ways, with the latter following Jesus' teaching. This view has

been challenged in recent years. C.C. Hill (1996:152) gives a different slant on the theologically and ethically liberal Hellenists and conservative Hebrews:

But the evidence of the New Testament does not justify this two-toned portrait of Jewish Christianity. Indeed, it suggests an opposite picture: a colourful and dynamic church in which there was as much disagreement within as between individual congregations.

Other scholars reject the idea of a mere linguistic distinction between Hellenists and Hebrews. They hold that there were also cultural and social differences between these two groups (Spencer 1997:64; Barrett 1994:308-309). To them, the dispute between Hellenists and Hebrews over the distribution of food, which Luke describes in Acts 6:1-7, highlights not only the linguistic but also the social and cultural diversity in the Jerusalem church (Rosner 1998:226). In his popular commentary on Acts Stott (2000:120) writes about the Hellenists and Hebrews mentioned by Luke in Acts chapter 6 in the following terms:

What exactly was the identity of these two groups? It has usually been supposed that they were distinguished from each other by a mixture of geography and language. That is, the *Hellenistai* came from the diaspora, had settled in Palestine and spoke Greek, while the *Hebraioi* were natives of Palestine and spoke Aramaic. This is an inadequate explanation, however. Since Paul called himself *Hebraios*, in spite of the fact that he came from Tarsus and spoke Greek, the distinction must go beyond origin and language to culture. In this case the *Hellenistai* not only spoke Greek but thought and behaved like Greeks, while the *Hebraioi* not only spoke Aramaic but were deeply immersed in Hebrew culture.

James Dunn (1996) in his commentary on Acts presents another argument for cultural differences between Hellenists and Hebrews. Dunn asserts that language and culture are closely connected. Language, he writes, 'is a vehicle of culture' (:81). Consequently, anyone who uses a single or predominant language becomes part of the culture to which the language belongs (:81).¹⁸ Marshall (1999) appears to hold a similar view. He remarks that though they had a strong sense of their Jewish identity Hellenistic Jews were more open to syncretistic influences than Jews of Palestinian descent (:126).

While different commentators hold different views on the nature of the distinction between Hellenists and Hebrews, most of them agree that Acts 6:1-7 clearly indicates that

¹⁸ According to Ludwig Wittgenstein there is an intrinsic relationship between language and behaviour. In *Philosophical Investigations* Wittgenstein writes: 'Suppose you came as an explorer into an unknown country with a language quite strange to you. In what circumstances would you say that the people there gave orders, understood them, obeyed them, rebelled against them, and so on? The common behaviour of mankind is the system of reference by means of which we interpret an unknown language' (1972:82).

Hellenists and Hebrews had their own meetings within the Jerusalem church. Wedderburn (2004:45), for example, sees the reason for neglecting the Greek-speaking widows in the practice of holding separate gatherings between the two language groups:

‘Hellenist’ widows were left out simply because the distribution took place within the gatherings of the Aramaic-speaking Christians, and the ‘Hellenist’ widows did not take part in these because they could not follow what was said. Instead they attended their own Greek-speaking gatherings elsewhere, just as Greek-speaking Jews would gather in their own synagogue and conduct their worship and their affairs in Greek.

The existence of separate Greek-speaking and Aramaic-speaking Christian meetings in Jerusalem is also argued by Dunn (1996), Williams (1999), and Schneider (1980:414). While Williams (1999:118) talks about a ‘Greek-speaking Christian community’ that formed a minority in an overwhelmingly Hebrew church, Dunn (1996:84) prefers to use the term ‘Hellenistic house churches’ for the Greek-speaking gatherings. Hertig (2004:65) notes that the relationship between these two groups was not free of any tensions. ‘The numerical growth of the minority group,’ she writes, ‘sharpened group consciousness and thus resulted in intergroup tension, particularly when resources were limited.’ These tensions, she argues, can be traced back to the rift between Hebrews and Hellenists that started with the attempts of the latter to transform Jerusalem into a Greek city in the second century B.C. (:65). However, Schneider (1980:430) rightly points out that the growth of the church did not lead to any further conflicts after the appointment of the seven deacons.

Despite the fact that separate meetings existed, it would be wrong to conclude that the Jerusalem church was divided into two independent hostile communities, factions or parties, as Hertig (2004:66) and Spencer (1997:64) seem to suggest. The way the problem of the food distribution was dealt with shows that the church saw itself as one community. In response to the complaints made by the Hellenists, the twelve apostles called together the ‘whole community’ (Acts 6:2), i.e. the full assembly of Christians in Jerusalem, in order to sort out the issue. They then suggest choosing seven men for the distribution of food among the Greek-speaking widows. The selection of the candidates is left to the community, while the apostles regard it as their task to commission the chosen candidates (:6:3). In other words, the apostles’ action leaves no doubt that the problem of the food distribution is a matter for the whole

Christian community, and not one of the Greek-speaking group alone. The church is confronted with a practical problem of unity because of its multicultural nature, and it deals with it immediately and sensitively (Fernando 1998:228). Fernando notes: 'The solution of the problem facing the church was not to divide and have separate churches – one for the Grecians and another for the Hebraists. Rather, they sought to ensure that the Grecians were cared for' (:230).

It is striking that the seven men selected all have Greek names. In contrast to some scholars (cf. Conzelmann 1987:45; Jervell 1998:219; Schneider 1980:428), who argue that all seven were Hellenists, most commentators agree that this cannot be taken as a clear proof that the seven men were all drawn from the Hellenist section of the church, since many Palestinian Jews of that period had Greek names. Munck (1967:57), for example, notes:

An examination of the Jewish tombs excavated in Jerusalem and its vicinity shows a considerable number of Greek names in Jewish families whose other members bear Semitic names. No conclusion about the persons' language and customs can be drawn from their Greek names.

However, at the same time most commentators agree that it is as least possible if not likely that the men were indeed members of the Hellenist group (cf. Barrett 1994:314; Bruce 1990:183; Dunn 1996:81; Fitzmyer 1998:350; Marshall 1999:127; Williams 1999:119; Willimon 1988:60). Thus, Williams (1999:119), Marshall (1999:127) and Dunn (1996:81) point out that most of these Greek names were quite uncommon names for Palestinian Jews, while Bruce (1990:183) writes that it was natural for them to be from the Greek-speaking section as they were appointed to serve that very community. Williams (1999) adds the fact that the selection of seven Hellenists would be a powerful sign of the unity within the Jerusalem church. Williams states:

If, then, the Seven were Hellenists, their selection by a meeting of the whole church says much for the grace of the Hebrew majority and for the sense of unity that they all had in Christ. The things that held them together were greater far than their differences' (:119).

Parker (1966:50) argues that the selection of the seven Hellenists is an indication that there was a desire to appease the Greek group in the church. Spencer (1997:67) notes: 'The wisdom of appointing a committee of high-standing Hellenists to insure the Hellenists' welfare is obvious.'

To summarise, one can say that the early Christian church in Jerusalem was a linguistically and culturally diverse mono-ethnic community. The church consisted of an Aramaic-speaking majority and a Greek-speaking minority made up of immigrants from the Diaspora. These two groups had their own meetings but they accepted the overall leadership of the apostles. As the church leaders, the apostles showed sincere concern for the needs of the minority group and the unity of the church. Also, they were flexible enough to restructure the community and to give leadership responsibilities to members of the minority group when it became necessary. It seems that the Greek-speaking minority were fully integrated into the church. They had a voice in the assembly and it appears that the Aramaic-speaking majority made no attempts to demand cultural or linguistic assimilation. The overall picture of the early Jerusalem church, presented by the author of Acts, is that of a caring community united by faith. This fits well with the main theological purposes of Luke, i.e. to strengthen the faith of his Christian readership (cf. Haenchen 1971:103; Jervell 2005:16; Kümmel 1995:163-164; Marshall 1999:21), and to assure them that the apostles Peter, Paul and James were in fundamental agreement over the content of the Christian message. Fitzmyer (1998:60) speaks of Luke's concern to emphasise the connection and continuation between Judaism and the Christian faith. In other words, Luke was able to demonstrate that the church was a united church. On this basis he was able to urge his readers to live at peace with the Roman authorities (cf. Haenchen 1971:106; Williams 1999:15).

6.2.2 The church in Antioch and other Pauline communities (Acts 11:19-31, 13:1-3, 16:1-40)

In the first century A.D. Antioch was not only the capital of the Roman province of Syria, but also the third-largest city of the Roman Empire, next to Rome and Alexandria (Smith 1994:34). The estimates of Antioch's population size vary between 100,000 people, set by modern historians, and 600,000, as some ancient sources suggest (Norris 1992:265). Antioch was a free city and attracted people from many different cultures (Smith 1994:35). The inhabitants of Antioch were Greeks, Macedonians, Syrians and Jews, the latter being mostly veterans of the army of Seceulus (:35). Antioch was, as A. Patzia (2001:98) writes, a city of 'rich ethnic and cultural diversity'. Antioch was what today we would call a global city.

The multi-ethnic character of Antioch was reflected both in the composition of the first Christian church and in its leadership. In Acts 11:19-30 Luke tells us how the church in Antioch was established by members of the Jerusalem Christian community who had fled from the persecution that had broken out after the death of Stephen. In Antioch they started to evangelise Jews only, but then some of them began to preach the gospel to members of the Greek population also. Barrett (1994:550-551) notes that the phrase 'Hellenists' in verse 20 refers to 'the non-Jewish, Greek-speaking inhabitants of Antioch'. Norman Thomas (2004:151) speaks of a 'breakthrough to a more inclusive church' at this cosmopolitan city, and F.F. Bruce (1989:225) comments:

But in Antioch some daring spirits among them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, took a momentous step forward. If the gospel was so good for Jews, might it not be good for gentiles also? At any rate, they would make the experiment. So they began to make known to the Greek population of Antioch the claims of Jesus as Lord and Savior. To present him as messiah to people who knew nothing of the hope of Israel would have been a meaningless exercise, but the Greek term *kyrios* ("Lord") and *soter* ("Savior") were widely current in the religious world of the eastern Mediterranean.

Bruce (1989:225) continues to argue that some of these new disciples might have been God-fearers, i.e. Gentiles who had attended the Jewish synagogue and therefore already had some knowledge of the Jewish faith. Other scholars such as Dunn (1996:154) and Williams (1999:204) hold that the majority of these new converts belonged to that class. Jervell (1998:322) thinks that they were all God-fearers. However, Luke reports that the evangelism among the Greek population of Antioch was very successful. He writes: 'The hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number became believers and turned to the Lord' (Acts 11:21).

The leadership group of the new Christian church in Antioch was as diverse as the church itself. In Acts 13:1 Luke mentions five men who served the church as prophets and teachers: 'Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a member of the court of Herod the ruler, and Saul.' While Schneider (1982:114) and Jervell (1998:341) argue that there is no proof for any leadership status, most commentators consider the five as leaders of the Antiochene church (cf. Barrett 1998:602; Haenchen 1971:394; Fitzmyer 1998:496; Neil 1981:153; Parker 1966:100). Williams (1999:220) notes that the names of these men are interesting as they embrace a wide range of social and possibly ethnic backgrounds. Barnabas,

who is mentioned first, was a Cypriot who had been sent to Antioch by the Jerusalem Church in order to establish a relationship with this new Christian community (:204). Simeon is, as Marshall (1999:214) and Johnson (1992:220) point out, a Jewish name, while the nickname Niger is Latin and means black or dark-complexioned. In contrast to Barrett (1994:603), the majority of commentators conclude that Simeon was probably of black African origin (cf. Bruce 1989:244; Dunn 1996:172; Jervell 1998:340; Johnson 1992:220). Lucius was, as Bruce writes (1989:45), a very common Latin name in the Roman world. Most scholars agree that there is no evidence that this Lucius is identical with the Lucius of Romans 10:21 or even with Luke the evangelist (cf. Bruce 1989:245; Fitzmyer 1998:496; Johnson 1992:220-221; Williams 1999:221), but he might have been one of the co-founders of the Antioch church (Bruce 1989:245; Williams 1999:221). The next name in the list is Manaen, which is the Greek version of the Hebrew Menahem meaning comforter (Fitzmyer 1998:497). Manaen had been brought up with Herod Antipas, the son of Herod the Great, the ruler of Galilee during Jesus' ministry, but was now part of the Christian church (:496). The last person that Luke mentions is Saul, a Jew and Roman citizen from Tarsus, who has been recruited as an assistant and brought to Antioch by Barnabas (Acts 11:25-26). Patzia (2001:101) notes: 'But Barnabas needed assistance with the rapidly growing Christian community (house churches) in Antioch. This city, with its large ethnic mix, would be an ideal place for this converted Hellenistic Jew and theologian.'

After Paul and Barnabas had served the church in Antioch for one year they were called and sent out as missionaries (Acts 11:26, 13:2-4). Antioch not only became the sponsoring church and springboard for their missionary activities but also the church model that they sought to replicate in other cities of the Roman Empire (Towner 1998:422). Therefore, it is not surprising that other churches founded by Paul were also socially, culturally and ethnically heterogeneous communities. The best example for that is the church in Philippi.

In Acts 16 Luke tells how the first church on the European continent was founded by Paul and Silas. The core of the first Christian church in Philippi, a Roman colony, consisted of Lydia, a seller of purple cloth, and her household, as well as a jailer and his family. Stott (2000:265) suggests that the slave girl became a member of the church too. The fact that her deliverance from an evil spirit took place between Lydia's conversion and the jailer's

conversion, he argues, allows such a conclusion (:265). But Spencer (1999:150) is right when he points out that Luke does not say anything about her fate. While Fernando (1998:447) too regards the girl as a Christian convert, Witherington (2001:259) believes that her proclamation in Acts 16:17 should not be taken as a true confession of faith. This view is shared by Trebilco (1989) and Johnson (1992). Trebilco (1989:62) thinks that Paul was annoyed with the girl because '[she] was proclaiming that the way of salvation was found in which ever god the hearer considered to be 'the highest god'', while Johnson (1992:294) writes:

The title "Most High God" (*hypsistos theos*) is used with some frequency in the narrative (Luke 1:32, 35, 76; 6:35; 8:28; 19:38; Acts 7:48), but in this context has more a polemical edge: the God the missionaries serve is "higher" than the one she serves, and the pythian spirit within her, like the demonic spirits in the Gospel (e.g., Luke 4:34; 8:28), recognizes that fact (:294).

The name of Lydia, the first convert in Philippi, corresponds to the name of her home country (Fitzmyer 1998:585). Lydia was an immigrant from Thyatira, a city in Lydia which was part of the Roman province of Asia Minor. Luke also tells us that she was a 'worshipper of God' (Acts 16:14). Some scholars, such as Barrett (1998:783), Johnson (1992:293) or Spencer (1997:164), argue that it is impossible to decide from this term whether she was a faithful Jewess or a gentile who was attracted to the Jewish religion. For other commentators like Bauernfeind (1980:208), Haenchen (1971:499), Jervell (1998:422), or Munck (1967:161) it is undoubtedly clear that she was a God-fearer, i.e. a gentile adherent of the Jewish faith. Haenchen suggests that she had grown up as a pagan child who later as an adult joined the small Jewish group as a listener (:499). As such she believed and behaved like a Jew without having become a Jew (Stott 2000:263). Lydia was undoubtedly a well-to-do woman. Conzelmann (1987:130) points out that Thyatira was famous for its dyeing industry, and Williams (1999:282) writes: 'It was a luxury trade, and Lydia must have been a relatively wealthy woman to be engaged in it'. Johnson (1992:292-293) speaks of 'a woman of substantial means'. The majority of scholars agree that Lydia's house became the first house church in Philippi (cf. Barrett 1998:784; Williams 1999:283; Witherington 2001:258). According to Spencer (1997:165) and Jervell (1998:422) she also became one of the local church leaders, but this view has been challenged. Blue (1998:481) writes that Lydia's position with regard to leadership responsibilities in the first European Christian community is rather uncertain. She was doubtless a benefactor to the church but any leadership role is entirely

conjectural (:481). Gehring (2000:361-362), however, allows for the possibility that Lydia led the Philippian church at the beginning.

The slave girl was probably of Greek origin and a resident in Philippi (Stott 2000:269). Since slaves were brought to this Roman colony from all parts of the empire she might have been a foreigner (:269). Neil (1981:182) notes: 'The girl was supposed to be inspired by the god Apollo, who was thought to be embodied in a snake (python) at Delphi. Anyone so possessed was reckoned to be able to foretell the future, like the original priestess of Apollo herself.' As a successful fortune-teller she was quite an asset to her owners, who exploited her condition for their own financial advantage (Bruce 1989:312).

The jailer's social and national status is in contrast to that of both Lydia and the slave girl and is representative of a completely different sub-group of Philippian society. As a prison guard he was part of the Roman administration and doubtless a Roman himself (Matson 1996:156). In a city that was distinctly Roman he typified Roman culture and society (:156). As a prison guard he was either an active or a retired soldier of the Roman army (cf. Rapske 1994:252-253). Matson (1996:157) writes:

From the time of Julius Caesar, soldiers often settled Roman colonies as a reward for faithful service and to insure loyalty to Rome. The jailer's quick recourse to suicide at the prospect of allowing his prisoners to escape (16.27) reveals a soldier's sense of duty and discipline.

The foundation members of the church in Philippi formed a very diverse group. They had not only been brought up in different cultures but also belonged to different social classes. Whether or not the slave girl was among the first Christians in Philippi, this group was definitely a multi-ethnic community.

A similar ethnic, cultural and social mix could be found in the churches that were set up by Paul and Silas in Thessalonica, Beroea, and Corinth.¹⁹ In Thessalonica the new church was composed of Jews, a great number of God-fearing Gentiles and a considerable number of

¹⁹ Theissen (2001:73) writes the following about the social composition of the Pauline communities: 'Early Christianity was located in the plebs urbana, but attracted also a small minority of people at the periphery of the local upper class. These were above all people with dissonance of status, caused by lower birth, by gender or by the fact that they were aliens (*peregrini*) or well-to-do people of the decurions. Within these limitations early Christianity comprised all social levels and groups, which we discover on and below the level of the local power elite.'

leading Macedonian women (Acts 17:4). In Beroea the new Christian community included a larger group of Jews and some Greek women and men (Acts 17:12). In Corinth the foundational members of the church were Aquila and Priscilla, both Jewish refugees from Italy. Luke tells us that they had been forced to leave Rome by an order of the Emperor Claudius and had emigrated to Corinth (Acts 18:1-2). Then there was Titius Justus (Acts 18:7), a gentile God-fearer and possibly a Roman citizen (cf. Barrett 1998:868), and Crispus (Acts 18:8), a Jewish synagogue official and his household, as well as many other Corinthians.

Finally, it is noteworthy that Paul's missionary teams were culturally and ethnically diverse, too. On his first journey Paul, originally from Tarsus, travelled together with Barnabas, a Cypriot Jew (Acts 4:36). When he visited Jerusalem for the second time Paul and Barnabas were accompanied by Titus, who was a Greek believer (Gal. 2:1-3). After Paul and Barnabas' split over John Mark (Acts 15:36-39), Paul continued his work with Silas, a member and prophet of the Jerusalem church and, like Paul, a Roman citizen (Acts 16:37), before they were joined by Timothy from Lystra, the son of a Greek father and a Jewish-Christian mother (Acts 16:1). On his third missionary journey Paul recruited the Italian couple Aquila and Priscilla, who went with him to Antioch and Ephesus (Acts 18:1-28). In Ephesus Priscilla and Aquila met Apollos, an Alexandrian Jew (Acts 18:24-26), whom Paul in 1 Cor. 3:5-9 describes as a co-worker. While in Ephesus Paul also sent a helper named Erastus together with Timothy to Macedonia (Acts 19:22). According to J. McRay (2003:167-168) this Erastus is identical with the Roman city treasurer of Corinth mentioned in Romans 16:23 and 2 Timothy 4:20. Other scholars are more sceptical. While Haenchen (1971:570) and Barrett (1998:921) regards it as possible, Marshall (1999:314) and Williams (1999:336) deny that it is the same person. Among Paul's co-workers were also Phoebe, a Gentile Christian women and a deacon of the church at Cenchreae, and Onesimus, a slave from Colossae. The author of Acts leaves no doubt that God's universal mission, as Senior and Stuhlmüller (1991:275) point out, was entrusted to 'all sorts of men and women in the community'.

In summary, one can say that the church in Antioch was a multi-ethnic church that had been founded by refugees who had fled from religious persecution. The multi-ethnic nature of the church was not only visible in its membership but also in its culturally and racially diverse

leadership. The same can be said of the church in Philippi, which had Greek and Roman immigrants among its foundational members, and those congregations founded by Paul and his multicultural mission team in Thessalonica, Berea and Corinth.

6.2.3 The Antioch crisis, the Jerusalem council and the doctrines of equality and unity (Acts 15, Gal. 2)

The success of Paul and Barnabas' multicultural mission in places like Cyprus (Acts 13:12) or Iconium (Acts 14:1) created a severe problem. With their successful evangelism among Gentiles problems of membership and integration began to arise (Marshall 1999:242). In Acts 15:1 Luke describes the intervention of a group of Christians who came to Antioch from Judea insisting that male Christians had to be circumcised in order to be saved. It is evident that a policy existed at Antioch that non-Jewish believers were not required to keep the Jewish law (Marshall 1999:242). This position was hard to accept for some Jewish Christians who retained traditional attitudes (:242-243). At a council in Jerusalem, which had been summoned in order to discuss these issues, the demand of circumcision was repeated by a group of believers of Pharisaic background (Acts 15:5), who were initially supported by the elders of the church (Acts 15:10). Jacob Jervell (2005:42-43) states the following on the situation which council members faced:

The problem is not the Gentiles' sharing in salvation, their admission as such, but the conditions for their entrance. Peter had learned from the Cornelius-event, that the Gentiles will be saved, in just the same way as the Jews (15:11). The proof for this is that God bestows the gift of the Spirit, which is the promise and property of Israel (Acts 2:17ff), on Gentiles in the same way as on believing Jews (15:8-9). Yet as Gentiles they are unclean: this the Cornelius-event, with Peter's vision, has not changed.

Bauernfeind (1980:187) argues that the demands for circumcision in verses 2 and 5 put the relationship between circumcised and uncircumcised believers at risk. However, Conzelmann (1987:125) rightly points out that the church in Antioch was not split over the issue. There was dissension caused by the visit of Christians from Judea. Jervell (1998:389) observes that all those actively involved are Jewish Christians. Consequently, the conflict was not between Gentile and Jewish believers but between Jewish Christians only.

After a long debate in which Peter argued against the circumcision of Gentile believers and Paul and Barnabas reported on their successful work among Gentiles, the council decided that there was no need for Gentile Christians to be circumcised (Acts 15:6-21). All the church leaders did was to ask Gentile Christians to observe certain Jewish food laws and to abstain from sexual immorality (15:29). Deines (2007:394) speaks of boundaries that Gentile Christians were expected to respect. In other words, the church decided not to demand cultural assimilation from Gentile Christians. It made clear that they were not expected to become Jewish. The church leadership realized that mandatory circumcision would have been a stumbling block for Gentile Christian integration into the church and would endanger the unity of the whole church. However, Gentile Christians were asked, as Willimon (1988:130) writes, 'to observe the minimum requirements that had been set for strangers wanting to enjoy fellowship with conscientious Jews'.

The prohibition of eating non-kosher food needs to be seen as a reminder for non-Jewish Christians to be sensitive to Jewish scruples (Fernando 1998:419), but not as an effort to absorb them into Jewish culture and tradition. For the early church, to have common meals was an essential aspect of church life (:419). If this table fellowship was going to survive, gentile believers would have to respect the Jewish concerns about purity upon which their cultural and national identity in a Diaspora situation depended (:419). Köstenberger and O'Brien (2001:151) comment on the council's decision: 'Without necessarily solving all future problems of relationships between Jewish and Gentile Christians, this way of living by the Gentile believers would make fellowship with more conservative Jewish believers possible'.

The fact that Luke gives such an extensive report about the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 again demonstrates his concern for church unity and his aim to assure his Christian readership that a church composed of Jews and Gentiles was not an apostate or heretical group but stood in continuity with Judaism (cf. Marshall 1999:22; Williams 1999:15-16).

Traditionally, scholars have argued that in Galatians 2 the apostle Paul gives a personal account of the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15 (cf. Dunn 1993:88-89; Betz 1988:85; Mußner 1974:131-132). Bligh (1970:145) comments: 'The arguments...are strong: the same persons

meet in the same place, to discuss the same matter, in the face of the same opposition, and the outcome is substantially the same in both cases.’ This view has been challenged by other commentators such as Bruce (1982:113-117), Fung (1988:86-87), and Longenecker (1990:46-47) who believe that Galatians 2 describes Paul’s famine relief visit of Acts 11. Matera (1992:108) mentions a third position which equates Galatians 2 with Acts 18:22.²⁰ However, what not only this chapter but the whole letter to the Galatians clearly show is Paul’s strong opposition to any attempts to impose Jewish ritual law on Gentile Christians. Thus, in Galatians 2:11-14 Paul calls it hypocrisy when Jewish Christians who do not live like Jews demand circumcision from Gentile Christian in order to comply with Jewish custom. In Galatians 3:25-28 Paul states:

But now that faith has come, we are no longer subject to a disciplinarian, for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.

Longenecker (1990:155) points out that verses 27-28 were probably part of an early Christian baptismal confession which Paul now uses to support his statement of verse 26. Similar words of Paul can be found in Romans 10:12, 1 Corinthians 12:13, or Colossians 3:11. What Paul is saying in Galatians 3:27-28 is that Christians not only belong to God through faith in Christ but also to one another. They belong to one another in such a way that traditional distinctions which divide humankind become less important (Cole 1993:155-156; Mußner 1974:264). They merge, as Burton (1977:208) writes, ‘into one personality’.

Firstly, there are no privileges because of one’s ethnic or racial background. When Paul wrote his letter to the Galatians the Jewish perspective of the world was a world divided between Jews and Gentiles, whereas the Greeks viewed the world as divided between Greeks and barbarians (Dunn 1993:205). To demand that Gentiles become Jewish so that they can become Christian would propagate a distinction that had already been abolished in Christ (Guthrie 1984:110).

²⁰ An in-depth discussion on this subject can be found in Zeigan’s (2005) study on the Jerusalem Council.

Secondly, when Paul writes 'There is no longer slave or free' he is saying that a person's social status is of no relevance for her or his acceptance to God and membership of the Christian church. As with race and language, so with social rank: there are distinctions but they are not important (McKnight 1995:201). People might have been brought up in different classes of society, some of them might be wealthy, others poor; some might be highly educated, others might lack a basic education, but for Christians these distinctions, though they clearly exist, are not a bar to Christian fellowship.

Thirdly, there was a tendency in the ancient world to despise women. Because society was patriarchal, women were widely regarded as inferior and often exploited and ill-treated (cf. Guthrie 1984:111). This is the context in which Paul wrote: 'there is no longer male and female.' With this statement Paul opposes any form of prejudice against women (McKnight 1995:202). Paul leaves no doubt that in Christ men and women are one and equal. Betz (1988:195) notes: 'There are several ways in which this statement can be interpreted, but in every interpretation the claim is made that in the Christian church the sex distinctions between man and woman have lost their significance.'

According to A. Chester (1997:113) Galatians 3:27-28 underlines that 'it is central to Paul's vision that the Christian community should be characterized by unity, equality and the breaking down of all barriers between its members'. J.L. Martyn (1998:381-383) speaks of a 'community of the new creation' in which unity in Christ has replaced any religious and ethnic distinctions on which the old creation was built upon. In other words, Paul emphasises that Christians have a new identity. They might be Jewish, Greek or Roman, but first and foremost they are Christians, whose true citizenship is in heaven (Phil. 3:20). They are united by their faith in Christ. This bond of unity has priority over any cultural, social or national allegiance. Christians are all one in Christ. This oneness in Christ must be understood as Dunn (1993:208) writes 'not as levelling and abolishing of all racial, social and gender differences, but as an integration of just said differences into a common participation 'in Christ', wherein they enhance...the unity of the body, and enrich the mutual interdependence and service of its members'. In other words, Paul does not promote a simplistic notion of unity. His understanding of Christian unity as D. Harrington (1982:146) points out is

anything but naïve. Harrington's comment on Galatians 3:28 and Ephesians 2:14 is worth quoting in full:

These texts do not say that the physical and social differences between people have ceased to exist entirely. The biblical writers were not that naïve. But they maintain that these distinctions are no longer terribly important. Frequently texts like Gal. 3:28 and Eph. 2:14 are used as slogans for radical social change or inertia. Rather, their fundamental thrust is neither charge nor inertia. Rather, their more fundamental thrust is to make us appreciate the awesome change that occurs in baptism and the attitudes that ought to prevail within the community of baptized Christians. Prescinding for the moment from those outside the Christian community, we Christians cannot afford to let ethnic, social or sexual distinctions be the sole criteria for action or inaction within the church. Every baptized Christian has the same awesome dignity before God, and every baptized Christian as part of God's people deserves our highest respect. On the other hand, prejudices against other Christians and violence between Christians totally contradict the church's identity as God's people in Christ (:146).

To summarize, one can say that Paul's planting and fostering of multi-ethnic churches was deeply rooted in his theology. The fact that most of his church plants were multi-ethnic was not a mere result of the multi-ethnic environment in which Paul and his mission partners worked but an integrative part of Paul's mission strategy and a consequence of his understanding of the church as a community united by faith.

6.3 Principles of integration

The above analysis of the New Testament church in the Book of Acts shows that there are both general and specific principles that can help us to develop strategies for the integration of refugees into the local church. The general principles are the principles of unity, equality, non-assimilation and mutuality, while the more specific principles deal with leadership and ministry issues. Some of these principles must be classified as binding principles while others have a guiding character. Among the former are the principles of unity, equality and non-assimilation while the principles of mixed leadership and mixed ministry teams are guiding principles because they are dependent upon other criteria, namely the operation of the Holy Spirit in the indiscriminate bestowal of gifts and abilities in the body of Christ.

6.3.1 The principle of unity

The life and teachings of the New Testament church show that Christian unity is more than an ideal. Christian unity has to be lived in the local church (cf. Strong 2004:204). Bekker (1984:306) comments on Paul's understanding of unity as follows:

It is interesting that Paul does not give the mission of the church a more important role than the unity of the church...Paul's primary goal is the life-style and unity of the internal life of the church (2 Cor. 6:14-15). Indeed, the unity of the church and the truth of the gospel preoccupy Paul's apostolic thought.

Christian unity finds its expression in common leadership, common service, and, if possible, common worship (cf. Thomas 2004:148,151). For early church leaders like Paul the founding of separate Gentile churches was not an option, even though the integration of Jewish and Gentile Christians was a difficult enterprise (cf. Schnabel 2004:1370). Schnabel points out that for Paul theological, ethical, and ecclesiological instruction were essential for a successful integration (:1371-1374).

Christians, whatever their ethnocultural background, have a new identity. They are united through their common faith in Christ. This principle of unity in Christ calls Christians to integrate refugees and asylum seekers into existing indigenous churches. To establish completely separate, independent refugee churches would contradict the Christian doctrine of unity.

6.3.2 The principle of equality

Paul's teaching clearly shows that in Christ all believers are spiritually equal, whatever their race, gender, social rank or legal status. For God there are no first and second class Christians. Every Christian is a child of God and a citizen of heaven. Bekker (1984:309) points out that oneness in Christ must not be understood as an undifferentiated oneness of the Christian church. Bekker continues:

The equality of all in Christ does not suspend the multiformity and variety of the members. The ontological aspect of participation in Christ only seemingly suspends and diffuses the personal identity of people. In reality, ontological participation intersects with the distinct multiformity of the individual members and their several charismatic gifts and talents,...(:309).

Such an understanding of equality has implications for the treatment of refugees and asylum seekers. While refugees and asylum seekers are denied certain rights by society because of their legal status churches must not do the same to Christian refugees and asylum seekers if they are to replicate the early church. Churches that minister to Christian refugees and asylum seekers should treat them not differently from any other church members, i.e. refugees and asylum seekers should not be discriminated against because of their legal status or ethno-cultural background. Christian asylum seekers and refugees should be granted the same rights that other church members have. These rights include the following: the right to use one's God given talents, the right to participate in the selection of church leaders, the right to determine the financial management of the church, the right to participate in policy making. To deny such rights diminishes their identity as members of the body of Christ.

6.3.3 The principles of non-assimilation and mutuality

At the Council of Jerusalem the early church decided to have a non-assimilation policy, and this became mandatory for all Christian groups. It was decided that to become Christian, non-Jews did not have to become Jewish first. The church knew that such an obligation would have been a stumbling block for its mission and the integration of non-Jewish believers (cf. Krodel 1981:57-59). Burnett (1996:172) points out that '[in] rejecting circumcision for Gentile converts the meeting also rejected cultural conversion.' This insight remains valid today. If someone from a foreign culture becomes a Christian he or she does not have to give up his or her own culture as a prerequisite for church membership. Larkin (1995:225) writes about James' proposal:

James's proposal, then, teaches us three things about life together in a culturally diverse church. We must say no to any form of cultural imperialism that demands others' conformity to our cultural standards before we will accept them and their spiritual experience. We must say yes to mutual respect for our differences. And we must live out that respect even to the extent of using our freedom to forgo what is permissible in other circumstances.

For a church involved in refugee ministry this means that it must not expect refugees to abandon their language and all their traditions and customs and adopt the dominant culture. In parallel, the Council of Jerusalem made clear that while there was no need for non-Jewish believers give up their cultural heritage it required them to respect certain Jewish customs. It

defined integration as a mutual process (cf. Strong 2004:204). Refugees who want to join a local church are not entitled to demand radical change. They too have to respect the cultural norms of the dominant group. What is needed is, as Strong (2004:206) puts it, 'an attitude of mutual submission, prioritizing mutual accountability and fellowship over personal rights and freedoms'.

6.3.4 The principle of mixed-leadership

Most New Testament churches, like the church in Antioch, were multi-ethnic communities. It is significant that the leadership of these churches reflected not only the diverse local church membership but also the diversity of the whole body of Christ (cf. Thomas 2004:151). The fact that the role was not based on the politics of ethnicity but upon the giftings of the Holy Spirit established a protocol for unity which has relevance today (cf. Cosgrove 2006:290). It follows that it is mandatory for multi-ethnic churches to select their leaders on this basis and to avoid a mono-ethnic leadership. A church that has an ethno-cultural diversity in its membership should foster and call leaders from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Green (2002:154) writes about multi-ethnic church leadership: 'Cross-cultural fellowship is not easy. We naturally tend towards our own kind. But to mix with those from other nations, other cultural backgrounds, should be a particular characteristic and glory of the Christian church.' The same applies to local churches involved in refugee ministry. Such churches need to identify spiritual leaders from among the refugees and call them into the overall leadership of the congregation. Doing so demonstrates that the local church takes the spiritual status of refugees seriously and validates the fact that they are brothers and sisters in Christ. Further, it shows a willingness to listen to them and to learn from them.

6.3.5 The principle of mixed-ministry teams

An analysis of Paul's missionary teams shows that these principles were applied to evangelism. The teams which he chose were culturally and ethnically diverse, too (cf. Green 2002:135-136). People of different cultures and social rank worked together for the sake of the gospel. For the New Testament church the God-given gifts and talents of people assumed

greater importance than their socio-cultural background. In addition, the cultural insights which they brought to mission enabled the church to be more effective in its outreach. Thomas (2004:148) speaks of the 'Antioch model of every-member ministries'. A local church which wants to integrate refugees should replicate this model. An important step to integrate refugees into the local church is to help them to find opportunities of service according to their abilities and gifts. Serving others is an important dimension of Christian life. The status of refugee should not reduce people to the passive receipt of service from other church members. Refugees need an equal chance to serve side by side with indigenous Christians in roles of mutual reciprocity. Where equal opportunities exist their contribution towards God's mission can be recognised by the whole church and in the process their participation enables them to get to know other members of the church better and to form friendships.

7. The refugee highway and the Christian response: Statements and programmes

The seriousness of the global situation of refugees has prompted individual churches, church fellowships and para-church organisations, such as the World Council of Churches or the World Evangelical Alliance, to address the refugee situation publicly and to take action. Positive statements have been made and initiatives launched by different church and para-church bodies. The chapter below analyses and compares the response of three international and four British church organisations. The comparison will indicate that though these statements and reports have much in common, some of them also show significant differences in their missiological understanding of Christian refugee ministry. They appear below in order of publication.

7.1 World Council of Churches: *A Moment to Choose*

In September 1995 the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches (WCC 1995) adopted a statement entitled *A Moment to Choose: Risking to be with Uprooted People*. The term ‘up-rooted people’ refers to refugees, asylum-seekers, internally displaced persons and economic migrants. In this statement the WCC Central Committee identifies several reasons for forced displacements, such as wars, civil conflicts, human rights violations or environmental devastation. It recognises that economic globalisation is a major cause of forced migration. It states the following:

Severe breakdown of economic and social conditions that once provided people with the means to survive in their traditional communities and in their own countries is accelerating the movement of people. Underlying this breakdown in conditions is the globalization of the world economy. This process continues to reproduce great and growing inequalities in wealth and incomes within and among countries (WCC 1995).

According to the WCC Central Committee (WCC 1995) the Christian church has a biblical mandate to minister to forced migrants. This mandate is based on three important biblical teachings. Firstly, since all people are made in God’s image, as described in Genesis 1, respect for human dignity is foundational to the Christian faith. Secondly, the biblical values

of love, justice and peace, as expressed in passages such as Matthew 22:37-39, Micah 6:8 or Amos 5:24, compel Christians to respond to the marginalised and excluded. Christians have an obligation to fight for justice and peace for all people. Thirdly, biblical texts such as Hebrews 13:2, Luke 10:23-37 or Exodus 23 challenge Christians to build inclusive communities that receive and accompany strangers and share both hope and suffering with them. Based on this biblical imperative the WCC (WCC 1995) calls upon all Christians and churches to protect and to promote respect for all forced migrants, and to address the causes of forced migration, as well as to provide support, diaconical services, and solidarity without any discrimination.

7.2 Methodist Church in Great Britain: Report on Immigration and Asylum

In 1996 the Methodist Church Division of Social Responsibility (1996) published a *Report on Immigration and Asylum*. In this report the Methodist Church stresses the importance of setting the growing number of asylum seekers who come to the United Kingdom in a worldwide context (:6). For British Methodists there are certain root causes for worldwide forced migration movements. These root causes include armed conflicts, human rights violations, environmental degradation and economic crisis (:6).

In a theological reflection on immigration and asylum, the report argues that there are not only the themes of journeying, pilgrimage, flexibility and inclusiveness in the Bible but also a tradition which emphasises the need to settle down and which furthers an exclusive attitude based on religion and race (MCDSR 1996:7). The report states: ‘Where the traditions meet and clash, on some occasions rigid boundaries are drawn, while on others the boundaries are constructed more generously. So hospitality to strangers appears as a moral duty in settled societies’ (:7).

Further, the report argues that the Christian duty to care and to protect strangers is based upon the Christian conviction that all people are made in God’s image (MCDSR 1996:7). Christians who accept that they have a right to receive God’s love and grace must also accept

that they have a duty to give (:7). For the Methodist Church these biblical insights form the foundation for their approach to asylum and immigration (:8).

At the end of its report the Methodist Church recommends pastoral guidelines for action at all levels of church life (MCDSR 1996:19). As part of these guidelines the report asks Methodist churches to counsel asylum seekers to seek legal advice, to encourage their members to visit detention centres for asylum seekers, and to help with emergency protection and accommodation for asylum seekers, as well as to consider the issue of sanctuary in church premises (:19-20).

7.3 Baptist Union of Great Britain: *Welcoming the Stranger*

In response to a debate at the Assembly of the Baptist Union of Great Britain in 1999, the Baptist Union, together with its mission agency BMS World Mission, prepared resource material for Christian ministry among refugees in the UK. This was published under the title *Welcoming the Stranger: Working with Refugees and Asylum Seekers* (Baptist Union 1999).

In *Welcoming the Stranger* the Baptist Union (1999:12-19) presents not only examples of individuals who live in Britain as asylum seekers and refugees and but also of local Baptist congregations and their involvement with them. In addition, it gives a short overview of the history of refugees in Britain (:10) and a summary of the current legal situation (:20-22).

Welcoming the Stranger considers the biblical and theological basis for the church's calling to welcome strangers and to care for refugees and asylum seekers (Baptist Union 1999: 2-4). For the Baptist Union the image of welcoming the stranger lies at the heart of the Christian faith (:2). Christian people were strangers who have met God in Christ and thus have been brought into God's embrace (:2). Based upon this premise five theological reflections follow. Firstly, in the incarnation God came to live as an alien among humankind. As God incarnate he not only experienced poverty but also the life of a refugee. This is an important theme in the Bible. Secondly, God's people are also called to live as aliens and exiles (:2). Though cultural and national identities are important for Christians they are first and

foremost citizens of heaven through their participation in the life of Christ through the Holy Spirit (:2). Thirdly, both the Old and the New Testament depict God as a God of reconciliation. Christians are called to model God's reconciliation in their own lives. (:3). Fourthly, God has always reminded his people that they have been liberated and included into God's community by God's grace (:3). Christians must not forget that. They are called to be channels of grace in their own communities. Fifthly, God is a missionary God, who is always reaching out to strangers (:3).

For the Baptist Union these biblical principles have consequences for the Christian church and its ministry among strangers, refugees and asylum seekers. Firstly, the church must be a prophetic community, which calls for fair and decent treatment of refugees (Baptist Union 1999:3). Secondly, it must be an inclusive community that offers asylum seekers and refugees a place of belonging (:3). Thirdly, it must be a sacrificial community that devotes resources to refugees and asylum instead of using them for themselves (:3). Fourthly, it must be a missionary community that shows in words and actions God's love and forgiveness to aliens, refugees and asylum seekers (:3). And last but not least, the church must be a worshipping community that remembers refugees and asylum seekers in their worship and invites them to join them (:4).

Welcoming the Stranger closes with practical steps for churches that are in contact with refugees and asylum seekers (Baptist Union 1999:23-24). Thus, it promotes social events, the visiting and befriending of refugees, the offer of clothing, furniture, and provision of English lessons and legal advice (:23). It also encourages churches to set up or join partnerships with other churches, local authorities or refugee agencies (:23).

7.4 World Evangelical Alliance: Code of Best Practices for Christian Refugee Ministry

In November 2001 the first global consultation on Christian refugee ministry took place in Izmir, Turkey (Tunncliffe 2002:52). The consultation, sponsored by the World Evangelical Alliance, was held under the title *Bringing Hope to the Refugee Highway* (:52). As a direct

result of this conference the Refugee Highway Partnership was set up as a network of the WEA Missions Committee in September 2002 (Mugabi 2003:60). A further outcome of the 2001 consultation was the publication of *Code of Best Practices for Christian Refugee Ministry*. It was drafted in Izmir and subsequently published by the Refugee Highway Partnership.

The authors of the *Code* recognised the need for guidance for organisations involved in Christian humanitarian service and witness to refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced persons (RHP & WEAMC undated:2). It contains 15 core values and 20 principles of Christian refugee ministry. The underlying core values include a commitment to the dignity of all human beings created in God's image; a commitment to apply biblical principles and to fulfil the missiological warrant for refugee humanitarian service; a commitment to defend the human and legal rights of refugees and to denounce unfair and inhumane policies and conditions that compel people to flee, as well as a commitment to engage in holistic mission, i.e. in mission that responds to the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual needs of refugees in a Christ-like manner (:2).

The twenty principles of Christian Refugee Ministry can be found in 7 sections which deal with ministry policy and practice, the role of advocacy, the role of the refugee, of the church and of the refugee organisation, the ministry context and the cooperation of all those involved in refugee ministry (RHP & WEAMC undated:3-8). According to these principles refugee ministry is a relational ministry (:3). It is motivated by the love for God and for those in need. The local church plays a vital role in the ministry (:5). It envisions, equips and enables refugee work. At the same time refugees are seen as partners who help to lead and participate in the work and who contribute to the life of the local community and church (:5). The role of Christian refugee agencies is to coordinate the work and to build bridges between refugees, churches, NGOs and government authorities (:6). Furthermore, it is their task to support those asylum seekers who are denied asylum and assistance (:6).

7.5 European Protestant Churches: *Liebfrauenberg Declaration*

In May 2004 a consultation on the challenges of migration and asylum took place in the French village of Liebfrauenberg. The consultation was held by the Conference of Rhine Churches and the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe. The results of this consultation were published in the so-called *Liebfrauenberg Declaration*.

In the *Liebfrauenberg Declaration* the signatory churches recognise that migration is an integral part of the current globalisation process (CRC & CPCE 2004:3). According to the *Declaration* there are many forms of migration and reasons for migration (:3-4). The main reasons why people move to other countries and regions are poverty and a lack of livelihood (:3). It charges contemporary Christians with a special responsibility towards migrants. It asserts that the 'biblical message calls the churches to responsibility for refugees and migrants in a particularly prominent way' (:5). This responsibility is first and foremost based on the biblical commandments to love strangers and to love one's neighbours, since these principles are found in both the Old Testament (Lev 19:33) and the New Testament (Lk 10:25-27) alike (:5). Furthermore, it points out that all human beings are made in the image of God (Gen 1:26). As a consequence every human being possesses a special human dignity and human rights (:5). For the church, this means that it is called to defend the dignity and rights of migrants: 'Our mission, founded in the Bible', the signatory churches declare, 'is to raise our voice when the rights and dignity of refugees and migrants are violated' (:6). On this basis they demand certain standards of EU refugee and asylum legislation and its implementation by member states (:6). Thus, they demand transparent, just and fair asylum procedures. Such procedures would involve the right to professional advice at all stages of the asylum process, the right to legal protection against negative decisions and the prohibition to detain asylum seekers during the asylum process (:7).

The participants of the Liebfrauenberg consultation point out that there are other assignments for churches and their social agencies besides advocacy work. They make clear that it is the churches' responsibility to fight racism within and outside the church and to help to integrate refugees both into the community and the local church (CRC & CPCE 2004:9).

The presence of refugees and migrants is seen as an opportunity for European Christians to get to know the Christian faith better (:9). In addition, refugees are seen as partners in the conciliar process for 'Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation' (:9).

7.6 Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales: *The Dispossessed*

In 2004 the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales produced a booklet entitled *The Dispossessed: A Brief Guide to the Catholic Church's Concern for Refugees and Migrants*. In this guide the Catholic Bishops' Conference recognises that migration is a global phenomenon and one of the top political issues both nationally and internationally (CBCEW 2004:5, 7). Today's migratory flows are seen by the Conference as the result of a combination of different pull and push factors, such as wars, ecological disasters, economic deprivation or human rights violations (:7-8). Furthermore, it suggests that there is a connection between these causes and the contemporary process of economic globalisation. The report states: 'While the analysis is far from conclusive, many of the phenomena described as causes appear to be features accompanying or aggravated by the globalisation of the free-market economy' (:8).

In a short section that describes the Catholic Church's basic position on refugees and migrants it argues that the church has both a biblical and historical mandate to affirm the rights of migrants and refugees (CBCEW 2004:7). In passages such as Genesis 1:27 and Galatians 3:28 both the New and the Old Testament teach that human beings are created in God's image and therefore cannot be regarded as mere objects. In addition, it is central to the Christian faith that God revealed himself in the human person, Jesus. This Jesus, the report continues, was not only an exile and refugee himself, but also showed and taught solidarity with all humankind (:7).

In two longer sections, the report looks at the Roman Catholic Church's foundational documents on migration and its social teachings on refugees and migrants (CBCEW 2004:10-17). These are followed by quotations from other documents and statements of the Catholic Church in England and Wales regarding migration, asylum seekers and refugees. According to these documents every human being has the right to freedom of movement

(:15), though distinctions need to be made between those who flee from life threatening conditions and those who emigrate to improve their personal economic positions (:23). Furthermore, it emphasises the fact that rich countries are obliged to welcome strangers in search of security and provide for their basic needs such as food, hygiene and education (:13) In the same way it is the church's obligation to arrange pastoral care for migrants (:14), and to defend their human dignity (:17-18), as well as to work for a just, humane and efficient asylum system (:19-20).

In his foreword to *The Dispossessed*, Patrick O'Donoghue, Bishop of Leicester, distils the basic position of the Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales on forced migration. He writes:

For us as Christians, it is essential to recall that all human beings, regardless of the labels given to them, are entitled to full respect of their human dignity and rights; we are challenged by the Gospels to respond to all 'dispossessed people', extend hospitality and work for justice, peace and reconciliation..., this is also manifested in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948) (CBCEW 2004:4).

7.7 Church of England: A Place of Refuge

In response to a General Synod motion on asylum the Archbishop's Council of the Church of England prepared a report under the title *A Place of Refuge: A Positive Approach to Asylum Seekers and Refugees in the UK*. This 72 page strong report was published in the 'Mission and Public Affairs' series of Church House Publishing in 2005.

The first chapter of *A Place of Refuge* defines technical terms. The second chapter outlines its theological basis. By quoting two passages from the Old Testament they remind their readers that solidarity and compassion towards strangers are biblical imperatives and that the history of the Jewish people is the history of an exiled, persecuted and oppressed nation (CofE 2005:8). This concern for homeless and displaced people, the report continues, can also be found in the New Testament (:8). It can be found both in the life and the teaching of Jesus (:8). The report states:

The biblical teaching on solidarity and active compassion with the displaced and oppressed is clear and unequivocal. God's love is not restricted to specific groups – defined by ethnicity,

religion, gender, social status or economic contribution – and neither should be the outreach of the Churches (:8).

Furthermore, *A Place of Refuge* refers to Paul's model of the church as the body of Christ. It argues that this model can provide a paradigm for society (CofE 2005:9). In the same way as Christians are members of the body of Christ every human being must be seen as a citizen of God's world (:10). The report argues that just as Christians are connected with each other as parts of the body of Christ, all human beings are connected with each other as cosmopolitan citizens in God's world (:10). Along with this interdependence comes a responsibility for one another (:10). To fulfil this responsibility towards refugees and asylum seekers individual Christians, churches and para-church organisations must show solidarity and compassion through practical hospitality and advocacy work (:10). The hospitality which Christians are called to demonstrate, must be unconditional (:11). Unconditional hospitality does not demand the acculturation or assimilation of individuals, but affirms every person's individuality. 'Christian compassion,' states the report 'must recognize solidarity whilst celebrating difference' (:12).

In the following three chapters *A Place of Refuge* examines the problems encountered in the asylum and refugee debate in Britain, such as the bias of the media, racism or ignorance of the facts about refugees and asylum seekers (CofE 2005:13-19). Moreover it examines specific claims and prejudices against refugees and asylum seekers, looks at the gender-related aspects of asylum seeking and discusses the historical, cultural, social and spiritual contributions of refugees. With regard to the latter, it confirms that the British Church can learn from Christian refugees and asylum seekers:

Contrasting theologies and worship styles also serve to enrich the tradition of Christianity in the UK. Through the process of being open to the experiences and beliefs of Others, our own faith can be challenged and strengthened, as we welcome contributions given from the margins. Welcoming change in our nation and striving for change in ourselves, we can allow God to shape us into the Church and people he wants us to be (:54).

In its last chapter *A Place of Refuge* gives several suggestions for action by churches and Christian organisations. The report calls churches to cooperate with local government and asylum groups to develop strategies for the integration of refugees into the community and

the workforce, to establish local support groups that offer asylum seekers friendship and advice, to donate food and blankets or to offer rooms for emergency accommodation if necessary (CofE 2005:58). Furthermore, it argues that churches must work in partnership with asylum support groups in dispelling the prejudices that can be found in some sections of the British media (:59). Christians could write to the editors of local and national newspaper, radio and TV stations or contact their Member of Parliament. In addition, churches can distribute material on the local asylum situation to their members (:59).

7.8 A critical analysis

All seven documents recognise that migration is a global phenomenon. The World Council of Churches, the Catholic Church in England and Wales and the Protestant Churches in Europe also see a connection between migration and the current globalisation process. While the *Liebfrauenberg Declaration* of the European Protestant Churches makes no further comment on the nature of this connection, both the WCC and the Roman Catholic Church seem to hold a critical hyperglobalist view of globalisation. Like the Methodist Church and the Baptist Union they recognise the existence of certain push factors, but the emergence of a global free market is seen by them as the root cause of current forced migration movements.

However, the documents demonstrate significant conceptual differences in missiological approaches towards refugee ministry. The WCC, the Catholic Bishops' Conference in England and Wales, the Protestant Churches in Europe and the British Methodist Church as well as the Church of England clearly emphasize the social and political dimension of mission. For them advocacy work and the integration of refugees and asylum seekers into the community seem to be at the heart of Christian ministry to refugees. While they do not deny that there is a spiritual side to refugee ministry it seems to be of secondary importance to them. The evangelistic dimension of mission is not mentioned in their documents and statements. In contrast, the Baptist Union of Great Britain and the Refugee Highway Partnership seem to have a more holistic understanding of refugee ministry. They too, affirm the prophetic role of the church and the church's social responsibility for refugees, but they do not separate these responsibilities from the church's calling to make disciples of all nations.

Furthermore, it is significant that in four out of the seven documents refugees and asylum seekers are regarded as people who are in need of support from the church but not as active partners in mission. The idea of refugees as partners and agents of mission is only mentioned in the RHP's *Code of Best Practices*, the *Liebfrauenberg Declaration* of the Conference of Rhine Churches and the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe, and the Church of England's *A Place of Refuge*.

All documents identify certain biblical principles from which they then deduce a missiological mandate for Christian refugee ministry. These principles tend to be rather general biblical teachings and commandments, such as the dignity of human beings, God's love for the stranger, or the obligation to love one's neighbour. With exception of the Baptist Union's *Welcoming the Stranger* there is a tendency to concentrate on a few biblical key verses. While these verses might be helpful in establishing a biblical mandate for Christian refugee ministry, the choice of a few proof texts can be reductive. Deeper exploration of the biblical basis for refugee ministry is more likely to result in its effective implementation.

Finally, and most importantly for this study, three of the documents, the WCC's *A Moment to Choose*, the Church of England's *A Place of Refuge* and the *Liebfrauenberg Declaration*, underline the necessity of integrating refugees into the receiving society and the church. 'Migration', the *Liebfrauenberg Declaration* states, 'calls for integration' (CRC&CPCE 2004:4). It goes on to say that special integration programmes need to be provided for immigrants as soon as they enter their country of destination (:4). Furthermore, it points out that integration is not a one-sided but a mutual process (:4). According to the *Liebfrauenberg Declaration* Christian churches can play an important role in that process (:9). Thus, they can help to create and sustain a climate of tolerance and acceptance in society. This can be done through offering church services, pastoral care or youth work, or through creating space for meeting refugees and for mutual learning (:9). The report reiterates the fact that Christian refugees need to be treated as full members of the church. 'Equal rights and equal participation', the *Declaration* argues, 'presuppose that people with a migrant background can make their own contribution in the life of parishes and church organisations in the same way as local people' (:9). In summary, the *Liebfrauenberg Declaration* makes some important

points about the integration of refugees into the Christian community. In particular, it stresses the fact that Christian refugees are partners with equal rights. But what the *Liebfrauenberg Declaration* clearly lacks is a biblical theological reflection on this subject. Finally, the document fails to address important cross-cultural issues, such as possible language barriers, different value systems, and traditions.

8. Mission and migration in a globalising world - missiological perspectives

8.1 A missiological myth and the shift of global Christianity

Most contemporary missiologists accept that the old model or paradigm of mission, that understands Christian mission as an enterprise going out from Europe or North America to the rest of the world, is no longer valid. J. Brand (2005:10) calls this as a missiological myth. It is the myth that 'the rest of the world needs us (the western church) in order to know God' (:10). C. Ross (2006:3) writes about a new paradigm - the paradigm of mutuality. For Ross this means that mission today is 'a two way street', that it is about 'giving and receiving'. And M. Ireland (2003:78) notes: 'For too long we in Britain have thought of world mission as 'what we can do for them', whereas we now need to recognize that our own country has become a mission field and that we need others to come and help us in mission'.

The main reason for this paradigm shift can be found in the demographic changes of global Christianity. According to a study carried out by Johnson and Chung (2004) the demography of global Christianity changed dramatically over the centuries. Starting from Jerusalem, Christianity expanded in various directions between the year 33 and 600 AD (:172). While it moved to the northern and western parts of the globe between 600 and 1500 AD, it began to shift to the southern hemisphere between 1500 and 1970 (:173-174). Since 1970 the statistical centre of gravity of Christianity has turned eastward while continuing to move south (:174). Johnson and Chung state:

Projections for the future show that while the trajectory continues to move to the southeast, the Christian churches of the Global South (Africa, Asia, Latin America and Oceania) will likely to continue to acquire an increasing percentage of global Christianity. By 2100, the geographic centre of Christianity is expected to be a full 30 of latitude south where it was at its most northern point in AD 1500, and 20 south of Jerusalem where it began in AD 33. [In] AD 2100 Southern Christians (2.8 billion) will be well over three times as numerous as Northern Christians (775 millions) (:174).

J.J. Hanciles (2004:96) identifies two factors for the demographic southward shift of Christianity: the decline of the Christian faith in the West and its enormous growth in other parts of the world. Characteristic for the former is not only the church's loss of its privileged status in society but also its inability to influence society's ethical standards (:96). To L. Sanneh (2003:55) the main reason for the shift in world Christianity is what he calls the 'indigenous discovery of Christianity' in countries of the Southern Hemisphere. This discovery, he argues has been made possible first and foremost through the development of indigenous languages as the means of receiving the Christian message (:24). In addition to this process of indigenisation D.L. Robert (2000: 56) also identifies sociological factors for the growth of the southern church, such as urbanisation and forced migration.

As a result of this massive demographic transformation the nature of world Christianity changes (Robert 2000:56). Christianity is becoming more and more culturally diverse (:56). The idea of the Christian faith as a Western religion can no longer be upheld (Hanciles 2004:94). According to Philip Jenkins (2002:16) this idea of a Western Christianity is a myth anyway, since it does not reflect the true geographical pattern of Christianity's development. The contemporary face of worldwide Christianity, writes Hanciles, is 'one of poverty and powerlessness' (:96), and Jenkins (2002:220) comments: 'Christianity is flourishing wonderfully among the poor and persecuted, while it atrophies among the rich and secure'.

8.2 Christian migration and the reverse mission movement

While it is true that the face of global Christianity is changing, one must not make the mistake of falling into a new North-South dichotomy trap. The Catholic missiologist R.J Schreiter (2001:127) points out that the deterritorialization of the world, which is one of the main features of globalisation, 'makes dichotomous thinking about the world less useful in analysis, since boundaries are not drawn as sharply'. This is certainly true not only for the world at large but also for global Christianity and its mission.

While the number of Christians is growing in the global South and declining in the West (Brierley 1998:37), current migratory movements bring Christians from the southern to the

northern hemisphere. Many of these Christians settle in the global cities of Europe and North America. In an article in which he looks at the politics of mission in today's global cities A.P. Davey (2005:78-79) notes that flows of poor migrants, such as asylum seekers or domestics are changing the human face of the city. He then goes on to say:

The new flows and ethnicities of our cities will also be present within the Christian community, bringing new narratives, insights and practices. This is nowhere more apparent than in the challenge that comes to us from the persistence and embeddedness of Christians in the mega cities of the majority world; and the tenacious presence of Christians from the South in the supposed secular cities of the North (:79).

Whatever their background these Christians often bring a different kind of Christian spirituality and zeal for mission with them or as J. Jongeneel (2003:31) puts it: 'It is clear that, on average, Christian migrants are more mission-minded than the members of established congregations and churches in Europe'. As we have seen earlier in chapter 2.3 it is argued by secular migration experts, such as Pellerin (1998:81) that today's migrants are not only objects of change but also agents of change. The same can be said of Christian migrants. Christian migrants from the south become agents of change; they become agents of mission in a postmodern, post-Christian West. Claudia Währisch-Oblau (2001: 261) speaks of the 'reverse mission movement' while Rufus Ositelu (2000:384) uses the term 'remissionization' to describe this development, and Philip Jenkins (2002:205), writing about new immigrant churches in Europe, notes:

[The] independent churches are now beginning to take the lead in evangelism across Europe. Reading their New Testaments, African and Asian Christians encounter the Great Commission that instructs followers to go and make disciples of all nations. They take their claims to catholicity seriously.

8.3 Christian migrants as agents of mission in a global age

8.3.1 Christianity – a migratory religion

In his article entitled 'Mission and Migration: The Diaspora Factor in Christian History' Andrew Walls (2002a) argues that Christianity is a migratory religion. According to Walls migration has both favoured and hindered Christian mission over the centuries (:4).

He claims that in the Roman Empire of the first century AD it was the network of Jewish diaspora communities that furthered the mission of the early church (:4). Walls comments: ‘Enforced migration, escape from harsh persecution, capture of prisoners of war, seizure of slaves by raiding, the peaceful quest for work or for trade, all seem to have played a part in the spread of the Christian gospel within the Roman Empire...’ (:5).

In contrast, Walls (2002a:4) identifies other periods when the mission of the church was obstructed by migratory movements. In Britain, for example the church experienced a setback when Scandinavian conquerors re-established paganism in the north and east of the country during the seventh century AD.

Walls (2002a:10) asserts once again that diaspora communities are agents of mission. However, this time they are immigrants from Africa, Asia and Latin America to the post-Christian West (Walls 2002a:10). Walls describes the current situation as follows:

The importance of the Christian aspect of the new migration is only now being realised. Studies on African and Afro-Caribbean churches in Europe....offer insights into their significance. It is clear that these churches are among the few expanding sectors of European Christianity. It is also clear that they are beginning to have an impact on the indigenous Western population, for some of whom, being untouched by traditional culture-Christianity, immigrants from Africa and Asia (and in Spain, from Latin America) provide the first contact with Christianity as a living faith (:10-11).

Walls views are supported by David Smith (2003a), Samuel Escobar (2003) and Jehu J. Hanciles (2004). While Smith writes from a western perspective, Escobar looks at it as a Latin American. Hanciles, who is originally from Sierra Leone, examines the relationship between mission and migration from a specific African point of view.

8.3.2 Jehu J. Hanciles: The Abrahamic and the Macedonian model

Like Andrew Walls, Jehu Hanciles (2004:99) holds that Christianity is a migratory religion and that migration movements have played a central role in the expansion of Christianity. Right from the beginning the spread of the Christian message was closely connected to networks of migrants (:99). In the first centuries of its existence the growth of the church was fostered through forced migrants, family networks and trade relations. Later on in history

European emigration brought Christianity to North and South America, Africa and Oceania (:100).

According to Hanciles (2004:98) today's migration movements are very different from the ones in the past in so far as immigrants keep strong ties with their home country and culture. They are transmigrants who are at home in two countries. Hanciles believes that these new migratory patterns and flows which are an expression of globalisation will transform the religious situation in the West (:98). He says: '[It] is my strong conviction that migrant movement (in this case from the 'global South' to the industrial North) will play an increasingly decisive role in reshaping the Western religious landscape' (:96). For Christianity this means that the new Christian immigrant communities in the West with their fresh and dynamic spirituality are likely to have a strong impact on the future of the Christian church (Hanciles 2003:152). They will not only be free of the arrogance and triumphalism so typical for the Christendom frame of mind but will also be able to offer much to a western church that struggles with its identity and relevance.(:149). Thus non-western Christian migrants know what it means to live a pilgrim's life on the margins of society (:150). Like Christ they know 'the pain of uprootedness, and the alienation that comes with being a stranger' (:150).

According to Hanciles (2004:103) a special role in that reshaping of Christianity is played by African Christians who migrate to Europe and North America. While African migration to these places is not a completely new development, it is the sheer number of Christian migrants that makes it unique (:103). Hanciles writes about the situation in Europe: 'African immigrant churches (AICs) are also mushrooming in unprecedented fashion throughout Europe, where the number of African Christians is thought to be in excess of three million' (:103).

Hanciles (2004:104) goes on to argue that there are two basic models of African missionary involvement: the Abrahamic model and the Macedonian model. The Abrahamic model embodies informal initiatives mainly by individual Christian migrants (:104). Often these migrants feel a strong personal call comparable to Abraham's commission as reported in Genesis 12:1 (:104). Since many of these migrants find it difficult to settle in existing Western churches they decide to start their own bible study groups or services to which they invite

other Africans (:104). These groups then often develop into vibrant churches. While most African immigrant churches founded in North America or Europe reflect this model (:105), there are also African migrants who do not establish separate congregations. Hanciles notes:

Countless thousands become members of, or take up ministry within established denominations and churches where their presence or contribution influences styles of worship and witness, or contributes to spiritual renewal in some meaningful way (:105).

The second form of African missionary activity, which Hanciles (2004:106) calls the Macedonian model, embodies official missionary initiatives by African churches or para-church organisations. This model refers to the calling of the apostle Paul to continue his mission work in Macedonia as it is reported by Luke in Acts 16 (:104). According to Hanciles there is a strong interrelation between the Macedonian model and the Abrahamic model (:106). Usually, it is the migration of individual African Christians that prompts African churches to set up ministries in Europe or North America. The majority of these churches are of a Charismatic or Pentecostal type (:106).

8.3.3 Samuel Escobar: Traditional missionaries and missionaries from below

In *A Time for Mission* Samuel Escobar (2003:10) argues that today Christian mission is the shared responsibility of the global church. The global church is a church that is increasingly dominated by a numerically and spiritually strong Christianity that can be found in the Southern hemisphere (:13). Thanks to immense migration movements a new Southern form of Christianity which has a strong charismatic feel to it has taken root in many European and North American cities (:12-13). Escobar speaks of a 'grassroots Christianity' that is characterised by poverty, narrative preaching, strong emotions, lively corporate prayer and worship, visions, and healings, as well as a strong sense of community and belonging (:13).

According to Escobar the traditional missionary movement has been affected by this shift of Christianity to the South, too. Today missionaries from Africa and South America are working not only on these continents but also in Europe, the USA or Canada Escobar (2003:14-15). Escobar puts it colourfully:

During the twentieth century the word 'missionary' in Peru was reserved for blond-haired, blue-eyed British or American Christians who had crossed the sea to bring the gospel to the

mysterious land of the Incas. Today there is a growing number of Peruvian *mestizos* – dark-eyed, brown-skinned, mixed race Latin Americans- sent as missionaries to the vast highlands and jungles of Peru as well as to Europe, Africa and Asia (:14-15).

This change in the composition of the missionary force has implications not only for the way mission is done but also for the way it is funded (Escobar 2003:14). In addition to these new types of professional missionaries there are missionaries from the South who do not belong to a traditional mission agency. Escobar notes: ‘Another missionary force is also at work today, it does not appear in the records of missionary activity...It is the transcultural witnessing for Christ that takes place as people move around as migrants or refugees, just as in New Testament times’ (:15). Escobar calls this kind of mission ‘mission from below’ (2003:16). It is a dynamic form of mission that is carried out by those who have few financial or material resources, but who are open to the leading of God’s Spirit (:17). These agents of mission are vulnerable people without power and prestige who know how to survive despite difficult circumstances (:16).

8.3.4 David Smith: Christian and non-Christian migrants

In *Mission after Christendom* Smith (2003a:96) argues that increased mobility is one of the main social features of globalisation. He goes on to distinguish between two groups of migrants (:96). On the one hand there are voluntary migrants such as tourists, business people, or academics, and on the other hand there are forced migrants who cross continents in order to survive (:97). According to Smith both migratory flows have enormous implications for Christian mission. Members of the first group are the beneficiaries of globalisation. Their world views are often incompatible with the Christian faith, whereas in the second group mission-minded Christians can be found (:97). Smith writes:

[It] is increasingly evident that in the mysterious providence of God many of the most faithful and effective practitioners of mission in a globalised world are to be found among the poor and disenfranchised peoples...This completely reverses the received expectations concerning the flow of mission within Christendom, undermining the assumption that Western Christianity possesses the spiritual, theological and material resources needed by the rest of the world’ (:97).

According to Smith (2003a: 97-98), the church in the West must recognise this and draw its conclusions for its missiological task. He suggests that the Western church should first and

foremost focus its missionary activities on the first group, i.e. the world's privileged elite, if it wants to proclaim the Gospel with credibility among the world's poor.

Like Escobar, Smith (2003b:142) notes that Christian migrants from the Southern hemisphere have a faith that is very different from that of Christian believers in Europe and North America. It is less rationalistic and individualistic. He further notes that the non-Western theologies and spiritualities of these migrants pose a real challenge to traditional evangelical Christianity (:142).

8.4 Missiological implications

8.4.1 A common missionary vocation

As Hanciles (2004), Escobar (2003a & 2003b) and Smith (2003) point out, the migration of mission-minded Christians from the global South to a post-Christian Europe has implications for the mission of the church. In *A Word in Season* Lesslie Newbigin (1994:11) writes: 'The first and fundamental thing that needs to be said about the pattern of Christian missionary enterprise is that we must recover the sense that it is the enterprise of the whole church of God in every land, directed towards the whole world in which it is put'. In other words, what is required today is unity and cooperation between Christian migrants from the South and indigenous Christians in the receiving countries. Sherron K. George (2002:53) speaks of the globalisation of mission that calls for 'mission partnerships of shared decision-making and resource allocation' and Werner Kahl (2002:331) pleads the case for a 'common missionary vocation.' In view of a global Christianity that is characterised by diversity Christians need to ask themselves how they can work, serve and grow together (Johnson & Chung 2004:177).

A.F. Walls (2002b:74&78) speaks of a new 'Ephesian moment' in Christian history. The first 'Ephesian moment' was at the time of the early church, when people of two different cultures, i.e. the Jewish and the Greek culture, shared their Christian faith in one church instead of forming separate churches (:78). In the new 'Ephesian moment', which we face

now, Christians from many different cultures have the opportunity to experience Christ together. Walls writes:

The Ephesian question at the Ephesian moment is whether or not the church in all its diversity will demonstrate its unity by the interactive participation of all its culture-specific segments, the interactive participation that is to be expected in a functioning body. Will the body of Christ be realized or fractured in this new Ephesian moment? (:81)

For Walls (2002b:72) the church is clearly at a crossroads in her history. She is challenged to form one cosmopolitan body, in which all parts with their specific cultures complete and correct each other (:78)

Recent official church statements on forced migration underline the importance of Christian cooperation and unity. Thus, for example the *Liebfrauenberg Declaration* (CRC & CPCE 2004:7) states that ‘Christians, both local and from abroad belong to the same Body of Jesus Christ and to universal communion.’ But unfortunately, the situation at ground level is often very different. Kahl (2002:333) comments:

Interestingly, European Christianity has become increasingly irrelevant as a living religion within the last generation...Against such a background it might, initially, be surprising that the church in Europe does not welcome happily Christians from abroad and learn from their experiences of reviving their own churches back home.

The question for Christians in the West is: ‘What are the reasons for this unwillingness to work together with immigrant Christians and their churches?’

8.4.2 Migrants as ‘objects’ of mission

According to Kahl (2002:330-331) one of the reasons for this lack of cooperation is the attitude of Western Christians towards their brothers and sisters from the global South. Thus, Christians from the West tend to see migrants as ‘objects’ of Christian mission rather than active agents of mission. They tend to see them as people at the receiving end of Christian ministry. Kahl writes: ‘Christians in Europe, including pastors and other church officials, are used to seeing Christians, especially from Africa, as objects of diakonia, and as in need of theological education’ (:331).

In an article entitled *Biblical Issues in Mission and Migration* C.D Pohl (2003) expresses a similar view. After having examined the biblical tradition of hospitality and the notion of Christians as aliens and strangers in the world, as well as the practice of the early church, Pohl concludes that alien status and hospitality play an important role in Christianity (:9). Pohl suggests that the emphases on hospitality and alien status in the world have several implications for mission and migration (:9). Regarding the way Christians view migrants she writes:

We might also need to rethink what migrant people bring to mission. From their own experiences, they know well the needs of strangers for meaning and place, and yet they also know how precarious are human connections to status, resources, and communities. It seems important to draw on this strength and to shift from thinking about migrants chiefly as objects of charity and outreach to viewing them as potential leaders and teachers in mission and ministry movements (:10).

A typical example of someone who still views migrants as ‘objects’ of mission, i.e. as people who need solidarity, hospitality and spiritual support from the church in the West but who have nothing to give to that church, is missiologist M.A Blume. In his article *Refugees and Mission* Blume (2000) presents refugees solely as victims who need the help of the Christian church. Blume says:

Regarding the mission of the church, the future will be accompanying with pastoral presence and other forms of assistance those who suffer the effects of prolonged exile, promoting dialogue between them and host communities and pressuring governments and legislatures to produce laws and policies that are based on the fundamental respect for and promotion of the human person and not on the political necessities of the moment (:170).

The problem with such a view is that it willingly or unwillingly sticks to the old paradigm of mission that understands Christian mission as a Western enterprise.

The evidence confirms that many refugees and asylum seekers, whether they are Christians or not, suffer from physical and emotional pain, isolation, marginalisation, discrimination etc. (cf. chapter 4). As women and men sent by the triune God, the church is commissioned to bring healing and comfort to these people. Christian mission as *missio Dei* is always incarnational, contextual, and holistic²¹.

²¹ Instead of holistic mission some scholars also use the term *integral mission* (Chester 2005:2). Charles Ringma (2004:441) argues that the expression *holistic mission* should be replaced by *integral mission* because the former has been used among evangelicals in a rather narrow sense. Ringma points out that mission is more than evangelism and social outreach. Ringma writes: ‘But mission is broader than this. It refers to all of God’s activity

Mission as the sending of a God who became flesh cannot be undertaken out of context (Goldsmith 2006:201). Jesus' mission on earth, for example, did not take place completely detached from human life, human interests, human needs and human suffering. On the contrary, Jesus was deeply concerned about his fellow people and had compassion for them (e.g. Mark 1:41, Mark 6:34, Matt. 9:36). He was confronted with real human suffering and sin and responded to it (e.g. Mark 2:1-12, Luke 7:36-50). Therefore, a missionary church needs to show the same attitude towards its fellow humans. David Bosch (2004:426) comments: 'Today, too, Christ is where the hungry and the sick are, the exploited and the marginalized. The power of his resurrection propels human history toward the end, under the banner "Behold, I make all things new!" (Rev. 21:5)'. And this has implications for a missional church. Bosch continues: 'Like its Lord, the church-in-mission must take sides, for life and against death, for justice and against oppression' (:426). Consequently, mission has more than one task. Christian mission is a multi-faceted ministry (Bosch 2004:512), and as such it is holistic, i.e. it is concerned about both human and social transformation (Goldsmith 2002:163). Paul Avis (2003:5) distinguishes between two dimensions of mission (:5). According to Avis there is on the one hand the public, social and cultural dimension, and on the other hand the pastoral, personal and local dimension or agenda of mission (:5). Both are intrinsically linked with one another or as Avis writes: 'They support and lend credibility to each other' (:5).

In summary, it is imperative that churches involved with forced migrants proclaim the gospel to refugees and asylum seekers on the refugee highway, many of whom come from countries with little or no Christian witness at all. At the same time, churches are called to challenge what they perceive as sinful actions and structures, such as wars or economic exploitation, which have caused people to leave their homes. The contemporary church needs to exercise its prophetic office once again.

However, to see refugees and asylum seekers solely as 'objects' of mission and not as 'partners' in mission is missiologically inept. Whilst it is true that refugees and asylum seekers are people the church in the West must minister to in order to be faithful to its calling, it is also true that they have the skills and abilities to make the mission of receiving churches in creating, sustaining, and transforming all of life' (:441).

effective. Christian refugees and asylum seekers are part of the same body of Christ. Walls (2002b:79) claims that the twin metaphors of the body and the temple in the Letter to the Ephesians show that the contribution of every cultural component of the church is vital for its success. Walls notes that the corollary is true: 'Only in Christ does completion, fullness, dwell' (:79).

8.4.3 Migrants as second-class Christians

Kahl (2002) argues that Christians in Europe not only refuse to accept non-European Christian migrants as agents of mission but that they also refuse to treat them as their equals. He notes: 'The majority of Christian and non-Christian Europeans seem to consider African Christians and other Africans as second, or, rather third-class citizens of the world *and* of the kingdom of God' (:333). Kahl identifies two reasons for this attitude: firstly racism and secondly theological arrogance (:333).

Kahl's evaluation is shared by Währisch-Oblau (2000:475-476) who in an article on the role of Protestant immigrant churches in Germany speaks of cultural preconceptions and theological prerogatives. Währisch-Oblau argues that prejudices against Africans and Asians are a common feature in German churches (:475). Many German Christians consider them economic migrants who should be deported. And those who do not share this conviction see them only as victims who need the support of the German church. In addition, there are strong theological prejudices against the Pentecostal and Charismatic spirituality that can be found among many immigrants (:476). In his book on African Initiated Churches in Germany Benjamin Simon (2003:288) writes that this widespread distrust against African churches among German theologians is nurtured by their ignorance of the worldwide ecumenical scene. According to Währisch-Oblau (2000:475) the reservations in mainline and evangelical circles go as far as to claim that immigrant churches are sects or cults. As a result of this many indigenous churches and immigrant churches in Germany live, worship and minister completely separated from each other. Immigrant churches are not seen as partners in mission. Währisch-Oblau writes:

[Few] German Christians yet accept the idea that African and Asian immigrant churches, especially when they are charismatic and non-denominational in character, are partners from whom they can learn much, or that the body of Christ in Germany no longer consists of ethnic Germans alone. Up to now, with one or two local, exceptions, there has been no theological dialogue between German and the reverse and independent missionary immigrant churches, therefore also no reflection of how the “reverse mission” of the immigrant churches could become part of a “common mission” of all churches (:476).

In Britain this hostile attitude led to the formation of an independent umbrella organisation of immigrant churches, the Council of African and Caribbean Churches (UK) (Jehu-Appiah 2000:442).

For Walls (2002b:78) there are two dangers in the current situation. Firstly, there is the desire of Christians to protect their own version of Christianity as the only legitimate one. Secondly, there is the danger that they regard all versions of the Christian faith as equally valid and therefore see no need for real unity and cooperation (:79). The prejudice against Christian immigrants from a Charismatic or Pentecostal background by western Christians, as it is described by Währisch-Oblau (2000:475) appears to be an attempt to protect one’s own version of the Christian faith.

8.4.4 Conclusion

Today, the most vibrant expression of the global church can be found in Africa, Asia and South America. Flows of Christian migrants from these areas bring a more charismatic and relational Christian spirituality to Europe and North America. The Christian practice of these migrants, whether they are voluntary or forced migrants, is what P.L Wickeri (2004:195) calls ‘a popular Christianity, a mission from below, a mission of transformation.’ For the churches in post-Christian Britain that are involved in refugee ministry this development raises three important questions. Firstly, what is the best way to integrate forced Christian migrants into the Christian community in Britain? Secondly, are they willing to recognise Christian refugees and asylum seekers as equal partners in mission? Thirdly, what do models of cooperation in mission between indigenous Christians and Christian asylum seekers and refugees look like?

9. The Integration of refugees into the Christian church and secular immigration models – a testing-out research

9.1 Methodology: a scenario test

Every year, about 2.5 million immigrants enter the European Economic Area and Switzerland, compared to 1.9 million at the end of the last century (Guiraudon & Jileva 2006:281). Among these immigrants are asylum seekers and families of foreign residents, as well as skilled, unskilled, permanent and temporary labour migrants (:282). As a result of this immigration the face of Europe is changing (Weller 2006:28). This changing face also affects the European church. Paul Weller notes: 'In the United Kingdom, certainly, but also in other parts of Europe, the face of Christianity itself is changing in a visible sense as the increasingly important diaspora of African Christianity in Europe takes root' (:29).²² To manage large-scale immigration Western governments have developed and applied a variety of immigration policies. A critical question is whether the British church should model its response on governmental policies or devise better alternatives.

The testing-out phase of this research uses an approach that is widely used in strategic management: scenario analysis. In strategic management planning the aim of the scenario-based analysis is not to precisely predict the future but to explore a range of different possibilities (Lynch 2000:93). The goal of this application is to establish how far secular models of immigration are appropriate for use when exploring the integration of Christian asylum seekers and refugees into the Christian community. Four main immigration models are tested: the non-immigrant model, the assimilation model, the pluralist model and the melting pot model.

²² A similar observation about the situation in Germany is made by Benjamin Simon (2003). Simon distinguishes between three forms of African Initiated Churches (AICs) that can be found in Germany: indigenous churches ('autochthone Ekklesiogenese'), diaspora churches ('diasporale Ekklesiogenese'), and transcultural churches ('transkulturelle Ekklesiogenese') (:68-69). Simon defines indigenous churches as churches whose mother church is located in Africa. Diaspora churches are churches that have been founded in Germany and are not present in any other country. Transcultural churches are churches who have been founded in Germany and whose leadership is still based here. However, these churches have already planted new churches in Africa and elsewhere.

Allan Anderson writes that the AIC movement 'must be taken seriously by anyone interested in African Christianity and the globalization of Christianity' (2001:107).

Standard scenario analysis is based upon a combination of three factors: objective information, subjective interpretations, and assumptions about the future (Wheelwright, Hyndman & Makridakis 1998:472). Typically, three or four different views are developed (Grant 2005:319). If scenarios are qualitative they normally take the form of narratives (:319). The research which follows uses only non-future qualitative scenarios. Four secular immigration models are applied to four 'church integration' scenarios. The integration of foreigners into society is seen as analogous to the integration of refugees and asylum seekers into the Christian community. All four scenarios meet the following conditions: firstly, they are credible or realistic; secondly, they are internally consistent; thirdly, they are easy to evaluate; fourthly, they are of approximately the same length (cf. Ringland 2002:181-182).

After constructing these non-future scenarios they are tested. Two key test criteria are used: a) the biblical principles of integration, outlined above; and b) the principles upon which Christian mission should be implemented, again, outlined above. This includes the principles of holism, incarnation, and contextualisation. In addition, the models tested take account of the paradigm shift in Christian mission, and the implications of global migration for mission.

9.2 Test results

9.2.1 Non-immigrant model

9.2.1.1 Features of the non-immigrant model

The first model to be tested is the non-immigrant model or the differential exclusionary model of immigration. This model is evident in countries in which the national identity is primarily defined on the basis of ethnicity (Castles & Miller 2003:249). In such countries the dominant social group is not willing to accept people of a different ethnic group as constituent members of the nation. Consequently, legislation restricts rights to citizenship and permanent residence (Lynch & Simon 2003:215-217). Such countries often apply a *ius sanguinis* policy, i.e. citizenship is conferred to the children of existing citizens only, or to those who belong to the same ethnic group as the dominant group of society. Countries which follow this model do not

regard themselves as countries of immigration. Foreigners who enter these countries are not seen as permanent immigrants but as guest workers who are expected to return to their home country. As such, they are granted restricted access to certain areas of society, normally the labour market, but are excluded from other areas, such as political participation or the welfare system (Castles & Miller 2003:250).

There are two main variants of this model (Lynch & Simon 2003:221-222). In the contained pluralistic approach, which was typical of Germany till the late 1990s, the government make some efforts to integrate resident aliens, while in the non-pluralistic approach, typical of Japan, no efforts are made to foster social integration of strangers at all. Other countries which typify this approach are Switzerland and Austria.

In response to exclusionary policies, immigrants or guest workers tend to form ethnic minorities which exist on the margins of society. Because of communication difficulties and low status of their jobs these ethnic minorities often live in geographical or social ghettos, and are perceived as a social problem. S. Sassen (1999:144) writes about the situation in Germany: 'The guestworker approach in Germany explicitly excluded integration, and thus entered in conflict with family reunification and the growth of the permanent foreign-resident immigrant population, including a second generation that was reaching school age'.

9.2.1.2 The exclusion scenario

According to this scenario, the church is not proactive in engaging refugees and asylum seekers, even though there is a level of awareness of refugees and asylum seekers in the local community. Refugee ministry is not seen as part of the church's mission. Christian refugees and asylum seekers who attend a church of this type are at best tolerated. Though they join other worshippers for the Sunday services they find that no efforts are made to integrate them into the church community. The church does not invite them to play an active part in its life nor does it offer them formal membership. Because they are refugees and asylum seekers they are seen as a threat to the church. There are different reasons for this aversion. Some church members tend to doubt the genuineness of their Christian faith while others are suspicious of

their different Christian spirituality and lifestyles. A small minority take the view that it is not good for Christians of different races to be in the same church. As a result of this hostile attitude, Christian refugees and asylum seekers opt to leave the host church in order to form their own separate and ethnically distinct Christian fellowship. This movement is welcomed because it restores homogeneity to the host church.

9.2.1.3 Evaluation

Because this model is a model of exclusion it fails to create the basis for an inclusive mission strategy and the integration of refugees and asylum seekers into the Christian community. A church with this approach ignores the Christian mandate to minister to asylum seekers and refugees, both Christian and non-Christian. It also undermines the New Testament principles of unity and equality. Christian refugees and asylum seekers are not only excluded from fellowship with indigenous Christians but are also prevented from using their God given gifts and talents. The non-immigrant model prevents Christians from serving in multi-ethnic ministry teams or benefiting from multi-ethnic leadership, in contrast to the churches of the New Testament.

9.2.2 Assimilation model

9.2.2.1 Features of the assimilation model

The second model of immigration is the assimilation model. In this model, immigrants are expected to adopt the cultural and social norms, the language and the lifestyles of the receiving society (Carmon 1996:23). Contact between immigrants and the culture of the host country, it is argued, results in a gradual process of change (:23). However, change is restricted to the immigrant group. Members of the immigrant group give up their culture of origin and become indistinguishable from the host population. Because assimilation is only acceptable on the restrictive terms of the indigenous population it remains a one-way process (George & Wilding 2002:160). The role of the state is to support this process. This is achieved either by giving immigrants incentives to forsake their old identity in order to adopt the values,

behaviours and language of the receiving society (Gurr & Harff 1994:112) or by insisting that immigrant children attend normal schools and use the dominant language only (Castles & Miller 2003:250).

There are a number of factors that can accelerate or slow down this process of assimilation (Overbeek 1982:171). The granting of equal rights and equal opportunities to immigrants can enhance their self-esteem and promote a feeling of belonging. Similarly, compatibility of language and culture can speed up the assimilation process whereas huge cultural and linguistic differences between immigrants and the host population can hinder it.

One of the countries in which the assimilation model has been very prominent is France. French policy encourages immigrants to become citizens but discourages them from forming separate ethno-cultural groups and political organisations. John Rex (1999:280) comments about the French situation:

There, there is a widespread belief that minority cultures and minority identities threaten French national culture and identity and that while minority members should have equal rights as citizens they should be discouraged from maintaining their own cultures. Politically they should be expected to work through the mainstream parties and there should be no intrusion of minority culture and values into the secular national schools.

9.2.2.2 The assimilation scenario

In this scenario, the church is aware of refugees and asylum seekers and reaches out to them. It recognises its calling towards both Christian and non-Christian refugees. As a consequence, the church is involved in evangelism, social action and advocacy work. The church is proactive in integrating Christian refugees and asylum seekers into its church fellowship. It offers them membership status on the condition that they adjust to the church's culture and agree with its doctrinal positions and vision. To accelerate the process of assimilation the church encourages refugees to take an active part in church life, i.e. to attend the services and midweek meetings such as house groups, bible study groups or social activities. It also offers special doctrine classes which help refugees and asylum seekers to learn more about the church's theological position.

9.2.2.3 Evaluation

In contrast to the non-immigrant model, the assimilation model, as described above, recognises the holistic character of mission. It pays tribute to the fact that Christian mission has different dimensions. However, the problem with the assimilation model is that it expects Christian refugees and asylum seekers to forsake not only their culture but also their specific Christian traditions and spiritualities. It expects refugees and asylum seekers to become indigenous Christians, i.e. Christians who adopt culturally conditioned theologies, traditions and norms of the indigenous church. In this model the church grants refugees and asylum seekers equal status with indigenous Christians as a condition of assimilation. In order to become a church member refugees have to become indigenous Christians first. This disregards New Testament principles of equality and unity. In the assimilation model refugees and asylum seekers are solely seen as clients on the receiving end of the indigenous church's missional activities. There is resistance to learning from the experience and spiritualities of refugees and asylum seekers. The principle of mutuality is rejected. Refugees and asylum seekers are not regarded as Christians with the potential to have a positive impact on the indigenous church and its mission. The assimilation model fails to take account of the contextual nature of the Christian faith. It sticks to the old paradigm of mission where mission is seen as an activity that goes out from the West to the rest of the world, thus ignoring the fact that the demographic centre of Christianity has shifted from the North to the South.

9.2.3 Pluralist model

9.2.3.1 Features of the pluralist model

The third immigration model is the pluralist or multicultural model. In this model immigrants are granted not only full citizen rights but also the right to keep their separate cultures (Rex 1999:280). Pluralist integration does not intend to eliminate cultural differences between different ethnocultural groups in society (Kymlicka & Norman 2000:140). On the contrary, its approach accepts the fact that ethnocultural identities are important to people and therefore must be recognised. For immigrants this means that they are expected to

conform to certain key values but not to give up their language and cultural heritage (Castle & Miller 2003:251).

There are two basic versions of the pluralist model (Lynch & Simon 2003:221). Laissez-faire pluralism, which can be found in the United States, neither selects immigrants on the basis of cultural compatibility nor does the state foster integration. In contrast, controlled pluralism, which is typical of Canada and Australia, is not only highly selective when admitting immigrants but actively supports the assimilation process. A radical variant of the pluralist model is the Dutch 'pillarisation' policy (Rex 2002:114). In order to guarantee religious freedom this model allows ethnic social groups to have their own separate schools, social services, media and trade unions (:114).

9.2.3.2 The pluralist scenario

In this scenario, the church is actively involved in refugee ministry. It reaches out to refugees and asylum seekers through evangelism and social action. It invites refugees and asylum seekers into membership without any preconditions. Since the church is aware that it is important to Christian refugees and asylum seekers to worship and have Christian fellowship in their own language it establishes refugee congregations and/or fellowships groups within its own congregation, or alternatively supports the formation of separate refugee churches. The church also helps to find and fund a refugee pastor who can lead a ministry to refugees. The existence of either refugee congregations within the church or separate local refugee churches is regarded as an enrichment of the local Christian community, demonstrating as they do the diversity of the body of Christ. In addition, they are conceived as the best means of reaching out to other refugees and asylum seekers. Refugee congregations and churches are regarded by the church as a major vehicle for evangelism.

9.2.3.3 Evaluation

Unlike the assimilation model the pluralist model of integration values the beliefs and spiritualities of Christian refugees and asylum seekers. No overt attempts are made to force

refugees and asylum seekers to give up their culture and adopt all the theological traditions and norms of the indigenous church. Refugees and asylum seekers are not discriminated against because of their legal status or cultural background. The important New Testament principles are sustained: the principle of equality and the principle of non-assimilation. However, this model can threaten the understanding of Christian unity and ministry. Where it favours the establishment of completely separate refugee churches it appears divisive. Like the non-immigrant model of integration such an approach does not adequately reflect the New Testament understanding of the local church as a multi-ethnic/multi-cultural community that is characterised by common leadership, service and worship. In this version of the pluralist model refugees might be seen as agents of mission but only as agents who are called to reach out to their own ethnic group. In contrast, the establishment of refugee congregations as an integral part of a local indigenous church is biblically based. Such a *church within a church* model can be used where language barriers make it difficult or even impossible for refugees and asylum seekers to take part fully in the life of the indigenous church.

9.2.4 Melting pot model

9.2.4.1 Features of the melting pot model

The melting pot concept was popular in the United States in the first half of the twentieth century (Mayhew 1997:277). It stands for an integration strategy that allows two-way influences between immigrant groups and the indigenous population (Carmon 1996:24). As with the assimilation model, the result of melting pot integration is a culturally and ethnically homogeneous society. But unlike the assimilation model, the construction process is based on the interaction of all existing ethno-cultural groups of society (:24). While in the assimilation model immigrant groups play only a passive role, in the melting pot model immigrants take an active part in the creation of a new nation. The result of melting pot integration is a new nation that is not only a cultural mix, comparable to the pluralist approach, but also achieves an ethnic mix (:24).

9.2.4.2 The melting pot scenario

In this scenario, the church is actively involved in evangelistic and socio-political refugee ministry. It invites Christian refugees and asylum seekers into church membership without preconditions. Since the church is aware that it is important to Christian refugees and asylum seekers to worship and to have Christian fellowship in their own language, it starts to offer a multi-cultural programme with multi-lingual services, house groups and social activities. The church encourages refugees and asylum seekers to get involved in various church ministries according to their spiritual gifts and talents. Furthermore, it calls on refugees to serve as members of the leadership team. The church gives up its old indigenous identity. It develops a new common church culture with which all ethnic groups in the church can identify. This new church culture consists of elements of the various theological traditions, worship styles and other aspects of church life which emanate from the range of different ethnic groups. As a result of this inclusive policy a number of ethnically mixed couples and their children are drawn to the church.

9.2.4.3 Evaluation

The melting pot model is an intrinsically incarnational model of integration. By offering multilingual services and social activities the church creates room for Christian unity. Indigenous church members can identify with refugees and asylum seekers in a way that would be impossible with all other models including pluralist and assimilationist approaches. In the melting pot model refugees and asylum seekers become collaborative agents of change and thus active partners in the mission of the church. The melting pot model treats both refugees and non-refugee church members equally. It enables them not only to serve together but to serve each other and to learn from each other's different theological traditions, styles of worship, and spiritual experiences. In contrast to the other three models, melting pot integration is a mutual process. Finally, it helps both refugees and non-refugees discover which of their beliefs and practices are primarily culturally conditioned and therefore negotiable. Melting pot integration can help Christians to see that they are Christians first, a new creation in Christ, and that asylum seekers' status and national citizenship are secondary.

9.2.5 Conclusion

The results of the scenario test show that some secular integration models seem to be more suitable than others for the development of a mission strategy for integrating refugees into the Christian community. While the exclusionary model completely rejects the mission mandate of the church, the assimilation model is only qualified acceptance because it is contingent upon the old mission paradigm. It ignores the fact that geographical shifts in World Christianity and global migration have theological and missiological implications for churches in the Western world – and should impact the integration of refugees into the Christian community. The pluralist model and the melting pot model appear to be more appropriate when it comes to developing an integration strategy. They both reject the imperative that refugees have to assume an indigenous Christian identity in order to be fully integrated. Both models allow room for refugees and asylum seekers to worship and to have fellowship with Christians in their own language.

However, it is important to recognise that all models have their limitations. All four models take a macro viewpoint of the receiving society (cf. Carmon 1996:24). Firstly, they assume that all immigrants are the same. They ignore the fact that immigrants have different social, racial, cultural and educational backgrounds. In addition, these models fail to take into account the different attitudes that immigrants might have towards integration. And secondly, all four models assume that they apply in any receiving society regardless of its specific political, social or geographical realities. Research indicates that these models work differently in different countries and with different types of immigrants. George and Wilding (2002:161) comment:

The Huguenots have been assimilated into British society, the black Africans have not in American society while the British and the French in Canada have maintained a fair social distance from each other.

Those who want to develop a mission strategy on the basis of the melting pot model, for example, need to be aware of its limitations and take more note of history. N. Carmon (1996:24), writing about the American melting pot concept, notes the following:

The ideal of a melting pot that included, in addition to a cultural mix, the creation of a new nation through biological interbreeding, seemed to work for most of the European groups in the

US, but has never materialized for the Blacks, the largest minority group, with the deepest roots in America....The Afro-American continued to suffer from segregation, discrimination and blocked social mobility.

Carmon claims that the degree of similarity between different ethnic groups is an important factor in successful integration. High levels of ethnic compatibility enable a successful integration process. However, the failure of the melting pot model to integrate the black population in the United States, mentioned by Carmon, indicates that the above evaluation of the melting pot scenario may be too positive. Where salient cultural characteristics are negative integration is impeded or negated.

10. Refugee ministry and minority ethnic churches in Nottingham – two social research projects

10.1 Research location, strategy, design and aims

I carried out my social research in the city of Nottingham, England, the largest conurbation in the East Midlands. The area designated as the city has a population of 273,900, while Greater Nottingham has a population of 629,700 (Nottingham City Council 2005). I chose Nottingham for this study for four main reasons:

Firstly, Nottingham typifies other UK cities which have been impacted by global forced migration in the last decade. Together with the other East Midlands cities of Derby and Leicester, Nottingham forms one out of nine dispersal areas for asylum seekers in England (Heath & Jeffries 2005:67). At the end of 2004 there were 1,195 asylum seekers in Nottingham who were supported by NASS (:67). In other terms, Nottingham is one of the exit ramps of the refugee highway in Britain.

Secondly, the influence of globalisation on Nottingham can also be seen in the areas of voluntary migration and education. Though Nottingham is not a global city in the narrow sense, it is a centre of global or superterritorial education and the locus of various transnational communities. There is a high proportion of international students and scholars from over 130 different countries at the city's two universities and its further education colleges (UoN 2005a). Thus, in the academic year 2004/2005 alone 5,700 non-EU international students were enrolled at the University of Nottingham alone (UoN 2005b). The same university, which is part of the Russell group of UK universities, and ranks amongst the 10 leading universities in the UK, also has a global presence. There are Nottingham University campuses in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, and Ningbo, China (UoN 2005c). In addition, Nottingham University is a founder member of Universitas 21, an international association of major research universities.

Thirdly, Nottingham has a long history of immigration and an ethnically and culturally diverse population. Thus, fifteen per cent of Nottingham's population belong to non-white ethnic groups (Office for National Statistics 2004b). This is significantly higher than the average figure for England, which is eight per cent (Office for National Statistics 2004a).

Fourthly, Nottingham has diverse range of minority ethnic churches including the following: German and Latvian Lutheran churches, Greek and Russian Orthodox churches, Italian, Lithuanian, Polish and Ukrainian Roman Catholic churches, a Korean church, the Nottingham Chinese Christian Church, three Asian churches and a Kenyan church as well as twenty-one black majority churches and fellowships (SDSRO 2004:i).

Of the methods available for researching the integration of refugees into the Christian community I opted for qualitative research with a case study research design. The case study approach has two main virtues: its flexibility and its responsiveness. Robson (1994:148-149) notes the flexibility of case studies compared with experimental and survey studies. Not only do other approaches require considerable pre-planning and pre-structuring, they are restricted by the limits of their tight conceptual framework (Robson 1994:148-149). Innes (2003:212) notes the responsiveness of the case study approach because of its in-depth potential. The interactive nature of case studies allows the researcher to explore the correspondence between the subject and the complexity of its setting. Additionally, case studies can promote holistic outcomes (Punch 2005:144).

I chose to conduct two case studies, both in the form of organisational analysis. The first case study scrutinised an indigenous church that was involved in refugee ministry. The second case study was a comparative or multiple-case study involving two minority ethnic churches. The objective in choosing to research churches of differing typology was to explore the dynamics of the Christian community from two different perspectives: integration and segregation.

For the refugee ministry research project I deliberately chose a single-case design since I considered this case to be representative. According to Robert K. Yin (2003:39-42) there are

five different rationales for a single case study: the critical case, the extreme case, the representative case, the revelatory case and the longitudinal case. The aim of representative or typical cases, Yin (2003) writes, 'is to capture the circumstances and conditions of an everyday or commonplace situation' (:41). He goes on to claim that 'the lessons learned from these cases are assumed to be informative about the experiences of the average person or institution' (:41). In line with this expectation I hoped that the case which I had chosen would be an exemplifying one, i.e. that it would provide me with data which would give answers to my overall research question (How to integrate Christian asylum seekers and refugees into the Christian community?). Further, I hoped that my findings would have application for other churches already involved in refugee ministry or those planning to get involved (cf. Bryman 2004:51). Other reasons for choosing a single-case and not a multi-case-design research project were economic: a comparative study would have involved a lot of time-consuming and expensive travelling. This was beyond my means as a single part-time researcher.

For my research into the mission and ministry of minority ethnic churches I decided to use a multiple-case design in the hope that by comparing two long-standing minority ethnic churches I would learn more about their missiological impetus and effectiveness. Bryman (2004:55) advocates multiple-case studies by listing their advantages:

The main argument in favour of the multiple-case is that it improves theory building. By comparing two or more cases, the researcher is in a better position to establish the circumstances in which a theory will or will not hold.

Given the fact that there a large number of such churches in Nottingham it seemed appropriate to carry out a multiple-case study.

The main aims of the two research projects were:

- to establish the mission objectives of minority ethnic churches
- to evaluate the strategies employed by minority ethnic churches in achieving their objectives
- to examine the policy and practice of integrating refugees into an indigenous church
- to establish the reasons given for and against the integration of refugees into an indigenous church

- to identify possible reasons for and against the formation of independent mono-ethnic refugee churches
- to offer my research findings in an attempt to develop strategies for the effective integration of refugees into the local Christian community

10.2 The integration of refugees and asylum seekers into a local church - a case study

10.2.1 Methodology

10.2.1.1 Research site and period

For the study of a church that was involved in refugee ministry I chose Cornerstone Church, Nottingham, and its group of Iranian asylum seekers and refugees. At the inception of this study Cornerstone Church was not only a multi-ethnic church but also a church with more than seven years' experience in refugee ministry (Abbott 2005:1). Over the years, Cornerstone's refugee ministry had developed from a general ministry among refugees and asylum seekers to a work with specific ethnic groups (Cornerstone 2005a:26). I selected the Iranian group for my research principally because its size provoked the most challenging questions about integration (P. Lewis 2005a). My research at Cornerstone Church took place over a fourteen month period, between February 2005 and April 2006.

10.2.1.2 Pre-study and initial research concept

In order to ground my research it was necessary to apply quantitative research methods at the outset. I hoped that by choosing this approach I would gain clear directions for the qualitative research which followed. The aim of quantitative research is the measurement of concepts (Bryman 2004:65-66). To be able to measure a concept it is desirable to have several indicators (:66). This is in contrast to qualitative research where conceptual measurement is regarded as less important (:271). Tight conceptual definitions tend to be reductive and can distort social

perceptions (:271). Distortions arise when concepts are perceived exclusively in terms of indicators, or, as Robson (1994:149) explains, a strong concept can blind the researcher to important features of the case or cause him to misinterpret evidence. While there is some truth in this critique it must be said that a very broad or general conceptual framework might not be a good starting point for a social research project either. These dangers need to be balanced against the dangers of being too generalised. The broader the framework, the more the research data becomes diffuse (Robson 1994:149). Given this quandary I decided to use specific indicators but not to stick to them exclusively, and to revise them during the research process if that proved necessary. In essence, I decided to develop an initial research concept which I did not treat as definitive.

In order to select appropriate indicators I carried out a pre-study at Cornerstone Church. This consisted of a series of general discussions with key members of staff focussing on refugee ministry. I interviewed the senior pastor (P. Lewis 2005a), a church elder (R. Lewis 2005a) and a member of the refugee ministry team (Howard 2004) about their experience in working with refugees and asylum seekers at Cornerstone Church. Additionally, I analysed the church's constitution (Cornerstone 2002) and a booklet entitled *Becoming a Member of Cornerstone Church* (Cornerstone undated). This led me to identify ten indicators for evaluating the integration of refugees in church. Thus, integration is contingent upon the following:

- the possession of formal church membership
- the attendance at church services and house groups
- agreement with the doctrinal basis of the church
- participation in church activities
- participation in the church's decision-making process
- acceptance of the church leadership
- regular financial support of the church
- the establishment of significant social contacts/friendships within the church

- their contribution to prayer and care of other church members
- their ability to communicate in the English language

10.2.1.3 Research methods

For my research at Cornerstone Church I applied two qualitative research methods: participant observation and qualitative interviewing. Over a period of 14 months I spent 300 hours of observation at Cornerstone Church. In order to take account of variations of people's behaviour my observations were taken in a variety of settings: the English-speaking and Farsi-speaking worship services, English-speaking and Farsi-speaking house groups, Cornerstone prayer meetings, Cornerstone leadership meetings, refugee ministry team meetings, the Annual General Meeting and a range of socials such as the church weekend, church lunches, the Church Life Sunday, an Iranian New Year party, an Iranian Christmas celebration and Christian concerts hosted by Cornerstone Church. Furthermore, I visited refugees, church leaders and members of the refugee ministry team in their homes. At all these events I observed the behaviour of church members and members of the Iranian refugee group and engaged in informal conversations with a wide cross section of its membership. My aim was threefold: firstly, to learn as much as possible about both the culture of the church and the culture of the Iranian group within the church; secondly, to learn about the process of integrating refugees into the church; and thirdly, to learn about the attitudes of refugees, church leaders and refugee workers towards integration. My ethnographic approach was as an observer-as-participant (cf. Bryman 2004:301). As such, the church leaders, refugees and the refugee ministry team were aware of my research, but in contrast to a complete participant or participant-as-observer, I acted mainly as an observer. Having said that, there were of course situations and events, such as bible studies and house group meetings, in which my active participation was almost unavoidable.

I was able to obtain optimum collaboration from the Iranian group because they had already established a positive relationship with me as a guest preacher at the Iranian service. In consequence, neither my presence nor the research project appeared suspicious. More

importantly, one of the refugees and the three leaders of the refugee ministry team had sponsored my research project and became key informants. They facilitated my access to the Iranian group, acted as interpreters when necessary and directed me to the right people when it came to choosing participants for focus groups or interview partners.

During my research at Cornerstone Church I kept two sets of field notes: concurrent short notes made during periods of observation, and expanded and more reflective notes made immediately following. Both types of note taking provoked speculation, theorising and questions which fed back into further observation. This systematic approach gave a sharper focus to my observations. The research journal which I kept also included descriptions of the people, settings and events observed, and paraphrased or gave verbatim statements of what my contacts said.

I also collected texts and documents about the church and the Iranian group. Some of these documents and texts were freely available, like the church's welcome booklet, while others were supplied to me by the church manager on request. Among the latter were copies of the church's annual reports, minutes of church members' meetings, the church constitution and the baptismal testimonies of Iranian refugees and asylum seekers.

In parallel with the observations described above I interviewed a number of individuals: members of the Iranian group, key church leaders and the refugee ministry team. Interviewing served two purposes: to confirm the findings of my observations and to collect further information not obtainable by observation. In addition, I conducted semi-structured interviews in two areas: with selective interviewees and with focus groups.

Interviewing continuity was achieved by using prepared interview guides consisting of a number of general questions and topics. This framework for questioning created a much more flexible tool for exploring issues than the rigid structures of the quantitative structured interview. It allowed me to pursue subjects tangential to the main thrust of my enquiry including church and refugee perspectives on integration. Questioning sparked lively

discussion with both individuals and groups and led to the exploration of a wide range of topics.

I used a mini-disc player to record interviews verbatim. The verbatim record ensured comprehensive analysis (cf. Fielding & Thomas 2003:135). The transcriptions were carried out with the help of a software programme called *StepVoiceRecorder, version 1.0 beta*.

Before every interview I asked my interview partners for their consent to tape the interviews (cf. Fielding & Thomas 2003:136; Esterberg 2002:45). While all agreed, I had to assure some of the Iranian interviewees that their full names would not appear in writing. They found the use of their first names acceptable pseudonyms. All interviewees were further reassured that the tapes would be deleted once the interviews had been transcribed.

Altogether I carried out fourteen semi-structured interviews with individual refugees, church leaders and members of the refugee ministry team. There were two focus groups: a focus group consisted of Iranian refugees and asylum seekers and a group made up of Cornerstone members involved in refugee ministry (including church leaders). Each focus group consisted of 4-5 participants. I aimed to achieve gender balance with both individuals and focus groups. Members of the refugee focus group either had the legal status of recognised refugees, asylum seekers or failed asylum seekers. Some refugees were married with children but the majority were single. I carried out the interviews myself and I also facilitated each focus group. I needed the assistance of an interpreter for some individual interviews and for the refugee focus group.

Selection of Iranian interviewees, both individual and focus group, was based upon the following criteria:

- being Iranian
- being a refugee or asylum seeker
- being a Christian
- being a member of the Iranian group at Cornerstone Church

A similar screening process was applied when selecting the church focus group and church leader/refugee worker interviewees. All candidates had to meet the following criteria:

- being members of Cornerstone Church
- being involved in refugee ministry or being a member of the church leadership team
- having a non-refugee background

10.2.1.4 Data analysis: A grounded theory approach

Analysis of interview texts and the collection of other documents, such as annual church reports and baptismal testimonies, were then subjected to coding. According to Punch (2005:205) and Bryman (2004:401) coding is the key process in grounded theory analysis. In simple terms, coding classifies texts in three stages: open coding, axial coding and selective coding (cf. Punch 2005:204; Bryman 2004:402; Sarantakos 1997:203).

In the open coding stage I went through my material line by line. By doing so I generated a great number of different themes and hence codes. Some of these codes appeared to have little relevance to my aims, while others formed clusters around my research theme. With the help of index cards I then identified those themes that occurred most frequently.

In the second coding stage, otherwise termed focused coding (Esterberg 2002:161), I again sifted the data line by line under the headings already identified in stage one. These recurring themes included key categories such as 'leadership', 'membership', 'language' and 'culture'. Further examination of the material led to the identification of certain patterns and connections between key categories. During this process I asked myself the following questions (cf. Fielding 2003:247):

- Are there any categories that can be grouped together into a general category?
- Are there any categories that need to be subdivided?
- Is there a time-ordered pattern between categories?
- What are the causes and consequences of a particular phenomenon?

At this juncture I could have undertaken a computerised search for key words and phrases but delayed this possibility in order to avoid the elimination of significant terms. As Esterberg (2002:161) points out, there is always the possibility that one misses important statements because people have used different words to describe the issues one is looking for. The problem was intensified in my case because some of my Iranian interviewees had limited English and I required help from an interpreter.

In the final stage of coding, called selective coding, I was able to refine the key themes already identified. For example, I replaced the code *membership* with the amplified code of *understanding of membership*. Similarly, the code *leadership* was replaced by *attitude towards leadership*. Textual comparisons between interviewees enabled me to see that there were apparent differences in *attitudes towards leadership* between members of the Iranian group and members of both the refugee ministry team and the church leadership group. However, all groups emphasised the *importance of language for integration*.

10.2.1.5 Research quality

Critics of qualitative research of this nature claim that it is prone to the subjective influence of the researcher, and can misrepresent the true nature of the situation under observation (Bryman 2004:284). To counter this claim, and to make sure that my research was valid and reliable, I applied two different techniques: respondent validation and triangulation (cf. Bryman 2004:273-277). In the first, I sought confirmation from church leaders, refugees and refugee workers that my findings were congruent with their own views. For this I wrote a report about my findings (see appendix) and asked the research participants for their comments. In the second, to achieve triangulation, I not only observed a range of people in different locations at different times but also carried out interviews with members of the different groups that I had observed to see whether my observations were correct (cf. Robson 1994:290).

In response to my research report I was invited by the senior pastor to discuss with him the question of church membership for Iranian Christians in October 2006. Shortly afterwards

I was asked to give a presentation to the leadership of Cornerstone Church. On the evidence which I had submitted the meeting made the immediate decision to open up membership to Iranian Christians at Cornerstone Church.

More general application of my findings beyond Cornerstone Church depended upon establishing its external validity or transferability. In order to achieve this I produced an extensive analytical and theological description of Cornerstone Church and its refugee ministry (see 10.2.2) (cf. Bryman 2004:275). This extensive description of the history, structure, and mission of the church makes the character of the church transparent for other researchers to decide how far my findings have application in other settings.

In a further attempt to establish reliability or dependability I submitted my research to external auditing, a process recommended by Bryman (2004:274). Both during and at the end of the research process I asked Mr David Howard to audit the research procedures.²³ I provided him with the complete research records: the case study questions, my data collection procedures, the fieldwork notes, the research journal, the focus groups and interview transcripts, and other qualitative documents, together with my analysis. Scrutiny of this documentation made it possible for him to check my research procedures and data and to reach an opinion on the degree of reliability of my research. His final report can be found in the appendix of this thesis (see appendix).

10.2.2 Cornerstone Church - an analytic and theological description of the research site

10.2.2.1 Affiliations and historical background

Cornerstone Church is a free church that is affiliated to the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches and the Evangelical Alliance (Cornerstone 2004:1). It began as a house group belonging to a large Baptist church in the centre of Nottingham in the early nineteenth century (Cornerstone 2005a). In 1883 it became a separate church with its own building in

²³ David Howard holds a BA in Biblical Studies from the University of Sheffield and an MA in Theology and Religious Studies by Research from the University of Nottingham.

Hyson Green, an inner city district of Nottingham. This building served the church for a hundred years. In 1969 the church chose to withdraw from the Baptist Union of Great Britain for theological reasons. Three years later it joined the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches. In 1983 the church moved to a building converted into a church from a former social club, and the name of the church was changed from Hyson Green Baptist Church into Cornerstone Evangelical Church. The continuing growth of the congregation necessitated a further move to Margaret Glen-Bott School in Wollaton, Nottingham, in 1992, a building which is now part of Nottingham Bluecoat School.

10.2.2.2 Church structures

As an independent church, Cornerstone Church practices congregational church government (Cornerstone 2002). The church claims that it operates under the independent headship of Christ and is autonomous and not subject to denominational control. Thus, Cornerstone is led by a group of elders, who are elected by the church members (Cornerstone 2002). The eldership currently consists of nine elders whose appointment is permanent (Cornerstone 2005b:40). The senior pastor and the assistant pastor are ex-officio members of the eldership (Cornerstone 2002).

Besides the two pastors, Cornerstone also employs a youth minister, a pastoral assistant, a church manager, a church secretary, a part-time bookkeeper, and two trainees (Cornerstone 2005b:41-42). Moreover, the University of Nottingham's International Students' Chaplain, who is officially employed by Friends International and funded by Cornerstone, is regarded as a quasi member of staff (Cornerstone 2004:13). While the staff members have a weekly team meeting, the church eldership meets fortnightly on a Tuesday evening and twice a year for a full-day (Cornerstone 2005b:6).

10.2.2.3 Location

Cornerstone does not have its own church building. Instead, the congregation meet regularly at Nottingham Bluecoat School's Wollaton Park campus for their Sunday morning and

evening services (10.30 am & 6.30 pm), quarterly members' meetings, evangelistic events, concerts, socials etc. (Prill 2005c:3). Most of these meetings take place in the school's assembly hall. In addition, the church rents a large room on the school premises, which it uses for prayer meetings, children's worship services, youth groups and other events. Also, for the church office, the church rents two rooms in the school's main building. The Bluecoat School, a Church of England aided secondary comprehensive school, is located close to the University of Nottingham's main campus. Together with the school, the church hopes to build a Worship Centre, which can seat one thousand people, on the school campus in the near future (Cornerstone 2006a:6).

10.2.2.4 Churchmanship and vision

Cornerstone Church can be described as an evangelical church in the Reformed Baptist tradition. As such it practices believer's baptism by immersion and holds to the so-called Doctrines of Grace (Cornerstone 2002:9). While the elders of the church must subscribe to these doctrines, this is not an expectation of church members (:3). However, membership requires assent to Cornerstone's more general Confession of Faith. Despite its Baptist origin and practice the church also welcomes people into membership who have been baptised as infants and maintain its baptismal validity (:1).

Cornerstone's vision is to 'be a church committed to glorifying God' (Cornerstone 2004:2). It seeks to achieve this through corporate praise and worship, prayer, evangelistic and social outreach to the local community, a biblical teaching ministry and participation in world mission (:2).

10.2.2.5 Membership and church life

In *The Tide is Running Out*, which looks at the results of the 1999 English Church Attendance Survey, Peter Brierley (2000:31) describes Cornerstone Church Nottingham as one of the largest independent churches in England. This classification stands for 2005. Cornerstone has about 300 members. They are drawn not only come from all parts of Nottingham but also

from a cross section of denominational backgrounds, such as Baptist, Anglican, Methodist, Brethren or Pentecostal (Cornerstone 2004:1). The church maintains two forms of membership: full membership and associate membership (Cornerstone 2002:1). Associate membership is for Christians who expect to be in Nottingham only for a short period of time and who do not want to give up their home-church ties.

Over the last fifteen years Cornerstone has seen a significant increase in membership. At the end of 1990 the church had 124 members (Cornerstone 2005b:7). In five years it almost doubled to 204 (:7). By 1999 the membership had increased to 290 and at the end of 2004 there were 315 church members (:7). This amounts to a membership increase of over 150 per cent between 1990 and 2004.

Consistent with the expansion in membership are numbers attending the Sunday worship services. According to a census carried out as part of the English Church Census 2005 the morning service is attended by 600 people. This compares with 450 people attending the same service five years earlier (Brierley 2005a:1). Currently, about 170 people attend evening services (:1).

Church growth has been accompanied by an increase in international and ethnic diversity. It is normal for approximately 35 different nationalities to be represented each Sunday (P. Lewis 2005a). Seventy-seven per cent of those who attend the morning service are white, while almost a quarter, twenty-three per cent, belong to non-white ethnic groups (Brierley 2005a:8). Significantly for this study, this ratio is almost three times higher than the percentage of ethnic minorities in British society and well above the average for Nottingham (see 10.1). Diversity is also a feature of membership: fifteen nationalities are represented. In addition to British nationals church members are drawn from countries such as Australia, Belgium, China, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Iran, Ireland, Korea, Malaysia, Romania, Singapore, South Africa (Prill 2005c:70).

Worship services are at the centre of Cornerstone's church life (Prill 2005c:6). There are the weekly services on Sundays, special guest services, and the quarterly prayer and praise

service. In addition, there is *Easy Access*, an evangelistic service for unchurched people which runs for periods of six weeks. A typical feature of all these services is lively and contemporary worship led by a team of musicians using a range of instruments: piano, guitars, drums, violin and flute (:11). The music combines traditional hymns and modern songs. Every Sunday service includes an international prayer time when the congregation is led to pray for one of the international workers who have been sent out by Cornerstone.

Each semester, services attract a significant number of university students and young professionals (Prill 2005c:11). During university term time students make up 28 per cent of the Sunday morning congregation and 34 per cent of the Sunday evening congregation (Brierley 2005a:2). Fifty-eight per cent of all those who attend the church regularly are between 20 and 44 years of age (:2). Twenty-one per cent are older than 44 years and 21 per cent are under 20 (:2). Forty-five per cent of the Sunday congregation are male while 55 per cent are female (:2).

House groups play a complementary and important part in the life of Cornerstone Church (Cornerstone 2005b:30). Currently there are nineteen house groups which are attended by more than 320 people on a regular basis. Every church member is encouraged to join one of the house groups which are part of the church's 'growing big by growing small strategy'. House groups are considered to be the best for people to get to know each other and engage in church life (Cornerstone 2004:7). House groups normally meet on Thursday mornings and Wednesday or Thursday evenings. The content and style of house group meetings vary from group to group but the emphasis is on bible study and developing relationships. Each house group is led by two to four church members.

Other ministries at Cornerstone include: children and youth work, evangelism, pastoral care, home ministry and international work (Cornerstone 2005b:1). Cornerstone's international work covers three areas: work with international students and their spouses, the sending and supporting of international workers, and the ministry among refugees and asylum seekers (:1). Cornerstone supports nineteen international workers who serve with

Christian mission and development agencies such as Tear Fund, OMF, People International, International Teams etc. or train for such a service respectively (:6-7).

10.2.2.6 Refugee ministry at Cornerstone

The refugee ministry at Cornerstone Church began in 1998 when the church sponsored one of its members, Ms Debbie Abbott, to go overseas as a refugee worker with International Teams (Abbott 2005:1). For two years Debbie Abbott worked with asylum seekers and refugees in Austria and Albania. During that time she was invited by Cornerstone Church to speak about her ministry and to lead seminars about refugee issues in the church on several occasions. The church also supported a group of four members, including the church manager, to go on a short term team placement in Albania where Debbie Abbott was based (:2). Since then several church members, both as individuals or groups, have been to Austria to work among refugees on a short term basis.

The refugee ministry in Nottingham began in October 2000 when Debbie Abbott returned to Nottingham (Abbott 2005:2). At the same time the government started to send asylum seekers to Nottingham as part of its dispersal policy (Garvie 2001:24-25). Church members became aware that many asylum seekers were lacking clothing and footwear and with the support of the church leadership they organised a fundraising event at the church (Abbott 2005:2-3). In view of the increasing numbers of asylum seekers coming to Nottingham, the church asked Debbie Abbott to form a refugee ministry team that would reach out to asylum seekers and refugees in the city. In cooperation with a local Baptist church, the team began to organise coffee bars for men and women, English classes and a mothers and toddlers group.

At the outset Cornerstone's refugee ministry was a general refugee ministry but it became more specialised as it developed, targeting specific cultural groups (Cornerstone 2005b:26). Currently, there are four of these groups: an African group, a Spanish-speaking group, an Iranian group and a women's group (:26-27). All these groups differ in their format, composition, size and their relationship to Cornerstone Church. The African group consists

of approximately 15 people drawn mainly from the Horn of Africa: Ethiopia and Eritrea (:26). The group meets for worship every Saturday afternoon at a Baptist church, located to the north of the city centre. About five members of this group attend the English-speaking service and house groups at Cornerstone, while its other members worship at other Nottingham churches and in other cities.

The Spanish-speaking group is made up of asylum seekers and refugees from Latin America (Cornerstone 2005b:27). The group is supported by Spanish-speaking members of Cornerstone. The group usually meets in the home of one Latin American family for bible study and socials. Most of the group members also attend the English-speaking service at Cornerstone.

The largest group, and the group with strongest formal links to Cornerstone, is the Iranian group (Prill 2005c:2). The Iranian group consists of approximately 45 adults and 10 children and teenagers. The majority in the group were Muslims when they first came to Britain as asylum seekers. Over the last five years about thirty Iranians have become Christians and have been baptised at Cornerstone. Some of them have moved on to other places in the UK, but most of them are still part of the group.

The Iranian group meet for Sunday worship in a room on the Bluecoat School campus, which is rented by Cornerstone Church (Prill 2005c:7). There is an average attendance of about 35 people. This includes 4-5 non-Iranian members of Cornerstone. The majority of the 30 Iranians are men. Normally 7-10 women attend, some with toddlers. The other Iranian children are integrated with different English-speaking children's groups, which meet concurrently. The service starts at 11.10am and usually lasts until 12.10pm. About two thirds of the Iranians join the Cornerstone congregation for their main service, which begins at 10.30am. At about 11.00am they leave the English-speaking service for their own Farsi-speaking service. After the Farsi-speaking service almost all Iranians re-join the congregation of the English-speaking service for coffee and tea in the school's main hall.

During the week there are three Iranian bible study meetings (Prill 2005c:14-15). These meetings take place in the homes of members of the Iranian group. There is one Farsi bible study group for new Christians and seekers, one bible study group for women, and one for more mature Christians. Groups are led by both Iranian and British Christians.

10.2.3 Church leaders and integration

10.2.3.1 Past, present and future of the Iranian ministry

My initial research at Cornerstone led me to believe that the diverse ministries which now exist stemmed primarily from their *reactive leadership style* of its eldership (Prill 2005c:80-81). Typically, reactive leadership does not involve data research and strategic planning (Hannagan 2005:47; Rosenfeld & Wilson 1999:376). Instead, leaders make decisions based on their daily observation and understanding of their environment. This was the basis for the establishment and development of both Cornerstone's refugee ministry and the Iranian work. In my interviews with church leaders several of them mentioned that the refugee work had not been planned by the leadership but had evolved (R. Lewis 2005b:1,3&9; Webster 2005:6; Gribbin 2005:2; Hampton 2005:1). One church elder described the beginning of the refugee ministry at Cornerstone Church as contextual in these terms:

I think the way it happened was not planned in a way but [came about] almost by accident [and] from a church level. With the increase of asylum seekers in the UK, and that [level of concern] coming into the media and so forth, and a lot of the Iranians and people [arriving] from the Middle East, in particular into the UK, and being [the] conscious [policy decision] by the government [to] spread [them] around the main cities of the UK, it meant that Nottingham got a number of these people (R. Lewis 2005b:1).

Another church leader perceived the church's refugee ministry in terms of the spiritual development of body ministry (Gribbin 2005). He claimed that the church had been 'led' into this dimension of divine ministry and that in consequence it was the leadership's main task to support church members involved in the work. He said:

I think like a number of other good Spirit-led things that have happened at Cornerstone, it's not been something directed by the church, although it certainly involved the initiative and hard work and vision of certain individuals in setting about starting something. But it's not been something which particularly has been directed as a strategy or as a policy by the leadership...It's

more about the, I think, with God's help, to create the right conditions for people to take initiatives and steps of faith rather than coming up with a big plan that everybody must align themselves with (:2-3).

There was not only broad agreement among church leaders on the way the Iranian ministry had started but also agreement on the relationship which the Iranian group had achieved with Cornerstone four years later. Most of the leadership perceived the Iranian group as a separate entity within the wider church context. Thus, one church elder observed:

I wouldn't regard them as integrated. In my perception they are a church within a church. They are a parallel church, meeting alongside the main church. They happen to be in the same building (R. Lewis 2005b:4).

The church manager put it this way: 'They are their own group. They will talk amongst themselves. They understand one another' (Hampton 2005:4).

While I would agree with this assessment I would not describe them as a completely isolated group. It was clear from my observations that most Iranians had contacts with non-Iranian church members. However, these were primarily with those directly involved in the refugee ministry (Prill 2005c:49). Another indicator is the fact that two Iranian men got engaged to two British church members during the time of my research (Prill 2005c:49). This suggests that the situation was already changing. Last but not least, the children of the Iranian group were not isolated at all. With the exception of two teenage boys, Iranian children were catered for by the church's children's and youth programmes (Prill 2005c:16). This was confirmed by the youth minister, who reported the following:

I think, from my perspective as a children's/youth worker, the integration of the Iranian children is something which is happening to a large extent. The children are often involved in Bible workshop classes (Brown 2005:.4).

When considering the future of the Iranian group, the majority of church leaders argued that the foundation of a separate independent Iranian church was not an option (Gribbin 2005:7, P. Lewis 2005b:5, Simpson 2005:8, Webster 2005:11). Thus, the assistant pastor said: 'I don't think they would want that and I don't think we would want them to be a separate church' (Webster 2005:12). Confirming this view, a church elder stated the following: 'In terms of kind of governance and structures I'm not convinced that encouraging them towards independence at this stage is necessarily likely to help them or their children' (Gribbin

2005:7). In other words, church leaders considered integration into Cornerstone as the best option. Their justification of this was what might be called the *second generation argument*. Several church leaders expressed their doubts on the ability of an independent Iranian church to serve the needs of the second and third generation of Iranians (Gribbin 2005:7; V. Lewis 2005:6; Webster 2005:11&12; Simpson 2005:4). It was the senior pastor who succinctly summarised concerns the leadership had when he said:

We agreed straight away that the trouble with simply establishing them as an Iranian church would be that that would not make sense for so many years. But their children would become westernized, anglicised in their language etcetera, and would find their kind of church difficult and sometimes boring if the language is a problem and so forth, and some of the expectation and attitudes between the two different generations. And we thought we don't want to produce something which in years to come is a ghetto or enclave (P. Lewis 2005b:3-4).

10.2.3.2 Integration as assimilation

10.2.3.2.1 Integration – a one-sided process

During the period of observation many indicators confirmed the consistent commitment of Cornerstone's leadership to its Iranian ministry (Prill 2005c:37). Thus, the church provided the Iranian group not only with a room for their weekly Farsi-speaking services but also paid for a weekend retreat for the group, helped the group to organise a national conference for Iranian Christians, and sponsored the theological training of a group member at an Iranian Bible College in the South of England. To secure its relationship with the Iranian work, and to ensure continuity, Cornerstone's leadership appointed a church elder to maintain direct involvement (Prill 2005c:3). This elder regularly attended the Farsi-speaking services and seemed to be highly respected by the Iranian Christians. Cornerstone's commitment to Iranian Christians was summarised by the church manager as follows:

And what's happened is that we made resources available to them because they are a big enough group. So they have their own room to worship in; they have their own chairs; they have their own microphones [and] speakers. They have some collection of resources that we have made available. They have their own budget for instance. And we have decided to spend that money for this group. So it is quite special (Hampton 2005:2-3).

In April 2006, towards the end of my period of observation, the Cornerstone leadership made a further investment in its Iranian work by deciding to employ two part-time workers for the Iranian ministry from September 2006 onwards (Prill 2005c:88). It should be noted that this was an executive decision without prior consultation. Even though they welcomed the decision, no member of the Iranian group had been involved or consulted.

Investment in its Iranian work was made in the context of a policy of integration. However, it became apparent that the leadership understood integration first and foremost in terms of assimilation (Prill 2005c:62). Although different church leaders had different views on the details of the integration process and its feasibility, their general idea of integration was clearly that of a one-sided process of change. They expected the Iranian Christians to adjust to Cornerstone's culture and theological positions. This view of integration corresponds to the assimilation scenario outlined above (see 9.2.2).

Key words used by the senior pastor to describe his view of integration included the following terms: assimilation, domestic integration, and identification (P. Lewis 2005b:5). Other church elders assumed that integration meant that Cornerstone's Iranian Christians would become British Christians. One of them said:

But I think the ultimate aim is to integrate them into church life. The first generation would be alright, but after that the church disappears. But if you are integrating, it lives on. And then they become part of the family, become British and part of the British way of life, part of the British church (Simpson 2005:4).

Another elder put it this way:

I would like to think it was possible for the Iranians to integrate into the main Cornerstone Church. That would be wonderful. But the more they do that the less they'll be a separate Iranian church. They will lose their identity, their Iranian distinctiveness (R. Lewis 2005b:14).

However, this extreme was not universal. Other church leaders took a much more balanced view. They did not expect the Iranian Christians to give up their national identity completely. Nevertheless they still expected them to change and to adjust to the church culture (Gribbin 2005:9; V. Lewis 2005:9).

The perspective of seeing integration as a one-sided process became the conceptual basis for assessing barriers towards integration.

10.2.3.2 Barriers towards integration

Most church leaders accepted that integration, though desirable, was not easy to achieve. This realism stemmed from a recognition that there were numerous barriers that made integration difficult (P. Lewis 2005b:13). The senior pastor put it this way:

But with the question of total identification and assimilation, we wanted to be true to the realities. First of all, there isn't the level of English to understand all the sermons, and so forth. Secondly, there isn't, or there wasn't, an understanding of Baptist church life where the congregation have to make decisions about the future of the church and lots of issues (P. Lewis 2005b5).

The most frequently listed barriers to integration were as follows: language barriers (R. Lewis 2005b:5 Webster 2005:10, Simpson 2005:2; P. Lewis 2005b:11), cultural differences (Webster 2005:13; Gribbin 2005:5; Hampton 2005:11; Simpson 2005:8; R. Lewis 2005b:14), and lifestyle issues (Webster 2005:6; R. Lewis 2005b:7; Gribbin 2005:12; Hampton 2005:5). Those emphasising barriers of language argued that the lack of English made communication between Iranian and non-Iranian Christians in the church problematic. One church elder commented: 'We've got a huge language barrier. So they don't really understand us and we don't really understand them. We communicate by smiles' (R. Lewis 2005b:5). Communication difficulties prevented some Iranians from getting actively involved in the church life and from profiting from the church's teaching ministry (Hampton 2005:1).

Assessment of immigrant life-styles raised critical ethical issues. Three church leaders spoke about concerns that Iranian Christians were involved in illegal activities such as working in the black market (Webster 2005:5; R. Lewis 2005b:7; Gribbin 2005:12-13). One elder said:

I suspect if you are a friend of some of these [Iranian immigrants], certainly of some of these men, if you are a close friend pretty soon you [re] gonna find that because of the kind of life they have to lead as refugees, they're doing some things that we would count not acceptable of other people (Gribbin 2005:12).

A common characteristic of barriers was that they were predominantly seen as problems for Iranian Christians to overcome. The onus was on the immigrant. One church elder said that the Iranians had 'to climb over a language barrier and to an extent a culture barrier' (R. Lewis 2005b:9), while another elder expected them to change their mindsets (Simpson 2005:9). The senior pastor spoke about 'the bridge into Cornerstone' which they had to cross (P. Lewis 2005b:15).

However, Cornerstone's leadership recognised its responsibility in assisting Iranian Christians to overcome language and cultural barriers. Some stressed the importance of social events, where Iranian Christians could mix with British and other church members, practice English and get to know the culture better (Hampton 2005: 7, V. Lewis 2005:7, Simpson 2005:4&5). The senior pastor (P. Lewis 2005b:11) and the pastoral assistant (V. Lewis 2005:7) also mentioned the plans which the church had had at one point to offer simultaneous translations for Farsi and Chinese speakers in the main English-speaking service or alternatively to provide them with sermon notes in their mother tongues. However, neither materialised (Prill 2005c:51). Interpreters were too expensive and the preparation of written sermon translations was too time-consuming.

10.2.3.2.3 The membership question

The assimilation model of integration determined the leadership's view on church membership for refugees. During the period of research there were periodic announcements made in the main service encouraging attenders to consider church membership. These announcements reinforced the standard weekly church notice sheet invitation: 'If you are a committed Christian, have attended Cornerstone for at least 6 months and have decided to make this your regular place of worship – why not consider applying for membership of the church?' (Cornerstone 2006b).

That no Iranian Christian forced immigrants had become members appeared to be a major inconsistency, especially for a church which regularly invited people to become church members (Prill 2005c:12). It appeared even more remarkable in view of the fact that the

majority of the Iranian Christians had even been baptised at Cornerstone Church. When I raised the issue with my interview partners I was told that the leadership had decided specific membership criteria for asylum seekers and refugees. These included a reasonable command of English and permanent residency in the UK (P. Lewis 2005b:5, Hampton 2005:14-15). In addition, the senior pastor (P. Lewis 2005b:15) expected them to be 'solid Christians' and the assistant pastor (Webster 2005) wanted to see genuine attempts at cultural assimilation. He said:

So, the reasons would be that they are genuinely Christians, they gained asylum and they are not just going to be deported the next month. And also, are they going to just simply fit in with life here? Or are they going to change our culture into their culture rather than getting into the culture that has already [been] established by those in the UK (:5).

A similar view was expressed by another church elder (Simpson 2005). When I asked him about the reasons why Iranian Christians had not been invited into membership he told me:

Part of it is to do with understanding, with the amount of English [which they have]. Some can understand. Some can sit through a sermon on a Sunday, and others are not at that stage. And there are cultural differences between their society and ours. At the moment I don't think a lot of them couldn't. Some could integrate quite easily and become part of the church, but perhaps the majority can't (:4)

Put differently, the only membership option open to Iranian Christians was assimilation. However, when I spoke to the church manager about the possibility of Iranians becoming church members he confirmed that bringing Iranian Christians into church membership was not being actively pursued by the leadership (Hampton 2005:15).

10.2.3.3 Suggested reasons for the leadership's attitude towards Iranian Christians

Exploration of the membership issue exposed a range of leadership attitudes towards the Iranian Christians at Cornerstone Church. Some of these attitudes stemmed from the way the church was led in general, while other reasons were more missiological, ecclesiological and pragmatic. In addition, the leadership's limited understanding of globalisation appeared formative.

10.2.3.3.1 Leadership reasons: Unwillingness to change and a pastoral pragmatism

During the period of my research at Cornerstone Church the leadership made it plain that they were generally unwilling to make any major changes or even to consider such changes. Decisions about the integration of foreign Christians into the church were no exception. The assistant pastor, for example, argued that any drastic changes in the church 'would be a huge mistake' (Webster 2005:13). The desire to maintain the current equilibrium appeared to be based on the following grounds:

Firstly, its leaders saw Cornerstone Church as a very successful church that was blessed by God in many ways (cf. Hampton 2005:15, Simpson 2005:11). In the *Annual Report 2004* the senior pastor wrote the following passage summarising his perception of the church:

As I look back on Cornerstone in 2004, once again the dominant impression is of a church in blessing. God continues to give us all the week-by-week encouragements of very large congregations, a growing children's work, lively and heart-felt public worship, regular conversions and a serious engagement with the Word of God (Cornerstone 2005b:5).

A similar view was expressed by the leader of the church's house group network. He wrote:

The year has been another one of great encouragement. Our groups continue to grow and multiply, encouraged and led by almost 50 leaders. These groups strengthen our church family and help us to feel at home in such a large and growing church (Cornerstone 2005b:30).

Consequently, church leaders did not see any need to change the way *church was done* at Cornerstone, or as one church elder told me:

I think we ought to keep what we are doing as long as Peter is the minister. And hopefully when he has finished, we get somebody who is similar to Peter, and while we have young people coming who are attracted to Nottingham and the church and I think the teaching ministry is vital to build up youngsters in that. We've got to build for the next generation and the next generation after that. This is what I feel that we are called to do. So I see the church very much as it is, we are just expanding...I think that's our ministry and if we fulfill that then we will be blessed as we have been blessed over 25 years since I've been in the church (Simpson 2005:10-11).

The leaders were reinforced in this view by third party assessment. In his book *The Tide is Running Out* Peter Brierley (2000:31), director of the Christian Research Association, mentions Cornerstone Church Nottingham as one of the few growing churches in England. In a report for Cornerstone's leadership that was based on the results of a survey carried out as part of the 2005 English Church Census, Brierley (2005a:14) writes the following:

There are few churches like this, perhaps another 30 outside the Anglican church (and 60 including the Church of England) among the 38,000 churches of England. *That* is the measure of its uniqueness and its strategic importance: how can such a church be replicated while there still is time?

On Brierley's authority, Cornerstone was not only a highly successful church but an example for others to follow. This assessment is not only high praise but endorsement for a policy of no-change.

Secondly, the recruitment of substantial numbers of Iranian Christians reflected well on the leadership and brought encouragement. Thus, the senior pastor told me:

My own feeling is that I am thrilled. I have Paul's feeling as he looked at the Thessalonians. They were the promise of the last days. Well, they were in the last days. They were the promise of the worldwide reach of the gospel. They were the first fruits of the Gentile harvest. He read into the situation future church history, as it were. I am thrilled to hear Farsi and Mandarin and many other things on the platform. It gives me a real joy in baptismal formulae or in testimonies or songs or anything like that (P. Lewis 2005b:16).

However, success also brought caution and the need to develop in a measured and controlled way. Novelty created diffidence and scope for mistrust. Initially, there were doubts about the degree to which the members of the Iranian group could be trusted. During my interview with the senior pastor he confirmed that the leadership had been suspicious of the Iranians at the beginning of the Iranian ministry. He said:

We were very cautious when they started to come, when they started to meet our people for Bible studies in the week, when they started to form groups, apparently keen on this, and even professing to be Christians – we were very cautious, [unsure] that we were being taken for a ride, that we were being used to get something good on the CV to help in their appeals. And we understood one or two facts of the culture and the use of half-truths and even deceit, to an extent. So we were cautious (P. Lewis 2005b:3).

Another church leader expressed his concerns about Iranian motivation for coming to Cornerstone. He expressed this in the following terms:

And certainly the church has supported a number of such people in court cases and so forth. You know, written letters of recommendation to support their case to remain. If you were to be cynical you could think that that was the motive of some of them originally (R. Lewis 2005b:2).

While the senior pastor (P. Lewis 2005b:3) assured me that this attitude had changed I found that some reservations remained. Analysis of the church leaders' interviews showed high incidence of the following terms: 'genuine Christians', 'genuine conversions' or similar

expressions in connection with the Iranian Christians at Cornerstone (cf. Gribbin 2005:12-13, R. Lewis 2005b:7&8&10, Webster 2005:2&4&5&6). It seemed that the question of genuine conversions was still an issue, especially with new members of the Iranian group. When I asked the assistant pastor about the reasons for not inviting Iranian Christians into membership, he answered:

[E]thical issues, which are a problem. And again, it is [a problematic] part of membership which you don't have with somebody who is already in the UK. So there [are] a few difficulties with some on those grounds. But obviously, it is the genuineness of conversion that was one of the big concerns to start with (Webster 2005:6).

Thirdly, there was a protectionist view among church leaders. Safeguarding the church was seen as a key leadership responsibility (Hampton 2005:14, R. Lewis 2005b:11, Webster 2005:6&11). One of them said:

So the leadership clearly needs to protect the church, the direction it's going, its teaching and we know that lots of churches can get divided by parts of the church and it can be very, very destructive...Cornerstone is really considered to be blessed with its leadership and its membership. We don't have a great deal of division...So we are really blessed and we need to protect that (Hampton 2005:14-15).

It was argued that an Iranian group that was part of the church membership had the potential to influence the church in a way that was not wanted by the leadership (Hampton 2005:14). The senior pastor spoke about the possibility of an 'Iranian block vote' (P. Lewis 2005b:5). Another, saw conformity as an essential condition for maintaining church unity:

I think there is a reasonable concern that accepting the way that Cornerstone is operating the way that God wants it to - that if you allow a large sub-group in a membership to form, and it becomes a power base and operates in consortia, as it were, then a relative small group can have a disproportional influence at a members' meeting. And members' meetings are where the governmental decisions are made in terms of the constitution of the church. So one thing we guard against - not against Iranians or asylum seekers, but about any group forming that is a counter power base within the church that might be trying to take the church in a different direction, that is against the gospel, or a direction that places a different focus of where we believe God has placed the ministries of Cornerstone, and it is for fear of church splits occurring which sadly is a common situation (R. Lewis 2005b:10-11)

This language suggests that Iranian Christians were seen as a challenge if not a potential threat to the church. The insecurities of engaging with immigrant Christians had produced a real sense of fear. This tangible sense of fear appears to have been based upon the threat of change

that Iranian Christians could bring the church. Church polity was under threat, and more importantly, theological principles. Thus, the senior pastor told me:

There are about 25 or 30 nations represented there....But – it has got to be stable. It's got to know its doctrine and it's got to be clear in its practice both in terms of the ethics of life and in terms of church government and church behaviour. And so the vast majority of people in the church are Western, they are British. And that is not an embarrassment. It's true to the realities, historically, obviously. I think if the church was top heavy with people from other nations, refugees, there would be a difficulty. If it was top heavy like some churches in the country since the refugee influx, there could be trouble. There was a church, for instance in King's Lynn, where the pastor had realized that he had hundreds of Portuguese, hundreds and hundreds and hundreds. That was a bomb, and he virtually ran his church and ministry for them and soon people started to leave because they said *we can't take it anymore. There is no teaching for us. It is not the right way to do things*. So, one doesn't destabilize a church. One must be true to the different situations and think strategically (P. Lewis 2005b:17-18)

A similar view was expressed by the assistant pastor (Webster 2005). He said that he was convinced that the Iranian Christians were enjoying being part of the church (:11). At the same time he made it clear that it was the church that served them and that they were the ones who had to adjust themselves to the church. He said:

Whether they are entirely satisfied with the situation as it stands I don't know, but I think they appreciate that we are trying to do things as we are learning where the needs are and – yes, they are having to go at our pace. But then we've got something that has been in existence for far longer to consider which could be destroyed by any kind of a hasty move. So you've got to, in a pastoral setting, consider preservation of what you do have, especially if it has been a good thing anyway, before you suddenly jump on a band wagon and taking the church into a different direction altogether (:11).

Finally, Cornerstone's leadership style can best be described as pastoral pragmatism (Prill 2005c:87). I found little evidence of conscious theological reflection on the themes of forced migration, asylum, integration and mission amongst the leadership (Prill 2005c:2). While some of my interview partners had privately considered some of these issues (cf. Gribbin 2005:13-15, Webster 2005:7) there had been no collective theological debate. This was confirmed by the senior pastor (P. Lewis 2005a). He told me that the decision to host an Iranian congregation within Cornerstone had been made by the church leaders solely for pragmatic reasons. The decision had not been informed by biblical teaching or missiological insights. The biblical perspective on migrants and the multi-ethnic nature of the church was never discussed. Publications such as *Welcome the Stranger* by the Baptist Union or the

Church of England's *A Place of Refuge* were unknown to the church leadership (Prill 2005c:87). The method of theological reflection based on the *pastoral cycle* which enables Christians to ask critical theological questions and to lead a dialogue with the Christian tradition and others (cf. Thompson & Pattison 2005:10) was unknown by the church leadership.

10.2.3.3.2 Missiological reasons: Evangelistic mission, old paradigms and the homogeneous unit principle

Further analysis of the Cornerstone leadership's approach to Iranian ministry shows their missiological premise for action. Integration and assimilation are conceptualised within their understanding of mission.

Firstly, the leadership and the church as a whole had what J.N.J. Kritzing (2003:543-544) calls a conversionist or evangelistic approach to mission. During my research at Cornerstone the church ran a vast variety of evangelistic events. Some of these events, such as the *Easy Access* course, the *Discovering Christianity* course, and the *Into Discipleship* groups, as well as the Guest, Baptismal, Child Thanksgiving and Christmas Carol Services were explicitly evangelistic, while other events were promoted by church leaders as low key or pre-evangelistic opportunities (Prill 2005c:44&69). The latter included lunches for both British and international students, a lunch club for the elderly, and craft evenings. Even the church's soup run, which reached out to homeless people in Nottingham, had an evangelistic focus, and was therefore listed in the evangelism section of the Annual Church Report (Cornerstone 2005b:26). In the *Prayer Diary*, published for the *Cornerstone Week of Prayer 2005*, the first prayer points were listed under the heading 'Outreach and Witness' (Cornerstone 2005d). Church members were asked to thank God for their salvation and conversion and were encouraged to pray for at least three people they knew to become Christians. At the bottom of the same page the following two quotations were printed: 'The Church is not a yachting club but a fleet of fishing boats' and 'There are people only you shall meet, places only you shall go, opportunities only you will have to tell the Gospel'.

By its own reckoning, evangelism was one of the priorities of Cornerstone Church, carried out principally by its full-time staff but supported by its church members. The church manager confirmed the pre-eminence of evangelism when he told me:

One of the great things about Cornerstone is the evangelising that is done here – Colin’s work, Debbie Dickson’s work and the Iranian work, because we see people coming to the Lord regularly. We just had a baptism of six people – that’s wonderful. With the Iranians we’ve seen a lot of them coming to the Lord, being baptised and coming into the Lord’s church in that way. I suspect that in a lot of churches – you know- they don’t do so much evangelism, they don’t see the work of the Lord in people’s lives in that way (Hampton 2005:8).

According to Kritzinger (2003:559) the conversionist position typically stresses ‘the lostness of human beings outside the faith in Christ’. This emphasis on the individual dimension of salvation was uniform amongst church leaders. Thus, the assistant pastor (Webster 2005:2) described some Iranians at Cornerstone as ‘solid and saved for the right reasons’ while another church elder said about the members of the Iranian group: ‘We are delighted that they want to be in church and that some have become saved and will be’ (R. Lewis 2005b:15).

Furthermore, it was noticeable that the repertoire of songs and hymns sung in the services consistently focused on the personal aspect of salvation and faith (Prill 2005c:79). A short survey on the songs and hymns sung at Cornerstone in the year 2005 showed that amongst the most frequently sung modern worship songs were: *In Christ Alone*, *King of Kings*, *Majesty*, *Jesus is Lord*, *Light of the World*, *When I was lost*, *You are my Anchor*, *There is a Day*, and *How Deep the Father’s love for us*. The most popular traditional hymn was *When I Survey the Wondrous Cross* (see appendix).

Secondly, it was evident that support for overseas mission work was a priority. In every Sunday service there was a time called ‘World Mission Focus’ when, by rota, a church member shortly briefed the congregation about the work of one of their international workers and asked the church to pray for them (Prill 2005c:42&76). This commitment to international mission work was endorsed by the leadership. In his annual report the senior pastor wrote the following about his understanding of world mission: ‘Visitors from all over the world increase

our global vision and strategy and a steady stream of people go out to work in other countries in short and long term mission' (Cornerstone 2005b:5).

The church leadership clearly saw Cornerstone as a classical missionary sending church (Hampton 2005:2, R. Lewis 2005b:3&12). They understood mission in a very traditional way. There was a strong conviction that it was Cornerstone's calling to send out Christians to work in Africa, Asia and South America (Simpson 2005:11). One church elder put it this way: 'We are not just here for ourselves, a social group. There is a work out there, which is the Lord's work and we can have our input into it. And we all run with that' (Simpson 2005:6). Interestingly, the Iranian group was considered part of the church's international mission. One church elder described the presence of Iranian asylum seekers and refugees in Nottingham as 'an international mission field on our doorstep' (R. Lewis 2005b:3).

With this strong emphasis on the evangelistic dimension of mission, and the traditional model of mission as a movement going out from the West to the rest of the world, it is understandable why Iranian Christians at Cornerstone were not regarded as equal partners in mission. The outreach of Iranian Christians was seen as a mission limited to their own ethnic group. One elder spoke about 'tremendous opportunities', the Iranians had 'to witness to their friends' (Gribbin 2005:4), while the assistant pastor put it this way: 'There are areas where they can be involved in but we can't, such as reaching out to Farsi speakers' (Webster 2005:8). There was the conviction that it would be easier for Iranian Christians to reach other Iranians than for British Christians. This conforms to the Homogeneous Unit Principle of mission advocated by C. Peter Wagner (1983:118) and others who claim that churches that consist of one kind of people are more effective in evangelising others of the same people group.

Against this background it did not surprise me that the Iranian Christians were also seen as potential missionaries to their own native country. When I asked the assistant pastor about the advantages of Iranians becoming members of the church he answered:

I would say the pluses - to have a member there of another culture and another language - that's always helpful for evangelism. The potential for outreach into refugees and Iranians and the potential for people for going back to their own country as a missionary themselves being already trained and equipped - those would be some of the pluses (Webster 2005:7).

Other leaders went even further. They saw the existence of a Farsi-speaking Iranian group with its own Farsi-speaking services and bible studies as instrumental for a successful evangelism among Iranians in Nottingham. Thus, the pastoral assistant called the Farsi-speaking service at Cornerstone ‘a good evangelistic tool’ (V. Lewis 2005:10). And though she hoped that the Iranians would join the English-speaking congregation in the future she was uncertain about its effect upon evangelism among Farsi-speakers in Nottingham (:9-10). Similar doubts were raised by the church manager. He made the following comment on proposals to integrate the Iranian group:

I think integrating it into the total church so that we no longer have the Farsi-speaking meeting strikes me as a disappointment. I suspect from the evangelistic point of view it would make it more difficult for people, for new refugees to join (Hampton 2005:9-10).

10.2.3.3 Ecclesiological reasons: Preaching, baptism and the multi-ethnic church

If missiological convictions determine integration policy, so does ecclesiology. Both tend to be products of the same mindset and reinforce each other. There is clear evidence for this at Cornerstone.

Firstly, it appears that Cornerstone’s church leaders were looking at the church through one dominant lens, and that lens was that of the Great Commission: Jesus’ mandate to make disciples by baptising and teaching them. Evangelism was primary. That does not mean that the leaders did not support pastoral, social or humanitarian ministries, but these were of secondary importance to them. This model of church most closely fits with what A. Dulles (2002:69) calls the *herald model*. Dulles classifies this ecclesiological model as ‘radically centred upon Jesus Christ and on the Bible as the primary witness to him’ (:69). In this model the task of the church is first and foremost that of proclamation (:69). Dulles summarises this model in the following terms:

The goal of the Church,..., is simply to herald the message. This ecclesiology goes with a strong evangelistic missionary thrust. The Church’s responsibility is not necessarily to produce conversion (only God can do that), still less to build the Kingdom of God; but rather to evangelize all the nations in accordance with the “great commission” of Mt. 28:18-20 (:76).

That preaching and teaching played a central role in the life of Cornerstone Church was explicit (Prill 2005c:44). A typical element of the Sunday services was expository preaching. The sermons would take 45-50 minutes and a significant number of the people in the congregation would take notes of the sermons. Every sermon was recorded and offered for sale as a CD-Rom or tape the following Sunday. Alternatively, sermons could be downloaded from the church's website. In addition, the sermon tapes and CD-Roms were distributed nationally and internationally through the Martin Lloyd Jones Trust. Most of the sermons were preached by the senior pastor, a well known Christian author and conference speaker (cf. Cornerstone 2004:2-3). His preaching ministry was considered one of Cornerstone's main assets. Thus, the report of the church trustees stated under the heading *Risk Management*:

The Church has been built on Peter Lewis's preaching ministry and this would be the hardest position to fill. The Church is blessed with other talented Preachers but the church would be in danger of losing consistency and cohesion if Peter Lewis was incapacitated for a significant period (Cornerstone 2005b:43).

The importance of preaching and teaching was also stressed by several of the church leaders at interview (Hampton 2005:1, R. Lewis 2005b:11, Simpson 2005:5&10). It was argued that the Iranian Christians needed Christian teaching as it was delivered at Cornerstone (Hampton 2005:10; R. Lewis 2005b:14). The senior minister (P. Lewis 2005b) told me about a meeting with an Iranian Christian leader from London who affirmed this view. He said:

The principal of Elam Bible College is Samuel Yeghnesar....He came up and stayed with us here. He addressed them the next day having seen my books. And he said *Look, this is ridiculous. You have one of the best known Bible teachers in the country here and you are not hearing any of it. It is time for you to go at least once a month so that you are with the church for the whole of the time. You want to be accepted, so you have to do something, too.* He was strong as they often are. And that set me thinking, because I know that many of them have poor English. Some of them have excellent English, others have English so that they can get by and some of them have poor English, especially more recent ones (:11).

In summary, the Iranian Christians were seen by the leadership as people who needed the church and were dependent upon its ministries. They were not seen as Christians with a major contribution to make to church life apart from evangelism.

Secondly, Cornerstone Church had a low view of the sacraments, which is typical for a church that follows the herald model (cf Dulles 2002:75). Holy Communion was understood

simply as a memorial meal, while baptism was considered to have a symbolic character only. In a leaflet entitled *Have You Been Baptised?* (Cornerstone undated) the meaning and purpose of baptism was described as ‘a symbol of our union with Christ in all that he has done for us’, as ‘a way of expressing publicly our commitment to Jesus Christ’, and as a symbol ‘that our sin is washed away.’ This individualistic understanding of baptism was more associated with personal salvation than with the membership of the body of Christ. The church’s publications on baptism said nothing about church membership. The opportunity for baptism to be seen as ‘the mark of belonging, the badge of membership’, as M. Green (1987:51) puts it, is missed.

Baptism was not seen as a trigger automatically leading to church membership at Cornerstone. To become a church member one had to apply for membership. The decision whether to accept someone into membership was the collective decision made by the congregation at the church’s regular business meetings. In contrast, the separate decision whether to baptise someone or not lay with pastoral staff alone (Prill 2005c:86). Baptism at Cornerstone Church was not seen as initiation into the Christian Church. In consequence, large numbers of refugees and others at Cornerstone did not hold church membership. This situation pertained despite the fact that many had become Christians through the church’s ministry and had been publicly baptised at Cornerstone.

Thirdly, the main objective of the leadership was not to create a multi-ethnic church but a cohesive church based on its main teachings. This was all the more surprising because Cornerstone presented itself as church with a strong international flavour (Prill 2005c:70&73). Thus the church logo consisted of a map of the world in the shape of a cornerstone. Church leaders reiterated the global dimension of Cornerstone by regularly mentioning the fact that people from over thirty different countries regularly worshipped there each Sunday. Similar statements were made about the existence of a Farsi-speaking congregation. This inclusivity was underlined at one of the Christmas carol services when international members were chosen for the bible readings. Furthermore, the church held special church lunches for international people. That Cornerstone Church was indeed international by many standards was confirmed by my interview partners. The church manager (Hampton 2005:9) called Cornerstone a culturally ‘fairly international church’ and the senior pastor commented:

So it is thrilling to me to see from China and all around the world Cornerstone being an international church. I mean I call it Cornerstone International sometimes. There are about 25 or 30 nations represented here. I said 25, but I am told it is more (P. Lewis 2005b:17).

Whether this is tokenism or not can be judged by the fact that the international and multi-ethnic composition of the church was not reflected in the leadership (Prill 2005c:11), an acid test of multicultural Christianity. The church elders were all white middle class British. This analysis suggests that the international character of the church was limited to the multi-ethnic composition of its congregation. This critique was confirmed by two Chinese church members who told me that in their opinion the church was not a truly international church as long as there were no internationals among the church leadership (Prill 2005c:73).

When leaders called Cornerstone an *international church* what they were actually claiming is that the church had a significant number of people from various countries and cultures among its members and regular worshippers. Despite its diversity the church was seen by the majority of leaders as a British church. When, the pastoral assistant, for example, spoke about the integration of the second generation of Iranians into Cornerstone she said: 'I'd like to see the children fit into a British church (V. Lewis 2005:10)'. The senior pastor emphasised that 'the vast majority of people in the church are Western, they are British (P. Lewis 2005b:17)' while one of the elders expressed the hope that the refugee children would one day become 'part of the British church (Simpson 2005:4)'. The assistant pastor said that he did not know what an international church must look like, since it was impossible in his view to cater for every ethnic group that came to the church (Webster 2005:12-13).

Finally, one of the elders, who had worked as a missionary in Central Asia, explained that his views on integration were influenced by the church growth school (Gribbin 2005:14). While he saw 'the limitations of a very ideologically prescriptive view of homogeneity' he argued in favour of a wider concept of homogeneity (:15). The idea of an ethnically heterogeneous church was rejected by him as neither biblical nor realistic. He said:

On the one hand I'm now a little bit suspicious of a kind of crude homogeneity, or a very simplistic, or very over simplistic homogeneity. On the other hand, I am a little bit suspicious as well of people who want to find a New Testament model that is heterogeneous and tell me that the church we must have in Nottingham in 2005 must reflect the full span of Nottingham communities. We do need to be open and inclusive and inviting, and that does mean that at all

sorts of points we have to make what might feel to us as individuals like compromise on different cultural points in order to include and welcome and draw in others but I don't actually believe that I, that Cornerstone, or any other fellowship particularly can on its own reflect – I mean that's making caricature of the opposite view (Gribbin 2005:15).

10.2.3.3.4 Pragmatic reasons: Assimilation in society and the role of the church

For some church leaders there was an intrinsic link between the integration of Iranian Christians into Cornerstone and their integration into British society. These leaders regarded cultural assimilation as inevitable. However, they believed that the church had an important and accelerating role to play in the process. While the pastoral assistant (V. Lewis 2005:6) said that the church 'has got to integrate them into the country' another of the church elders put it this way:

If they start getting involved in house groups and stuff then they really would integrate. But for those individuals that's probably leading them to help integrating into British society as a whole. Maybe they can integrate at work and they'll become more part of the British community. Like anyone integrating into the British community will become more like us. And I think that's already happening to an extent [with] some of the Iranians, the way they behave culturally (R. Lewis 2005b:14).

These views reflect the assimilation model that has dominated British integration policy for many years. In practice, a form of integration is achieved because Cornerstone church leadership insist on Iranian Christians joining the English-speaking congregation for the first half of their service before starting with their Farsi-speaking service. (Prill 2005c:42). The senior pastor confirmed this policy. He said:

Our way of assimilating, as it were, the Iranian group is to have them in the morning meeting from 10.30am to 11.15am. And then in the second half, our Persian friends can go to the Farsi meeting. But there are a number who don't bother to come to that – or maybe who are tired having worked late on a Sunday or just aren't good timekeepers (P. Lewis 2005b6).

The decision of the leadership to make permanent residency a membership criteria for Christian refugees adds weight to the view that their integration concept was influenced by secular integration policies. For Iranian asylum seekers and refugees the granting of church membership was contingent upon the granting of citizenship rights. By implication, the integration policy of the church was indirectly governed by the asylum policy of the British Government and felt culturally appropriate. Again, for Iranian Christians, this meant that

though they were part of the universal Church they were excluded from full participation in the life of the local church – comparable to the way they were excluded from certain civil rights.

10.2.3.3.5 Geo-political reason: Lack of awareness of globalisation

The theme of globalisation has been discussed by several national churches and church organisations in Britain over the last decade and has affected local church strategies in a number of ways. In 2002, for example, Churches Together in Britain and Ireland held a conference entitled *Globalisation and Mission* (CTBI undated). Cornerstone Church played no role in this debate because its leaders seemed ignorant of globalisation as a multidimensional transformation process that posed missiological and ecclesiological challenges for the church (Prill 2005c:87). Though they were aware of the growing number of refugees, asylum seekers, international students and professional people that came to their church, they seemed oblivious to the scale of global migration and its implications for the church. Thus, one elder told me:

[T]here has always been a reasonably high proportion of internationals in the church. But I would certainly agree that in the last five years and maybe the last ten years - I can't really define exactly when- the ratio of internationals has substantially increased (R. Lewis 2005b:12).

When I probed further and asked him if this had changed the church he answered:

To be honest I don't see it as a fundamental shift... There was much more focus on international students before, which is still very strong. The asylum side of it - that seems to have raised within the last 5 years as yet another ministry outreach. But if you go back 20 odd years, 20 or 25 years, there were a lot of Vietnamese in the same situation as the Iranians, Iraqis and all the other. There was reaching out to them. So it is not that new a subject. But what is probably very new is that you've got an Iranian church within the wider Cornerstone context (R. Lewis 2005b:13).

Other church leaders expressed significant uncertainty over both the nature and the future of forced immigration to the UK (Simpson 2005:8-9, Hampton 2005:6-7). Thus the church manager commented: 'Also, what I don't know is whether we have reached the end of the refugees coming into the UK or not. Whether or not it was a bubble' (Hampton 2005:7).

10.2.4 Refugee ministry team and integration

10.2.4.1 The future of the Iranian group

Like most of the church leaders, those directly involved with the Iranian Christians at Cornerstone Church saw the future of the Iranian group as remaining within Cornerstone (Brown 2005:9, J. Taylor 2005:9; R. Taylor 2005:8). While integration into Cornerstone was not regarded an easy enterprise the formation of a separate Iranian church was not considered the best option for the Iranian Christians either. One of my interview partners said: 'The easy thing in one sense would be to say 'You need a separate church. We are never going to breach this divide.' But I think the hard work is beginning to pay off' (Bush 2005:5). Speaking about the integration of Iranian children the youth minister put it this way:

When it comes to youth work, I want to see that Iranian children and young people are accepted as fully part of the group. I want to make sure that they are getting the same level of care and attention as everyone else is getting. And that's a challenge because there are, I guess, different expectations of lots of our children at Cornerstone who have grown up through the church (Brown 2005:9).

Further exploration showed the fact that there were different reasons why members of the refugee ministry team wanted the Iranian group to be part of Cornerstone Church. Firstly, like the church leaders interviewed above, some interview partners believed that a separate Iranian church would not be good for the second generation of Iranians and could be rejected by them. One interviewee said:

I think that historically we have seen that any foreign language church set up does well for the first generation and then struggles for the second and the third (Brown 2005:10).

Another member of the team told me:

But I think individuals will be – and definitely second generation, the children of the people that are settling here wouldn't want to be necessarily in a separate group. So I would like to see more integration, not less (Abbott 2005:11).

Secondly, it was argued that the presence of Iranian refugees gave church members the chance not only to serve them but also to learn from them (Bush 2005:21&25). One of my interview partners said that church members who had no contact with the Iranian group would miss out (Taylor 2005:2). She went on to say that the church could learn much more

from the Iranian Christians than vice versa (:4). A similar view was expressed by another interviewee. He told me: 'I think the Iranians have a lot to teach us just as we have a lot to learn from them' (Gordon 2005:2-3).

Thirdly, it was claimed that Iranian refugees experienced racial discrimination and that Cornerstone Church was a kind of safe place for them. One church member involved with the Iranian group said: 'I think we are a counter balance to some of the negative experiences that they might have' (J. Taylor 2005:4). She then went on to tell me about the isolation, especially of Iranian women and the bullying of Iranian children at school (:4). Another member of the ministry team shared similar observations (Gordon 2005). He spoke about prejudice and 'a lot of ill feeling about asylum seekers, about immigrants' in English society (:4). The idea of Cornerstone as a place where refugees could feel safe was expressed by a further interviewee. He said: 'Lots of Iranians come to church that aren't even Christians and probably never will be. They just love coming to church, 'cause they feel the community atmosphere and it's safe' (R. Taylor 2005:7).

The co-ordinator for the Iranian ministry stressed that the church was a place where Iranians could make friends with British people and thus overcome their isolation in British society (Howard 2005). He told me:

Another vital benefit of integration is friendship with English people. As I said earlier – ethnic communities don't tend to mix with English people whereas in church they do and they can. And that is amazing. It stops feelings of alienation, ghettoisation, being different. When you talk to refugees who aren't Christians they will all say they don't have English friends. But everybody who comes to church, even if their English is rubbish, they all say they have English friends. Maybe it's just one or two people in the church, but they've got it. They've got that link. They don't feel alienated. They know they can go somewhere, if they don't understand something. They can go and get help without asking for help. Because they are your friend they will do it (:10-11).

Last but not least, it was argued that a separate Iranian church, made up of Iranian asylum seekers and refugees, would put a significant amount of pressure on the 'time and energies and emotions' of its members (Abbott 2005:14).

10.2.4.2 Integration as a mutual process

While the majority of the church leaders understood integration first and foremost in terms of assimilation, those church members who were directly involved with the Iranian group saw it as a gradual and mutual process that required change and adjustment from all parties involved. At one point in his interview the youth minister emphasised the necessity of the church 'to adapt having our Iranian brothers and sisters within our congregation' (Brown 2005:2). Later on he spoke about the need of 'adaptation from all sides' (:3). The idea of integration as assimilation was explicitly rejected by the co-ordinator of the Iranian ministry at Cornerstone Church. Thus, he said:

But I think, as well, we need to understand what we mean by integration. I think we've got to be careful. When we say integration, do we mean they've got to become English and fit into how we do things or is it give and take between the two cultures - that we are going to learn something from them and they can contribute as well. I think if the church means by integration that they have got to become English then it will fail (Howard 2005:11).

Additionally, team members stressed that they did not wish the Iranian Christians to give up their culture or Christian identity (Howard 2005:17, J. Taylor 2005:9). There was a strong sense among some of the team members that the church should respect the Iranian Christians as equal partners (Prill 2005c:85). One of these team members put it this way:

[W]e as Christians should know that they are a valuable people and that they are loved by God and that they are not just refugees. And I really hope that Cornerstone and myself learn not to treat them as refugees but just as people in their own right. It's good to celebrate the fact that they are Iranian or they are this nationality or that nationality...(J. Taylor 2005:5).

Interestingly, it appeared that none of my interview partners had thought through the implications of the integration process. There were various degrees of uncertainty. While one member of the team spoke vaguely about the possibility of multi-language services (Brown 2005:4), another one hoped to see the Iranian group being built up with the help of bilingual pastoral staff (Bush 2005:27). However, there seemed to be overall agreement that the model of a Farsi-speaking Iranian congregation within the larger English-speaking church was the best, at least in the medium term (Abbott 2005:6; Bush 2005:27; Howard 2005:27, J. Taylor 2009:9).

10.2.4.3 Barriers towards integration

Similar to the church leaders quoted above, most members of the ministry team regarded language problems and cultural differences as integration barriers (Abbott 2005:15; Brown 2005:3; Bush 2005:13-14; Gordon 2005:4; J. Taylor 2005:1). One interview partner mentioned cultural differences in the understanding of leadership (Abbott 2005:15), while another spoke about the different role of men and women in Iranian and British culture (J. Taylor 2005:9).

For two team members, language was the main problem (Bush 2005:3; Gordon 2005:4). One of them spoke about his personal frustrations: that he was not able to communicate with Iranian Christians in their mother tongue (Bush 2005:3). His colleague pointed out that the lack of language prevented people from getting to know each other better (:3). It was argued that it would be difficult for the majority of Iranian Christians to follow the sermons preached in the main English-speaking service (Abbott 2005:6; Brown 2005:5; Bush 2005:17; R. Taylor 2005:6). The reason for this was not only their lack of English but also the sermon style. Thus, the sermons were described as 'pretty academic' (Bush 2005:17) or needed a very high 'level of English' in order to be understood fully (Brown 2005:5). This confirmed my own observations (Prill 2005c:84). I personally found most of the sermons delivered by the senior pastor intellectually demanding. Even English members of the congregation who I spoke to admitted that they had problems at times (:70).

Team members raised two further barriers to integration: ignorance and prejudice among church members (Abbott 2005:16; Gordon 2005:24; J. Taylor 2005:8,9). One interviewee said:

[T]here are people in the church who one minute seem quite normal charitable people. But then they've really got strong views and strong reservations about this ministry. So there is a whole process of learning going on: different rates for different people. But really the only way of removing these prejudices is by bringing people together (Gordon 2005:24-25).

Two other interviewees saw the church's membership policy for refugees as an inherent barrier to integration (Abbott 2005; Bush 2005). One saw the policy as discriminative (Abbott 2005:12-13), while the other believed it would engender a sense of exclusion amongst refugees (Bush 2005:23). It was the conviction of the former that 'there should be no difference

irrespective of people's status in this country' (Abbott 2005:13). The other interviewee claimed the following about the membership process:

This is something I really had to challenge the elders on because we had a situation where we were happy to baptise people, we were happy to go to their houses and eat with them, we are happy for them to have their own service – everything in the church except join our membership roll. There were some inbuilt reservations about what if an ethnic group formed a lobby group, who then could speak together and vote together in the church meeting against the will of the majority and things like that. There are probably deep seated fears in a lot of people (Bush 2005:22).

Finally, it was mentioned that the Farsi-speaking ministry was only one ministry out of many, and that the church leadership had different priorities (Bush 2005:18-19). The size and complexity of the church and the leadership task inhibited the integration of Iranian refugees. The leader of the refugee ministry team put it this way:

It is a big church. Not everyone knows the people who are asylum seekers. They don't know where they are coming from and whatever else....Some people think it is a nice idea but they are too busy, and there is the support of prayer for individuals. But some of it is seen as that is just another ministry in the church and that appeals to some people, but it doesn't affect me personally (Abbott 2005:16).

10.2.4.4 Steps towards integration

Most team members took the view that personal contacts and friendships between Iranian and non-Iranian Christians were crucial for the integration process (Abbott 2005:6,16; Bush 2005:6; Gordon 2005:4-5; J. Taylor 2005:7). It was argued that house groups optimised the opportunity for Iranian and non-Iranian Christians to meet and to get to know each other (Bush 2005:17; Taylor 2005:7). Additionally, the importance of social events, such as church meals was stressed (Bush 2005:22; Howard 2005:22). Thus, the co-ordinator of the Iranian ministry said the following during a focus group interview:

I don't know if Alan is aware of this, actually, but a few weeks ago I sat down with Spencer, our church manager, and looked at what opportunities we've got in the church calendar this year to push forward integration. I don't know how far it's gone yet, but Spencer has made several notes in the yearly planner and says that he is going to push events to encourage integration - just encourage people mixing, getting to know each other and breaking down those initial fears, [and by so doing] realising, if somebody doesn't have an English accent, who doesn't speak perfect English, can understand you very well and can express themselves quite well. Maybe not in the

traditional way, but they can...And so it's things like church hospitality times or church meals (Howard 2005:21-22).

One team member said that furthering friendships was more important than having common worship services (Gordon 2005:4-5), whereas the leader of the refugee ministry pleaded for an active participation of Christian refugees in the main English-speaking services (Abbott 2005:11). She also told me that refugees should be encouraged to use their gifts and to get involved in the various ministries at Cornerstone Church (:11).

Two interview partners emphasised the mutuality of integration: that these steps towards integration were steps to be taken by both refugees and non-refugees (Abbott 2005; Gordon 2005). One interviewee said that the church had to step 'outside its comfort zone' (Gordon 2005:24). Another one stressed the importance of training sessions for church members. She said:

I know people that [when they] have got involved even on a nominal level it has definitely changed their attitudes and I've seen those people – even if they've come just for one training session – I've then seen them actually go up and talk to people and make friendships. And I think that's one of the things what it's all about (Abbott 2005:16).

10.2.4.5 Underlying convictions and personal experience

The stark differences in interpreting integration at different management levels within Cornerstone appeared to be both systemic and theological. Systemic, because senior leaders based their policy decision on what they understood to be the needs of the whole, whereas the refugee ministry team were primarily concerned with the needs of their inter-face group. But, more fundamentally, management differences were theological because they sprang from underlying differences in missiological and ecclesiological convictions.

10.2.4.5.1 Missiological convictions: A contextual, holistic and incarnational ministry

At the start of my observations it quickly became apparent that most church members involved with Iranian refugees had an understanding of refugee ministry that was contextual, holistic and incarnational (Prill 2005c:33). Thus, for example, team members spoke a lot about the needs of the refugees and asylum seekers who were linked with Cornerstone Church (:33).

The importance of meeting people's needs was a recurrent interview theme. The team leader told me about the beginning of the ministry:

[O]ne of the needs that was actually highlighted by the potential receiving organisations in Nottingham was the need for clothing and footwear and things for people. And so she organised a clothing drive, and actually, from what she'd seen on her short-term team [visit] with me, and discussed it with me, she actually did a presentation and a very successful appeal, and that actually started up the first Christian ministry to asylum seekers in Nottingham (Abbott 2005:2-3).

She went on to say that this needs-based understanding of ministry was still to be found among the team. Thus, she described the team with the following words: 'There is a small core group that have active daily/weekly involvement with people and who feel very passionate about integration, about the needs, the issues that people have' (Abbott 2005:15-16). The youth minister outlined his understanding of the church's mission as follows:

I guess that whoever comes through the doors we have a commitment to reach out [to] with the gospel. I guess that's meeting people's spiritual needs, meeting people's physical needs, emotional needs, medical needs etc. And also, quite in a community where the church family can come together to worship God and to carry one another and to – I guess – bear one another up (Brown 2005:1).

In other words, the youth minister perceived mission not only as contextual but holistic. The holistic character of ministry was transparent (Prill 2005c:33). While evangelism, based on Gospel proclamation, was pivotal, it was only one dimension of ministry. Demonstrating God's love in Christian service required action of many kinds: finding accommodation for Iranian refugees, helping them with transport, offering counselling, teaching them English, preparing them for court cases, acting as witnesses in court and supporting Iranian children with their homework. The following comments of a team member typify this holistic approach:

[P]art of it was very much practical help. There was, in those times, a lot of form-filling. At this stage the people we were involved with their cases [which] were still on-going. Rob actually helped in court with quite a few cases giving testimony. I remember taking my laptop to two or three evenings and helping writing down people's testimonies. So we had someone giving his testimony in Farsi, someone translating that into English, and I was writing that into good English. That happened a few times... Yes, the practical help: [providing] furniture, trying to arrange moving houses, if someone needed lifts, and all these kinds of things (R. Taylor 2005:2-3).

Incarnational dimension to the ministry included team members willing to open up their homes to Iranian refugees who had no accommodation, sometimes allowing them to stay with them for several months (Prill 2005c:33). Two team members were in the process of learning to speak Farsi, one having acquired a high level of competence (Prill 2005c:86). He told me that learning Farsi was a time-consuming, difficult and slow process, but one worth doing (Howard 2005:8). He described the merits of doing this in the following terms:

I think it has built a bridge. People are very proud, very happy and they are so willing to help me and they are very kind. It is very interesting, actually, speaking to the Iranians in church in Persian. I feel far more comfortable than speaking to Iranians outside church. Those inside church I feel like it's my family. I can make mistakes; it doesn't matter, whereas outside I'm very shy (:8-9).

Confirmation that learning Farsi had been helpful for the integration process was underlined by two other team members (Bush 2005:5), and by one of the Iranian Christians (Amir 2005:10).

10.2.4.5.2 Ecclesiological convictions: Church as the body of Christ

Strong ecclesiological definitions underpinned the work of the refugee ministry team. They especially stressed the importance of the unity of the Christian Church. Two of them used the Pauline picture of the Church as the body of Christ (Bush 2005:23; Gordon 2005:2&28). One of them said: 'The illustration of the body in the New Testament is quite instructive. I think we are part of one body and it might take a bit more integration' (Gordon 2005:2). The other interviewee stressed the inclusivity of the Christian church: 'What's the big deal? They [the Iranian Christians] are part of the body of Christ. They are part of our church. We need to embrace them totally' (Bush 2005:23).

The youth minister (Brown 2005:1&8) argued that 'God isn't just the God of the British' and that the Iranian refugees were 'as much part of Cornerstone as any other member.' Finally, it was the leader of the refugee ministry team who emphasised the link between unity and diversity when she said:

My focus has always been integration and I feel that as believers we have unity and fellowship irrespective of our culture or our background, our original belief systems and that we should be

able to accept and learn and grow, and the diversity is actually healthy and makes being a believer in a church a lot more exciting and more well rounded as a community (Abbott 2005:10).

This reasoning led some team members to question the notion of a uni-cultural church (Brown 2005:8; Gordon 2005:2-3; Howard 2005:12). The co-ordinator of the Iranian ministry argued that the biblical model of church was multi-ethnic and this, he believed, had implications for the integration of refugees into the local church (Howard 2005). He said:

I think as well, if we are an evangelical church/a Bible believing church, the biblical precedent is for multi-ethnic churches. I think [that] for that reason alone the church should do it. If we are a Bible believing church, we can't pick which bits of the Bible we believe. So I think you are doing vitally important work in terms of analysing the text/analysing the Bible closely and seeing what it says – because if the Bible is saying, or just implying - it's just taking it for granted that the church is multi-ethnic. And if the first-century church did have to work through problems of integration and working together, then it is vital for us to be doing it if we are a Bible believing church (Howard 2005:11-12).

10.2.4.5.3 Personal experience: A steep learning curve

The Annual Church Report of 2004 included a statement from a Cornerstone member about her experience of working with Spanish-speaking refugees: 'The group has been an encouraging one and we are often struck by the example of faith and prayer of our friends in the midst of difficult circumstances' (Cornerstone 2005b:27). Similar views were expressed by members of the refugee team involved with the Iranian group. They argued that their involvement had changed their perspectives and that they had personally benefited from this ministry (Bush 2005:12; Howard 2005:10; J. Taylor 2005:6; R. Taylor 2005:5). One interviewee admitted that she had been rather ignorant and cynical about refugees and asylum seekers before she met members of the Iranian group at Cornerstone (J. Taylor 2005:8). Several interview partners said they had come to regard Iranian Christians as Christian role models: that they had inspired, and encouraged them in their own discipleship (Brown 2005:6-7; Howard 2005:11; J. Taylor 2005:2-3; R. Taylor 2005:4). When being asked what it meant to him to be involved with Iranian Christians one team member said:

To me the very big feeling early on was a feeling of gratitude, I suppose, for what I have and the things I have taken for granted. These people had to escape their country and they've come here with absolutely nothing. And yet on the Sunday morning [they] would still be upstairs praising God for being gracious to them. And here we are in our comfortable homes, with comfortable jobs, everything, our family around us and we sometimes aren't as gracious. And that was a real

blessing to me. Yeah, it really struck home, and spiritually it spoke to me that if you got Jesus and nothing else that's enough (R. Taylor 2005:3).

He then went on to say that contact with Iranian refugees had helped him to understand the universal character of the church better and had led him to experience God in a new way. He told me:

I spent most of my time in this country. It just reminds me that God is not a God of the West. He's not an English God. He's a God of the whole world. Iran is somewhere that in this country no one knows about, really. So it's great to know that he's just as relevant to Iranians of Muslim background. Yes, for me personally, those are the two main things in terms of learning how blessed I've been and to appreciate God in a new way. It just opened my eyes to different cultures, different people. And you kind of realise how we have our own ways, as well (R. Taylor 2005:3).

The impact upon the youth minister was similar (Brown 2005). He was particularly struck by the way the Iranian Christians were coping with hardships and difficulties in a Christ-like manner:

I think, hearing how they live as a Christian with the pressures that they [are] face[ed] with, the apparent, well, not even apparent, with the injustice that [they face from] our legal system or how it comes across: as it [transpires] one can be accepted [or] one can be rejected [even] though their cases are identical. And seeing and observing how they respond to that is a testimony, I guess, to their faith. And I personally have never been through half of what they have been through. Their testimonies, their stories, their life experiences in another country, and in a very difficult country, are something which perhaps we will never go through. So when we talk about being a Christian and persevering in spite of suffering, and pressing on towards the goal, and all those different sorts of things, I think that we can see in how they are living, how that works out in practice, because we don't have that same level of – persecution is probably the wrong word. Hm! We don't have that level of difficulty, I don't think. We have different difficulties, obviously, but not the same. We don't have to worry from day to day of being evicted from our houses for example (:6-7).

Another team member confirmed how refreshing it was for him to worship and pray together with Iranian Christians (Bush 2005:18). The co-ordinator of the Iranian ministry (Howard 2005:11) told me that the ministry had had an enormous influence on his 'own discipleship and spiritual development'. It had provoked him to reflect upon his own behaviour in his own culture:

Mixing with ethnic minorities in Britain has really shown me the sins inherent in my own culture. Not as I can see all of them, but a lot has been really highlighted to me. Sin in my own culture that I would never have conceived or seen without mixing with other cultures. That has been a great benefit to me and my own spiritual walk (:11).

Team members cited other refugee attributes: their warm hospitality (Bush 2005:7; J. Taylor 2005:1; R. Taylor 2005:3), their humility (J. Taylor 2005:5) and their generosity (:6), all of which challenged standard British church culture.

10.2.5 Refugees and integration

10.2.5.1 The future: Integration rather than separation

Despite the spectrum of attitudes expressed at Cornerstone by its members about the Farsi-speaking group, the majority of Iranian Christians saw themselves as part of Cornerstone Church (Prill 2005c:19&20). This observation was confirmed by most interviewees. A recurrent theme was their strong sense of belonging (Amir 2005:1; Davoud 2005:9; Emanuel 2005:3). They strictly rejected the notion of a separate Iranian church (Emanuel 2005:4; Hoshang 2005:6). They gave a variety of reasons why they saw the future of their group within the context of Cornerstone Church as a whole.

The most frequently mentioned argument was a theological one. Thus, several interviewees emphasised the importance of the unity of the Christian Church. One Iranian interviewee said that Iranian and English Christians were ‘the same in Jesus’ body’ and that they were ‘children of God’ who needed to grow together (Amir 2005:2&5). Another interview partner put it this way: ‘The idea of having a separate church is not a good thing for us. We must support each other – emotionally and with everything. Because when we come to the cross we become brothers and sisters’ (Omid 2005:7). Another interviewee mentioned the concept of *church as the family of God*:

All Christians together form the family of God. We are all the same. Race and language do not really separate us. It’s not a good thing to have a separate church. We should all be together in one church. I believe that we Iranians should be integrated into Cornerstone. There shouldn’t be an Iranian church, a German church or an English church. We are all one in Christ. We all have the same aim. Our aim is Jesus (Hoshang 2005:2).

Secondly, it was argued that the church had become a surrogate family since they were separated from their Iranian birth families (Amir 2005:3, Zarah 2005). An Iranian woman put it this way:

I thank God that he led us to Cornerstone. The church gave us hope for the future. We have a lot of difficulties here, but they gave us hope for the future to live in this country...We accept them like a family because we have no family here. Our families live in our country and they are a good family for us here. They have a lot of love for us (Zarah 2005:8).

Another Iranian refugee pointed out how important the church had been to him as a place for establishing friendships with non-Iranians (Emanuel 2005:5). He said it was almost impossible to meet and to get to know British people outside the church. The same interviewee claimed that the support which the Iranian Christians were receiving from Cornerstone Church strengthened their self-worth and dignity:

It shows to Iranians in Nottingham [that] we are important [because]we belong to a big church in Nottingham. That's very important to us. If someone came to the church for the first time, he would see that they invested time and money for the Iranians, and respected the culture and language (Emanuel 2005:4).

The conviction that the church was helping Iranian Christians to integrate into a society that was prejudiced against refugees was shared by another Iranian Christian. In his view Cornerstone played an important role in the integration of Iranian refugees into British society (Omid 2005). He said:

I think it is really, really good to integrate with English people. They have to help us. If they don't help we are not gonna do that. Everything that most people know about Iranians they get from TV. They think all Iranians are Muslims, they are different, they are suicide bombers. But when they get to know us they really like us, they feel for us (:7).

Interviewees addressed the sensitive issue of future change. They recognised that the children in the group would find it difficult to attend a purely Iranian church as their command of English was already better than their Farsi (Amir 2005:4; Davoud 2005:5). My own observations confirmed this trend. Very often Iranian parents would speak to their children in Farsi and the children would answer them in English (Prill 2005c:16). A number of Iranians feared that their children could lose their mother tongue and their links with Iranian culture (Prill 2005c:19). As a preventive measure the Iranian group decided to set up a Persian Saturday School with the help of Cornerstone Church.

Several interview partners stressed how important personal friendships with church members were as a step towards their church integration (Davoud 2005:2; Emanuel 2005:5;

Mansour 2005:7). One Iranian Christian told me that his friendship with a member of Cornerstone Church had been instrumental for him to come along to Cornerstone in the first place. He said:

In one church there was a club. It was a coffee club for refugees. I found a friend from America. His name is Andy. And Andy introduced me to Cornerstone Church and I went to Cornerstone Church. I joined the Church and I found a lot of Iranians there (Davoud 2005:1-2).

Another Iranian Christian said how thankful he was for the commitment of members of the refugee team (Amir 2005:10). He identified the team member who was learning Farsi as being of particular help, not least because of his enhanced ability to communicate.

10.2.5.2 Integration: Adjustment and change

While there was widespread agreement among Iranian Christians on the need to be part of Cornerstone Church, there were differences of opinion on the best way to manage integration. Some Iranians proposed assimilation. While they saw the necessity of a separate Iranian service in the short term, they wanted to see the Iranian group worshipping together with the main congregation in the longer term. Thus, they welcomed the church leaders' suggestion of inviting Iranian Christians to stay in the main service once a month and to give them a translation of the sermon. Furthermore, they vehemently rejected the idea of calling an Iranian pastor for the Farsi-speaking group at Cornerstone. Two of them made the following statements:

No, I don't agree with having an Iranian pastor. It's not necessary to have an Iranian pastor. A pastor for the Iranian group could be English or of any nationality (Hoshang 2005:5).

A pastor doesn't have to be Iranian. Sometimes Iranians make more problems than other people. Iranians who come here want to know more about English culture. In my opinion a pastor for the Iranian group should be an English person. He can help them. And they respect English more than other Iranians (Omid 2005:5)

These views appear to have been motivated by the fear that an Iranian pastor could lead the group into a separate Iranian church (Prill 2005c:84).

Of the Iranians who favoured assimilation some appeared convinced that this was the best option and the best way forward, while others were less convinced but believed they had no choice. One interview partner expressed his diffidence in these terms: 'We live in this

country and it was our choice and we must accept some English culture. Maybe English culture is not good for us, but we live here and we must accept it' (Amir 2005:4). Other members of the Iranian group defined integration as a mutual process that demanded change and adjustment on all sides. For one of my interview partners the crucial question was: '[H]ow much do English people want to integrate?' (Nima 2005:8). He pointed out that Cornerstone's leadership needed to adjust to the changing situation in a number of ways. He suggested a wider use of Persian in the church (:7) and a more direct contact between church leaders and the Iranian group. He said:

They love these guys. They are the leaders. But they shouldn't feel like second class citizens. They should feel the closeness. I mean it's a matter of time and of organisation. ...Pastoral care is very important. How much time do we spend with international students?...And how much time do we spend with the Iranians? Pastors and elders have a huge responsibility for pastoral care (Nima 2005:9).

The feeling of being treated as second class Christians was also expressed by another Iranian Christian when he complained to me that the weekly Iranian bible studies, in contrast to all other Cornerstone house group meetings, were not mentioned in the church's notice sheet (Emanuel 2005:6).

Another interviewee saw the status of the Iranians as important. He suggested that in the event of a pastor being called for the Iranian group he or she should be part of the Cornerstone Church eldership (Nima 2005:8-9). Only full recognition of this nature would demonstrate that the Iranian group was truly a part of the church and had parity with others.

10.2.5.3 Integration barriers

Iranian Christians were one with church leaders and members of the refugee ministry team in seeing language and cultural difference as significant barriers to integration, both into the church and into society at large (Davoud 2005:3; Hoshang 2005:2). One interviewee acknowledged that their lack of English would make communication with British Christians in the church difficult (Davoud 2005:3). Another stated that the onus was upon Iranian Christians to overcome these barriers: 'We must learn more about English culture, English customs, and of course the English language' (Hoshang 2005:4). The same interview partner

identified church racism as a barrier to integration (Hoshang 2005). While he found most people at Cornerstone Church very supportive he had also experienced rejection. He told me:

We try to integrate and they have to help us. They need to show interest in us, speak to us or mix with us. I think there are some people here at Cornerstone who are racists. But I try not to think about them. But there are lots of good people in the church as well (:6).

When I probed further and asked why he thought that some people were racists, he answered: 'Because they don't come to us, they are not warm, they are not friendly to us' (Hoshang 2005:6). Another interviewee disagreed with this view. He denied that there was racism in the church but agreed that there were cultural differences. He said:

I think the English are not racists. They are reserved, they are not racists. That's my opinion. They look at us, and we look different. They are scared of us sometimes. And we are scared of them. We have to break down this wall (Omid 2005:7).

Unsurprisingly, those who regarded integration as a mutual process emphasised the role of the church in overcoming cultural barriers. The cultural norms for Cornerstone may not always be appropriate for Iranian Christians. A case in point is the formality of inviting church members and regular visitors to approach pastoral staff if they want to get involved in a specific ministry (Prill 2005c:22). This open invitation is endorsed by the weekly circulation of a leaflet entitled 'How to serve at Cornerstone'. The impersonal advertising of certain *church jobs* appeared culturally inappropriate to one of my interviewees:

You know Iranians don't ask you. They want to be asked. It's a very different culture. It's not like asking people 'Who wants to help with tea and coffee?' It's like 'Reza, you have to help the church. You have to come and do the coffee!' Not, of course, in a pushy way, but in a wise way, because you know you have to have a good understanding of the culture. If you go to an Iranian church it doesn't matter if you serve coffee or preach as long as you do that (Nima 2005:6).

That this practice of open invitation has continued for as long as Iranian Christians have been part of Cornerstone Church may indicate a lack of cultural awareness amongst the leadership or a failure to consult.

The same cultural insensitivity was shown over membership. On the surface the Iranian group appeared content with the membership status quo (Prill 2005c:19), but when I probed further I discovered that some interviewees were frustrated by barriers to church membership. They pointed out that admission to church membership was important to Iranian Christians

at Cornerstone. One of them said: 'Of course membership of a church is different from membership of a bingo club or a political party that you support' (Nima 2005:2). He went on to claim that membership would increase Iranian commitment to the church (Nima 2005:3).

The same view was expressed by another interviewee, when he said:

In my opinion this is really, really important for Iranian people, because they need to know what's going on in church, and they can ask questions and they don't feel separated. When they become members they feel the church is their home [and] they feel they are serving God. In the Iranian group they don't know a lot about the English church. They support each other and go out to evangelise other Iranians, but they don't serve the church. They want to help. It's part of our Iranian culture (Omid 2005:3).

Another interview partner expressed his disappointment about the church's unwillingness to invite Iranian Christians into membership. He told me: 'I would like to become a member as well. But nobody has asked us. Nobody has asked us to become a member or to come to the members' meetings' (Hoshang 2005:3-4). Some Iranian Christians felt ostracised by the church's membership policy.

10.2.6 Summary: Negative and positive issues

This study has shown that there was a widespread desire among church leaders, refugees, and members of the refugee ministry team to see the Iranian group being fully integrated into Cornerstone Church. In addition, it has shown that there was general agreement that a *congregation within a congregation* approach was for the benefit of Iranian Christians. However, it has also shown that a significant number of issues remain which have the potential to hamper or even to jeopardise the integration of Iranian refugees and asylum seekers. These issues include:

- Belief in assimilation
- Belief in homogeneity
- Ignorance of globalisation
- Ignorance of paradigm shift in mission
- Conversionist approach to mission
- Low view of church

- Exclusion from membership
- Reactive leadership style
- Pastoral pragmatism and lack of theological reflection
- Unwillingness to change
- Anxieties
- Lack of cultural sensitivity
- Indifference
- Stereotyping
- Language barriers

In spite of the negative potential of these complex issues to impede integration, this study has also shown that there are a range of positive factors which could lead to integration success.

These factors include the following:

- Belief in integration as a process of mutual change, adaptation, and learning
- Belief in the unity of the church
- Belief in the multi-ethnic church as the New Testament standard model of church
- A contextual, holistic and incarnational approach to mission, which includes cultural sensitivity, language learning, hospitality etc.
- Experience of ministry to and with Christian refugees as a spiritually enriching process

10.3 The life and mission of minority ethnic churches – a comparative case study

10.3.1 Methodology

10.3.1.1 Research sites and period

Two minority ethnic churches have been selected in this comparative case study: the German Lutheran Congregation Nottingham and the Nottingham Chinese Christian Church. They were chosen for four main reasons. Firstly, each church had a significant number of migrants among its founder members. Secondly, both churches had been founded in the second half of the 20th century. Thirdly, their congregations had a completely different ethnocultural background from each other. Fourthly, both churches belonged to contrasting theological and denominational traditions. These similarities and differences made it possible to carry out cross-cultural research and to establish common and differentiating arguments for the formation of minority ethnic churches (cf. Bryman 2004:55). My research at both churches took place over a period of twelve months, from January to December 2005.

10.3.1.2 Pre-study and initial research concept

As part of the process of developing an initial research concept I analysed the constitution of the German Lutheran Congregation Nottingham (GLCN 1997) together with a report on the future of the German-speaking Lutheran congregations in Great Britain (ESGB 1999). In addition, I interviewed the senior pastor of the German Lutheran Congregation Nottingham (von Gottberg 2004) about his experience as a minister of a minority ethnic church. The interview was in a conversational style and was not taped. Instead, I took notes and analysed these straight after the interview. Based on this pre-study I devised five indicators for predicting the potential of a minority ethnic church in fulfilling its mission. These indicators are:

- the extent to which it offers members of its own ethnic group the opportunity to worship, to pray and to have Christian fellowship in their mother tongue
- the extent to which it offers pastoral care to members of its own ethnic group in their mother tongue
- the extent to which it offers worship services and teaching in a certain theological tradition, that cannot be found in indigenous churches
- the extent to which it acts as a cultural oasis for its members
- the extent to which it acts as an ambassador in relationship to other indigenous churches and the dominant ethnic group in society

10.3.1.3. Research methods

Over a period of twelve months I spent 85 hours at the Nottingham Chinese Christian Church. As a part-time Assistant Pastor of the German Lutheran Churches in the English Midlands I was able to combine my research activities in this church with my day-to-day ministry. My personal friendship with one of the ministers of the Chinese Church enabled access to the Chinese Church congregations and participation in the ministry of the church: between January and December 2005 I preached at two English-speaking services and three combined English-Cantonese services. In addition, I took part in prayer meetings, theological seminars, a mentoring group for students, and socials such as Agape meals and a Chinese New Year celebration. Furthermore, I was the main speaker at a weekend retreat for English-speaking Chinese students and young professionals.

During my research at both churches I took notes based on my observations. I usually avoided writing my notes in the presence of other people since this would have been rude or disrespectful and culturally inappropriate (cf. Esterberg 2002:73). Field notes were recorded in a small notebook and comprised of key words or quotes. These cryptic notes were the basis for the amplified version of my observations which I recorded in my research journal.

As with Cornerstone, I interviewed members of the leadership of both churches. To ensure cross-case comparability I chose to use in-depth semi-structured interviews. For these interviews I prepared an interview guide. This interview guide was roughly based on the five indicators that I had devised (see above). The interview guide contained a number of issues and questions which I addressed during the interviews. The interview process itself was very flexible. In almost all cases I altered the sequence of questions and seized the opportunity to probe for more information. Altogether I interviewed fourteen church members with leadership roles. To qualify as interviewees, candidates had to be either a member of the church council or had to have some sort of leadership function in the church, such as fellowship group co-ordinators. All interviews were recorded with the help of a mini-disc player and transcribed verbatim. All my interview partners gave their consent for our dialogue to be recorded (cf. Fielding & Thomas 2003:136; Esterberg 2002:45).

Again, as with Cornerstone, I observed members of both churches and engaged in conversations with them. However, in contrast to my research at Cornerstone, where my role was that of an observer-as-participant, my role at the two minority ethnic churches must be classified as participant-as-observer (cf. Bryman 2004:301). At both of these minority ethnic churches I took an active part in both social and religious activities and most members were aware of my research.

The same analysis of documents took place in these two churches as at Cornerstone. They included the church constitutions of both churches, an annual report of the German Lutheran Congregation, a church mission statement and an information leaflet on the Chinese Church, as well as a review report on the Chinese Church prepared by Simon and Iris Ng (Ng & Ng 2005), two external consultants who visited the church in June 2005.

10.3.1.4 Data analysis

In order to find answers to my general research questions in this section I used the same grounded theory analysis approach that I applied to my research at Cornerstone Church, described above. I analysed not only the field notes that I had taken but also 7.5 hours of

transcribed semi-structured interviews with leaders of both churches by using open, axial, and selective coding.

In the open coding stage I went through my data line by line. As a result of this I generated a huge number of codes. Some of these codes were unrelated to my general research questions, while others were more relevant and provocative. Common themes or categories began to emerge in the early stages of transcript and field notes analysis. Based on index card data, which contained the relevant statements or phrases from interviews or my field journal, I identified those themes that occurred with greater frequency (cf. Esterberg 2002:159). These key themes or categories were codes such as *identity*, *racial background*, *the difficulty to make friends with English people* or *commitment to evangelism*.

In the second coding stage I went through the interview transcripts and field notes again, but this time I concentrated on the key categories which had emerged in the open coding process (cf. Fielding 2003:247). At this stage I was able to form clusters of similar categories. For example, I grouped categories such as *racial barriers*, *racial attacks* and *lack of tolerance* together into a new inclusive category which I labelled *racial discrimination*. Other categories I had to subdivide. Thus, I split the category *Chinese culture* into *Chinese language* and *Chinese values*.

In the selective coding stage I reviewed the categories that had evolved to this point. I scrutinised them for core categories around which the other categories could coalesce (cf. Bryman 2004:402). On this basis I selected two core categories: *The Motive of Church Attendance* and *The Challenge of Minority Ethnic Churches*. Next, I constructed several typologies. It became apparent from these typologies that different people had different motives for attending both the German Lutheran Congregation Nottingham and the Nottingham Chinese Christian Church. There were those, for example, for whom the opportunity to speak and worship in the German or the Chinese language was crucial, while for others sociological factors were paramount, such as racial discrimination. It became apparent that there were certain types of problems and challenges that both churches had in

common. Some of these problems were theological problems whereas others were pragmatic and primarily connected with church location.

10.3.1.5 Quality of research

To verify the quality of this new research data I applied the same techniques and processes as I had to the refugee ministry research project above: triangulation, respondent validation and an extensive description of the two research sites, as well as external auditing.

In order to enhance the internal validity of my findings I engaged in two tasks: I observed members and regular worshippers of the German Lutheran Congregation Nottingham and the Nottingham Chinese Christian Church and interviewed leaders of both churches. Additionally, I produced a report on the findings of my research (see appendix) which was given to my interview partners for comment. The response I received assured me that my findings were correct. None of the respondents suggested that I had failed to understand them or had severely misinterpreted their church based behaviour. One respondent (Cheung 2006) provided me with additional information about the Chinese Church. He seized the opportunity to amplify a statement that he had made during his interview.

As with my research at Cornerstone Church, I produced an extensive analytical and theological description of both churches to establish external validity (see 10.3.2). Thus, I described the history, the mission, the life and the structure of both minority ethnic churches in detail.

Finally, I asked Mr David Howard to conduct the same audit with two minority ethnic churches as he had with the Cornerstone Church. His auditing report can be found in the appendix of this thesis.

10.3.2 The German Lutheran Congregation Nottingham and the Nottingham Chinese Christian Church – an analytical and theological description

10.3.2.1 Historical background

The Lutheran Church was the first church to grow out of the Reformation movement of the 16th century (ELCE undated). The Reformation was initiated by Martin Luther's 95 theses published in 1517. Its theological claims spread rapidly throughout Europe, influenced the direction of the church in England during the reign of Henry VIII and gave rise to the Protestant Reformation in England. Lutherans have worshipped in England for more than 300 years (Lewent 2005:8). The first official congregation of German and Scandinavian Lutherans was founded in London in 1669. German Lutheran church life began in the Midlands in the city of Leicester in 1948 and was started by German immigrants (Baermann 1975:84).

The Nottingham German Lutheran Congregation was officially founded, with a congregation of about 20 people, three years later in November 1951 (Rawlins 2001:5). Most of the founding members were ex-prisoners of war, nursing staff in the local hospitals, au pair girls or students (:3). Many of them were displaced persons or refugees from the former Eastern provinces of Germany, which after World War II had become part of Poland or the Soviet Union respectively. Initially the church was served by a German pastor who was based in Hull, Yorkshire (:5). In 1961 responsibility was transferred to a pastor who lived in Leicester. During this time the congregation met for its services in the hall of St Nicholas' Church, an Anglican inner-city church, and later in the premises of Castle Gate Congregational Church, likewise situated in the city centre of Nottingham. In 1967 the German Lutheran Congregation purchased its own church building, a former Methodist chapel erected in 1907 and used by the Methodist Church for almost sixty years (:14). In 1969 a church hall and a flat to accommodate the senior pastor and his family were added.

The beginnings of the Nottingham Chinese Christian Church can be traced back to 1971 when English-speaking Chinese university students and nurses, mainly from Hong Kong, Malaysia and Singapore, formed a bible study group in Nottingham (Vong 2005:1). The group was led by a pastor affiliated to the Chinese Overseas Christian Mission. In the late 1970s

members of the group attended a mission conference at which they were moved by the fact that there were many non-English speaking Chinese living in Nottingham for whom there was no church. They felt called to reach out to these people with a view to establishing a church and in consequence began using Cantonese instead of English as the main language in their meetings (:2). A few years later the Cantonese service became bilingual, offering both English and Cantonese in order to meet the dual needs of worshippers. In 1994 the church constitution was changed and with it the Nottingham Chinese Christian Fellowship became the Nottingham Chinese Christian Church (Ng & Ng 2005:3).

10.3.2.2 Affiliations

The German Lutheran Congregation Nottingham is a member church of the German-speaking Synod of Lutheran, Reformed and United Congregations in Great Britain (GLCN 1997:1). Together with congregations in Birmingham, Coventry, Leicester, Derby and Lincoln it forms the Midlands district of the German-speaking Synod (:1). The German-speaking Synod combines twenty-two congregations with 1,759 members and ten ordained ministers in England, Wales and Scotland (Brierley 2005b:9.19). The Synod has close links with the Protestant Church in Germany, Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, and the Church of England (Lewent 2005:13-14). The Nottingham congregation is a member of Churches Together in Nottinghamshire & Derbyshire (von Gottberg 2004).

In contrast to the German Lutheran Congregation, the Nottingham Chinese Christian Church is an independent inter-denominational church (Ng & Ng 2005:1). The church is affiliated to the Evangelical Alliance and the Chinese Overseas Christian Mission. The latter is a Christian mission agency which aims to bring 'the gospel to the Chinese scattered over Europe through pioneering evangelism, church planting, training and literature work' (COCM 2002).

10.3.2.3 Church structures and finances

The church structures of the German-speaking Synod of Lutheran, Reformed and United Congregations in Great Britain are based on federal principles at all levels (cf. Bindemann 2005:30-31). Each congregation is responsible for Christian life in its own area, while the districts and the Synod carry out joint tasks with which their members have entrusted them. Every congregation has its own church council which has a wide remit in managing the affairs of the church. The church council of the German Lutheran Congregation Nottingham consists of eight members and meets every other month (von Gottberg 2004). Council members are elected for a period of four years, and re-election is possible.

There are currently two ministers serving the Midlands district; a senior pastor who is based in Birmingham and an assistant pastor who works part-time for the church district and serves part-time as Lutheran & International Chaplain at the University of Nottingham (von Gottberg 2004). Both ministers are ordained in the Protestant Church in Germany, and they are both employed by the Synod. The senior pastor is an ex-officio member of the church council (GLCN 1997:3). Seventy per cent of the remuneration of the senior pastor, who has been seconded to England for a period of six years, comes from the church in Germany while the salary of the assistant pastor has to be raised by the congregations of the Midlands district (von Gottberg 2004).

As an independent church the Nottingham Chinese Christian Church practices congregational church government. It is led by a church council whose members are elected by the church members annually (NCCC 2003:6). Re-election is possible. The ministers of the church are ex-officio members of the church council (:6). In September 2005 there were six members, and both men and women were on the council (Yeung 2005:5).

At the beginning of my research in February 2005, the Chinese Church had two ministers (Prill 2005c:1). There was one part-time minister who oversaw the English-speaking ministry, while another full-time minister was responsible for the Cantonese-speaking and Mandarin-speaking work. The former went back to Singapore in December 2005 and the latter retired in the summer of 2005 (Ng & Ng 2005:4). The team was augmented by a

Mandarin-speaking bible college student who did her annual placement with the Nottingham Chinese Christian Church. Ministers' salaries were raised entirely by church members and friends of the church (:14).

In 2004 the Nottingham Chinese Christian Church had a total gross income of £42,702 while the total expenditure was £46,589 (Charity Commission 2005). These figures are more than double of those of the German Lutheran Congregation for the same year. Thus, the German Lutheran Congregation had an income of £17,462 and a total expenditure of £21,424 (GLCN 2005:3). While the German Lutheran Congregation generates most of its income from renting out its premises to students and other churches (:3), the Chinese Church heavily relies on the contributions of its Cantonese-speaking group which forms the core of the church membership (Ng & Ng 2005:7).

10.3.2.4 Location

The church building of the German Lutheran Congregation, which includes a church hall and a flat, is located in Aspley, a western district of Nottingham (Rawlins 2001:14). Since the formation of the Midlands district and the decision to move the pastor's seat to Birmingham in 1989, the flat and the church hall have been rented out to Luther College Study Centre, which is part of Luther College, Decorah, Iowa, U.S.A. (:14). Luther College is an undergraduate liberal arts college affiliated to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (:14).

Twice a month the church building is used by a small English-speaking congregation of the Lutheran Church in Great Britain, and a Latvian-speaking Lutheran congregation uses the premises for monthly worship (von Gottberg 2004). Historically, the building has been used by other European Lutheran church groups: Estonian, Polish or Finnish.

In contrast to the German Lutheran Congregation, the Chinese Church does not have its own church building (Vong 2005:13). Instead, the church meets for its worship services and socials at St Nicholas' Church, an Anglican parish church in the centre of Nottingham, which

had formerly been used by the German congregation in the fifties and early sixties of the last century (cf. Rawlins 2001:14). The Chinese Church plans to buy or build its own church premises in the future (Vong 2005:14).

10.3.2.5 Churchmanship and church life

The churchmanship of the German Lutheran Congregation Nottingham is neither liberal nor evangelical, but moderate conservative and traditional (Prill 2005c:1). The fortnightly Sunday morning worship services are at the centre of church life (German Lutheran Churches in the Midlands 2005:11). One service takes place on the second Sunday of every month and the other on the last Sunday. According to the German Lutheran tradition, communion is celebrated monthly. The services follow the traditional Lutheran liturgy and hymns are taken from the German Protestant Hymn Book (Prill 2005c:1). Congregational singing is with organ accompaniment. During the period of my research an average of 23 people attended the Sunday services.

In addition to Sunday services there is a monthly bible study attended by 5-7 people, and a low key evangelistic event, which attracts between 8 and 12 people (Prill 2005c:10). Once every three months the church holds a luncheon club at which German meals are served and 25 to 35 elderly people come to this meeting. Twice a year the church organises coach trips to different sites in England. The German language is normal for all regular events.

Currently the Nottingham congregation has 65 members, while the church district has a total membership of 220 (Prill 2005c:1). In the last decade the church in Nottingham has seen a significant decline in membership matched by an increase in the average age. In March 2005 this stood at 75 years.

The Nottingham Chinese Christian Church perceives itself as broadly evangelical and is affiliated to the British Evangelical Alliance (Prill 2005c:1). As a member of the Alliance it subscribes to its statement of faith. Unlike the German Lutheran Church, which holds to the Lutheran Confessions and the Barmen Declaration of Faith (GLCN 1997:1), the Chinese

Church holds no theological distinctives. In its Mission Statement, updated in March 2004, it defines its vision in broad terms (NCCC 2004). It characterises itself as a life-changing church, a church where people can become Christians and grow in their Christian faith, and a church composed of a loving and prayerful community which aims to serve one another and enable each other to identify and develop their spiritual gifts. The statement concludes: 'We all actively share the local and global mission of the Chinese church, by bringing the gospel to the Chinese community in particular, and to the wider world' (NCCC 2004).

Central to the life of the church are its worship services (Prill 2005c:1). There are three services conducted in three different languages on most Sundays (NCCC 2005a:1): an English language service that takes place between 1.00 and 2.15pm, and two Chinese services, one Cantonese-speaking and the other Mandarin-speaking, which run simultaneously between 2.45 and 4.00pm (:1). Congregations vary in size: 60 to 80 people attend the Cantonese service, 30 to 40 the Mandarin service, and 20 to 30 persons the English language service (Prill 2005c:1). The Mandarin-speaking service is mainly attended by students from Mainland China while the English-speaking congregation consists of British-born or raised Chinese, and students from Hong Kong and Singapore (Ng & Ng 2005:6&9). The Cantonese congregation is made up of middle aged and elderly people who originate from Hong Kong (:7). Most of them are involved in the restaurant business (:7). Another major sub-group within the Cantonese-speaking congregation consists of a floating population of students from Hong Kong (Cheung 2006).

On the first Sunday of every month there is a joint English-Cantonese-speaking service which is celebrated as an all-age worship service (NCCC 2005a:1). On the last Sunday of every month there is a joint Cantonese-Mandarin service. Holy Communion is celebrated on the first Sunday of every month and is usually followed by an Agape Feast. This feast has the character of a social at which traditional Chinese food is served (Prill 2005c:3). In addition to the services, the church offers a Chinese class for children from 1.15 -2.15pm every Sunday, which is followed by Sunday School from 2.30-4.00pm (NCCC 2005a:1). There are approximately 20 to 25 children who come to the Chinese class and the children's programme

(Prill 2005c:4). Sunday School is compulsory for those children who attend the Chinese class (Ng & Ng 2005:10).

During the week, five different Chinese Church fellowship groups meet in different areas of Nottingham and at different times (NCCC 2005a:2). The content of these meetings varies from bible-study, theological seminars, and social events to outreach activities (NCCC 2005b). The Cantonese-speaking Joy Fellowship, which is attended mainly by elderly church members, meets at St Nicholas' Church in Nottingham city centre (NCCC 2005a:2). The same premises are used for the monthly meetings of the Cantonese-speaking Women's Fellowship group. The English-speaking Barnabas Fellowship group, for young British-born Chinese and English-speaking Chinese overseas students, holds its meetings at Oasis Christian Centre, an independent charismatic church, between 8.00 and 10.00pm on Wednesdays, while a Cantonese/Mandarin-speaking student group meets at St Andrew's Church, an Anglican parish church which is located north of the city centre, on Friday night. Likewise on Friday two groups of Mandarin and Cantonese-speaking students meet at Beeston Evangelical Free Church, which is located close to the west entrance of the University of Nottingham's main campus.

The church distinguishes between three classes of membership: full membership, associate membership and junior membership (NCCC 2003:4). In order to be eligible for full membership applicants must have attended the church over a period of at least six months. Requests for membership are made to the church council. After an informal interview carried out by at least two church council members, the council decides if the applicant will be welcomed into membership of the church (:5). In September 2005 the church had a membership of 48 (Vong 2005:7). Most were middle aged Cantonese-speakers (Ng & Ng 2005:7).

10.3.3 Reasons for attending the German Lutheran Congregation Nottingham and the Nottingham Chinese Christian Church

Research showed the wide range of motives held by those attending or actively participating in the life of both churches. The reasons cited can roughly be divided into five categories: language, cultural, sociological, theological, and missiological.

10.3.3.1 Language reasons

During my visits to the Nottingham Chinese Christian Church I observed that most of the elderly church members spoke Chinese (Prill 2005c:4). This was their chosen language not only with each other but also with younger people in the church whose first language was English. When I was introduced to some of these older church members it became apparent that they had only a very limited command of English. Some interviewees later confirmed that many older church members spoke little English at all (J. Chan 2005:11; Chong 2005:7; Low 2005:12; Vong 2005:10-11).

The majority of these elderly church members were Cantonese-speaking Chinese from Hong Kong (Low 2005:12). Because of their language disability they would have found it extremely difficult to worship in a purely English-speaking church (Prill 2005c:45). The Chinese Church was the only Nottingham forum in which they could worship and have Christian fellowship in their mother tongue. One church council member put it this way: 'They've got to come to the Chinese Church because this is the only language they can speak. They cannot go elsewhere. They have no choice' (Cheung 2005:4).

In a similar way, language was significant for people who attended the German Lutheran Church, even though they were competent in English. The elderly people who attended the German Lutheran Church were fluent in both English and German. Some spoke English even better than their mother tongue (Prill 2005c:1). A church council member I interviewed confirmed this observation. She put it this way: 'They all can speak their own language still but lots of them wouldn't mind if the service was held in English...English would be easier for

them' (Vallance 2005:2). The same church council member emphasized how important the German language was to her when she and her husband first joined the church in the 1960s:

Jim and I joined it through a friend which I met in Bingham. She invited us to come to a dance. That was during Pastor Seeger's time. We came to this dance. I was happy to get back to be able to speak German, to speak German with lots of people. The first evening I met a lot of people. I was then invited to come to the church services, which I happily did. My first service here was at Easter...I had lots of visitors from Germany every year, but no opportunities outside the family to speak my language (Vallance 2005:1).

Another lady from the German Lutheran church council mentioned the following reasons for joining the church in the 1980s: 'The friendliness of everybody. And the fact that we could converse in German again, which I had very little opportunity to speak. My family didn't want to know' (Sparrow 2005:1).

The disparity between the language competencies of German and Chinese Christians was work related and marital. Firstly, most of the Cantonese-speaking Chinese came to Britain in order to work in the restaurant business (Cheung 2005:1). Due to the nature of this work there was very little need or opportunity for them to learn or to improve their English. In contrast, most of the elderly Germans had worked alongside British people in different occupations during their working lives (Rawlins 2001:3). Secondly, many German immigrants married British citizens or people from other ethnic minorities such as Poles, Lithuanians or Ukrainians (T. Barthold 2005:6-7). The majority of Chinese immigrants married people from their own ethnic group (cf. Vong 2005:4).

10.3.3.2 Cultural reasons

For both Chinese and Germans, language and culture are closely related. It became apparent that both churches functioned as a cultural oasis where one could meet people with the same or a similar ethnocultural background. The churches were places that reminded people of their home country and their native culture. They were places where people could meet friends with similar life experiences. A council member of the German Lutheran Congregation put it this way:

There is still that little bond with the old home. I mean, there is a bond with Germany even after 50 odd years...While my mother and my father were still alive obviously the bond was much, much more. It's now getting less and less. I've got my family, I've got my children, I've got my grand-children here. At church you meet people of your own age, with the same sort of background history (Sparrow 2005:2-3).

When asked about the reasons why people attended his church the pastor of the English-speaking congregation at the Nottingham Chinese Christian Church gave the following answer:

I think you seek to find your own kind of people who come from the same country [who] speak your language. So you feel a sense of identity. For example – in my case – when I first came I tried to go to an English church, but I had difficulty in integrating after several months. After trying I decided to go to the Chinese Church where I can find my own kind (Low 2005:3).

A Chinese undergraduate student from Hong Kong, who came both to the Cantonese-speaking services and the fellowship group meetings, told me about her reasons for joining the Chinese Church in Nottingham:

I think it feels good if you meet someone who is from the same place, and you can share with them and they, maybe, understand what you have been through. There's more understanding. They understand more your feeling. Like maybe, some time you have [been] homesick and maybe people here don't really understand, but people from Hong Kong they understand "O, you have homesick? Yeah, I have too!" (Yeung 2005:4).

Another member of the Chinese church, an English-speaking British-born Chinese woman, who was part of the English-speaking congregation put it in similar terms:

Occasionally I go to an English church and I very much enjoy it...But at the end of the day, even if it is my language, it is catered for English people, it's different. It feels different. When I'm in the English-speaking service at the Chinese Church, I'm with people like myself who know what it is like to be Chinese, but happen to speak English. If you are going to an English church it's just so English. You do feel like you are set apart, you are different (Chong 2005:4).

However, the Nottingham Chinese Christian Church is not only a place where one can meet people of the same ethnocultural background, it is also a place where Chinese culture is passed on to the next generation (cf. Cheung 2005:5-6). Thus, the church runs Chinese language classes which are attended not only by children from church families but also by children from non-Christian families who otherwise have no links with the Chinese Church. A member of the Chinese church council made the following comments about this ministry:

The parents usually like their children to learn more Chinese. So we have Chinese classes and usually the parents would bring their children along. I think we do quite well because the church

won't charge them anything. And there are some [other] Chinese organizations. They also organise Chinese classes, but they charge them something (Vong 2005:7).

In addition to the language classes, the Chinese Church celebrates traditional Chinese festivals, such as the Chinese New Year, which attract non-Christian ethnic Chinese from the Nottingham area (Prill 2005c:3).

While the German Lutheran Congregation no longer offers German language classes for children it still organises events such as the Oktoberfest and the German Christmas Bazaar which attract a large number of non-church members of all ages who have links with Germany and German culture (Prill 2005c:68).

10.3.3.3 Sociological reasons

What struck me during my research at the Chinese Church was that the desire to be with Chinese Christians was relatively strong among the English-speaking second generation, the so called British-born Chinese. The same was true for English-speaking ethnic Chinese students and professionals from Singapore, Hong Kong, or Malaysia (Prill 2005c:4). Thus, one young BBC told me that he would travel 70 miles on a Sunday in order to attend the Chinese Church in Nottingham (:45.). I asked myself 'Why is it that these Christians attend the English-speaking service of the Chinese Church rather than an English church closer to their home?' When I probed further I discovered that this attitude was based on more than the simple desire to be with culturally like-minded people.

Firstly, it became evident that there was a strong sense of being different among the English-speaking church members and regular visitors. Whenever my interview partners spoke about the relationship between English-speaking Chinese and the dominant white British culture, terms such as 'different' or 'difference' were used quite frequently (cf. Chong 2005:4; Vong 2005:2). Furthermore, the sentence 'We are like bananas. Yellow on the outside and white inside' was used by one interviewee to describe how English-speaking Chinese see themselves in British society: English-speaking Chinese are in many respects like white British people but with the exception that they look different (Low 2005:13).

Secondly, in conversations with two church members, both of a BBC background, I learned that they had direct experience of racial discrimination in British society and were convinced that British society at large was prejudiced against ethnic minorities (Prill 2005c:66-67). One of my interview partners, a British-born Chinese, expressed a similar view:

But in a way that first instinct of someone who sees me, they see a Chinese person. As they get to know me they see me as Angela who happens to be Chinese. Now for a lot of people who don't have a problem with ethnic minorities and other nationalities, that's great. But predominantly, Britain as a whole is very closed in. We are an island and it's not as open to other nationalities as other countries are....I've spoken to people who have lived in France for a year and I have lived in Germany for a year. And I know for a fact that England is less tolerant – though improving slowly – of other nationalities. If you look different, speak different, they just think you are different. And they treat you differently and that's predominantly the way it is (Chong 2005:5).

According to the same interviewee discrimination could also be found in Christian circles, though to a lesser extent (Chong 2005:5). For some people the Chinese Church functioned as a refuge from racial discrimination or what was perceived as such. For them, the church formed, as one church council member put it, a 'safe' environment (Vong 2005:5).

Thirdly, other interviewees emphasised that they had had some negative experience in English churches which they would not classify as racial discrimination (Low 2005:4; Vong 2005:4-5). From their understanding, the problem consisted in the inability of indigenous churches to integrate foreigners and members of ethnic minorities into their communities. One of these interviewees told me about his experience with a local English church in Nottingham:

Well, I did not find the people trying their best to reach out to me. I would be basically left on my own after the main service. And also it is very difficult to integrate [in] to their circle...I mean on the surface they could be very friendly and welcoming. But I think if you want to really connect with them and make friends, this is the actual difficulty. I'm not sure if this is because of the colour, or because they don't know really how to integrate non-English [people] (Low 2005:3).

In contrast to the Chinese Church, the German Lutheran Congregation Nottingham clearly did not function as a refuge from discrimination. All my interview partners appeared to be fully integrated into British society and none of them raised discrimination as an issue (Prill 2005c:1). Most of them had British citizenship and spoke very positively about the British way of life. Since the church offered only two services a month one lady told me that

she would attend her local Methodist church on the other Sundays (Vallance 2005:8). She also assumed that some of the other church members would do the same: 'I'm sure lots of them do it. There are quite a few who come here and go somewhere else as well' (Vallance 2005:8).

However, three of the interviewees indicated that the situation had been different at the inception of the church in the 1950s, shortly after the end of World War II (Hogg 2005; T. Barthold 2005; B. Barthold 2005). There were still reservations against the former *enemy* in some parts of the British population at that time (Hogg 2005:3). Consequently German immigrants felt isolated to some degree (B. Barthold 2005:7). One church council member, who had come to Britain in 1946, told me about the situation of German immigrants at that time: 'I don't think they could adapt to the English in the first instance in the late forties and fifties. ...They were lonely. They were lonely and so they got together, and formed a community' (T. Barthold 2005:6). Another council member described the role of the German Church in the 1940s and 1950s in these terms:

I think they all spoke English, after the fashion, but I think being with other Germans was just very important, because quite a few of them were fairly isolated when they came here. [They encountered] quite a lot of animosities because they were Germans. And there was a place where they could feel safe, maybe (Hogg 2005:4).

10.3.3.4 Theological reasons

When I interviewed the leaders of the German Lutheran church I also learned about the theological motives which people had for coming to this church. I discovered that there were certain distinct theological traditions and teachings which attracted people, and especially the nature of the church services. Thus, two council members told me that the German Lutheran liturgy was very important to them. Retaining their liturgical tradition had been the determining factor for joining the church in the first place. One of them said:

The services reminded me of home because I knew what I had to say, what I had to respond – it was the same liturgy. Whereas, when I went to different churches in England it was so strange, it was so different (Vallance 2005:1-2).

The other church council member put it this way:

My husband and I used to go to a local English church but I just found that it was important to have that German connection...And being used to the German Lutheran service. So you know,

there was something, sort of, familiar about it. That was good...But being used to a Lutheran church is rather different from an Anglican church, though the church we used to go [to] wasn't terribly high church, but it was more like in a Roman Catholic church...So I was quite happy to be in this Lutheran church because I grew up in it (Hogg 2005: 1-2).

Another theological distinctive mentioned by the senior pastor of the church was the Lutheran understanding of the sacraments, especially of the Eucharist (von Gottberg 2005:3-4). The way Lutherans view the Eucharist or Holy Communion is unique. It differs significantly not only from the Roman Catholic or Orthodox view but also from the understanding of other Protestant denominations. In contrast to other Protestants, Lutherans believe in the real presence of Christ in, between and under the elements. However, they reject the Roman Catholic view of the Eucharist as a sacrificial act. Lutherans who hold strong sacramental views can find it difficult taking part in a communion service at a Protestant church holding a solely symbolic view of the Eucharist.

While these theological motives were undoubtedly valid for a minority I had the impression that they were actually not that important for the majority of church members, a considerable number of whom had a non-Lutheran background (Prill 2005c:68). I failed to identify any distinct theological doctrines or traditions that attracted people to the Chinese Church. Interviewees emphasized how much they appreciated the inter-denominational character of their church, or as one church leader said: 'In our church we don't have the denominations, we are just Christian. But English churches all have different denominations, different labels, different doctrines' (Chong 2005:6).

10.3.3.5 Missiological reasons

When I spoke to the leaders of the Chinese Church about the church's mission most of them said that their church had an evangelistic task to fulfil among the Chinese people of Nottingham (cf. Low 2005:5; Cheung 2005:8; Chong 2005:11). The pastor argued that the Chinese Church was better placed to evangelise ethnic Chinese effectively than indigenous English churches. He saw this as the main justification for the existence of a minority ethnic church like the Chinese Christian Church Nottingham. He stated:

Yes, I think some reasons will include the fact that we'll be more effective in reaching out our own people in terms of evangelism or mission, because we know their background. We speak their language. So in terms of effectiveness in outreach, I think this is the key reason (Low 2005:4-5).

The pastor confirmed that his ecclesiological position came close to the Homogeneous Unit Principle (Low 2005:5). When I probed further for the biblical theological basis for his views he argued that a similar pattern could be seen in Jesus' ministry:

What comes first to my mind is Christ saying 'I am first sent to the house of Israel and then after that to the Gentiles'. So it is a case with Christ to reach out to their own people first before looking beyond. I think this would be something comparable to what we are doing (:18).

The view that it was easier for Chinese to evangelise Chinese was shared by other leaders of the Chinese Church (cf. Cheung 2005:9; Fung 2005:9).

While the majority of church leaders in the German Lutheran church expressed the desire to see more people joining the church (cf. Sparrow 2005:6; Vallance 2005:8), there was, with the exception of the senior pastor, no awareness of the evangelistic dimension of the church's mission (Prill 2005c:5). For them, the opportunity to evangelise German-speakers in the Nottingham area was clearly not a motive for their church involvement.

In contrast, members of the Chinese Church claimed that they could minister to Mainland Chinese who stayed in Nottingham for a limited time only more effectively than other local English churches. One of my interview partners said the following about the ministry to Mandarin-speaking Chinese in local English churches and in the Chinese Church:

However, there is something when it comes down to deep sharing they would not be satisfied... In a Bible study group...they talk about learning the Bible, that's o.k., but when you talk about sharing of your feelings about the Bible or about a message they are stuck. In that respect the Chinese Church will probably have an advantage because they will be sharing with their own people. So about feelings like deep seated emotions would be quite difficult (Cheung 2005:6)

This claim appeared to reflect the Homogeneous Unit Principle (Prill 2005c:56). The only difference was that it mainly referred to pastoral as opposed to evangelistic issues. The same interview partner amplified his claims that the more interactions become intensely personal the more culturally based they become. In his written comments on my research report he claims the following:

For people who can manage English, they might be fine in worshipping etc but may actually prefer to use their mother tongue when coming to sharing at deeper levels (e.g. feeling, struggles in their spiritual lives, application part of a bible study). This is exemplified in Mandarin-speaking Chinese coming from Mainland China who might enjoy worshipping at a local English church but as far as bible study and deeper fellowship sharing are concerned, they would prefer to use Mandarin (Cheung 2006)

10.3.4 Challenges for the German Lutheran Congregation Nottingham and the Nottingham Chinese Christian Church

Both the German Lutheran Congregation Nottingham and the Nottingham Chinese Christian Church were facing problems and challenges. Some were common to both churches, but others were specific to each congregation. Altogether, I was able to identify six different groups of challenges: missiological, theological, sociological, geographical, financial, and leadership challenges.

10.3.4.1 Missiological challenges

By their nature both churches, the German Lutheran Church and the Chinese Church, limited their mission to people who belonged to the same ethnic group (Prill 2005c:56). Both churches had a clear focus on ethno-cultural minorities. Thus, all the services and other church events in the German Lutheran Congregation were in German. The only exceptions were funerals which were held either in English alone or as bilingual services in both English and German. The Chinese Church offered an English-speaking service and an English-speaking bible study group, but from my observations both were attended almost entirely by Chinese Christians. Against this background it did not surprise me that neither the German Church nor the Chinese Church seemed to have much contact with the local communities in which their church buildings were located (:56). Both churches were exclusive insofar as they did not feel responsible to reach out and minister to members of other ethnic groups. A leader of the Chinese Church involved in the English speaking ministry confirmed this when he said: 'I hope that in the future we won't just focus on English-speaking Chinese. It would be good if we could reach out to any people from any nationality or background' (K. Chan 2005:9-10).

The danger for ethnocentric and insular churches is that they tend to become not only inward-looking but end up as communities where their social life becomes more important than the spiritual. This danger was seen by leaders of both churches (cf. Cheung 2005:4; J. Chan 2005:10; von Gottberg 2005:1-2) Thus, the pastor of the Chinese Church complained that there was a lack of commitment to evangelistic mission among his church members. When asked if the church was a mission minded church he answered:

Well, I do not think so. This is my honest opinion. Although they try to be a purpose driven church – and that means to have an evangelistic focus, I think there is no concept to really reach out to the Chinese community here. So, if there is any form of outreach, it is more personal – you invite your friends or your relatives. But there isn't a systematic programme as such (Low 2005:5).

He then went on to say:

If this continues as status quo, I think it would just be like any ordinary social club, where members just come together for cultural reasons, because they meet their friends here. Once a month there is an Agape feast, that kind of thing. So it may lose its distinctive as a Christian church. This would be my concern (:6).

Leaders of the German Church mentioned that for many years the church had been not much more than a social club and that it was still seen as such by some people (B. Barthold 2005:14; T. Barthold 2005:9; Hogg 2005:2). When I asked one of the church leaders what motivated people to come to the church he replied:

It's a very difficult question. Very difficult. I can't answer it truthfully - it is the German element. They come to have a talk with their friends, German friends. That's why they come...Yes, the social side played a big part in the German Lutheran Church. A very big part. It did hold it together. Whenever there was something going on they were there (T. Barthold 2005:9,14).

Another interviewee said: 'Some just came for the social side [or] mainly for the social side. Others came to the social side and then came to church' (B. Barthold 2005:14).

The leaders of the German Lutheran Congregation also appeared to have a distorted understanding of mission (Prill 2005c:56). Not only did they have their focus on German-speakers only, they also understood outreach first and foremost as reaching out to German-speaking Lutherans. When being asked about the reason why there were no young people in the church one of the council members replied:

Where do you get young German-speaking Lutherans from? Unless they are our children. Unless they are students. We get the odd student occasionally from the university. But that's not a great

deal. They've got to be interested in church activities...for them to be able to come (T. Barthold 2005:5).

Church growth was not predicated on evangelism but upon gathering people of the same denominational background. This compares with other Lutheran churches in Britain, both in indigenous English-speaking churches and in expatriate Lutheran church bodies (cf. Landgraf 2005).

10.3.4.2 Theological challenges

The Nottingham Chinese Christian Church called itself an inter-denominational church (NCCC 2005c). From my observation this was an accurate description since the church members and regular visitors whom I met came from various denominational backgrounds, such as Presbyterian, Baptist or Free Evangelical (Prill 2005c:4). What they had in common was their core Christian beliefs and Chinese origin. This polyglot approach assumed a willingness to respect divergent theological views and an ability to compromise over secondary issues. The pastor of the Chinese Church described the situation as follows:

There are people who could say they came from a Baptist church or from a Charismatic Church or Methodist. So they once were involved with denominational churches. But I think if the Chinese Church reaches out to Chinese Christians – then in a sense we have to be non-denominational to embrace as many as possible without compromising the distinctives of the gospel. So in our midst we have Charismatics too, but they don't speak in tongues. They do it in their homes, but not in church. We have people who are for women pastors, but others are not for them (Low 2005:19-20).

Without this degree of tolerance and willingness to compromise, as evidenced in the Nottingham Chinese Christian Church, there are grounds for tensions and conflicts between people who hold different theological convictions, and a destabilising threat to unity.

As a denominational and confessional church the German Lutheran Congregation did not face the same danger. The challenge for a church like the German Lutheran Church is that its confessional emphasis excludes people from different church backgrounds. In order to become a church which ministers more widely to German-speakers, regardless of their church background, it needs to modify its denominationalism.

10.3.4.3 Sociological challenges

As a result of my observations and the interviews with church leaders I became aware that both the German Lutheran Congregation and the Nottingham Chinese Christian Church were confronted with several sociological problems and challenges.

10.3.4.3.1 The second generation problem

Firstly, there was what can be called the *second generation problem*. The German church had ceased to attract its second generation (Prill 2005c:6). Almost without exception, the church membership was made up of first generation immigrants. There were no younger people in the Sunday services. When I asked the church leaders about their own children and grandchildren I learned that many of them were completely anglicised (cf. Sparrow 2005:2). While some of their children were still able to speak, or at least to understand, some German, their grandchildren had no substantial links with the German culture or language (cf. Vallance 2005:3). Almost all members of the second generation born in Britain had married English people and considered themselves to be British. Consequently, they felt excluded from a church where the ability to speak German was central (cf. Sparrow 2005:5-6).

The fact that the German Lutheran Congregation was an ageing church without any young people had consequences for the daily life of the church. Thus, the church found it very difficult to recruit church council members let alone volunteers to undertake other ministries in the church. One council member put it this way:

Help is very scarce these days because of age...People either don't want to help or they are not fit enough to do so. We've got one or two people that can hardly get about. And we can't ask them to do anything really. It wouldn't be fair at all (T. Barthold 2005:4).

In the Chinese Church the situation was radically different. The presence of second generation Chinese immigrants, the so called British-born Chinese whose first language was English, meant that generational linguistic differences were being handled differently (Prill 2005c:4). Although members of this group were anglicised they had retained strong links with Chinese culture and Chinese values. Their ethnic links were so strong that members of this group tended to marry only Chinese people. One church council member told me: 'If their

parents are traditional, even though they were born and brought up here, in the back of their minds they want to marry a Chinese person' (Vong 2005:4). Another interviewee, a British-born Chinese, described her own culture as a mix of British and Chinese. She said: 'We are just an amalgamation of the two...You speak English like an English person, but you feel Chinese' (Chong 2005:7).

Though both churches were presented with a second generation problem they approached it in different ways because of the differing effects of cultural assimilation. In the German Lutheran Congregation the second generation problem seemed to be accepted as a given fact for which there was no remedy, while the Chinese Church decided to take action and saw the difficulty as one which could be overcome (Prill 2005c:4). For many years there had been only a bilingual English-Cantonese service which had not been satisfying for members of both the first and the second generation (Vong 2005:2). To meet the needs of both groups the church introduced a weekly English-speaking service in 2004 (:2). A British-born Chinese church member explained the reasoning behind this decision:

It needed that because basically the church had a bilingual service, which really wasn't ticking all the boxes, which you need when you've got a mixed congregation of people in their fifties and sixties speaking Cantonese, and also myself, British-born Chinese, speaking English. So the services in the old days were very stilted and either too traditional for us, the young ones, or too liberal for the older ones. And trying to listen to a sermon when it's broken up in two different languages was very distracting and you didn't get the full message (Chong 2005:1-2).

In contrast, one German Church leader told me that it had been wrong not to 'open up' the church for English people (Sparrow 2005:6). Others argued that this would have made no difference at all (T. Barthold 2005:12; Vallance 2005:8).

10.3.4.3.2 Global migration and education

Secondly, one of the two churches was much more affected by globalisation than the other. Over recent years Britain has seen a huge influx of Chinese students (HERO 2005). Thus, the number of Chinese students in UK higher education rose from 35,200 in the academic year 2002/3 to 47,740 in 2003/4 (The Council for International Education 2005). With around 1,000 Chinese students, the University of Nottingham is one of the most popular higher

education institutions for Chinese students in the UK (HERO 2005). The pastor of the Chinese Church commented:

I think UK education is regarded very highly by Chinese where they come from....I mean, now the fact is also Chinese are getting richer, the Chinese in mainland China. So they would leave their country and study overseas. So this is a common phenomenon [now] (Low 2005:17).

One youth leader at the Chinese Church said the following about this development:

China is opening up and they are allowing them to study. They are studying from [a] young age rather than 20 years ago when people came here to do their PhDs or scholarships. The number of students coming here was limited. But teenagers can come here because their parents can afford to support them. This scenario will continue. It is just the beginning and there will be more Chinese people coming to study overseas. And UK is one of the big markets (Fung 2005:10).

The influx of Chinese students presented a twofold challenge to the Chinese Church: first of all to reach out to this expanding group from a very limited personnel and financial base (cf. Ng & Ng 2005:13-14), and secondly, to bond with Chinese students and scholars who spend only a relatively short time in Nottingham (:10). They were people in transition. This created a double difficulty: integrating them into the church but without any real expectation of commitment from them (K. Chan 2005:6). There was the added danger that the regular departure of students after a short time would have a de-motivating effect on church members, or as the Chinese pastor put it:

It is difficult. I mean, from my experience this can be quite discouraging to see people come and go. But the medical students and those who study nursing tend to stay. So it is these people that we try to encourage to stay in Nottingham and get a job here. So for those who are only here for one or two years, they tend to leave the country after all (Low 2005:17-18).

However, the chairman of the Chinese Church council pointed out to me that there was also a positive side to this issue (Cheung 2005). While it was true that the students did not stay for long, the church had the opportunity to help them to grow in their Christian faith and equip them for their future ministries in their home countries in East Asia. He said:

There is another point as the purpose of the church, which I wasn't aware [of] back home, because we don't have this peculiar situation when people are coming and going....It is that we should look at it from a kingdom perspective, which I didn't do in the past. Because I thought 'O.k. why look after these people, support them? I helped them out with a programme how to do Bible studies and did a few workshops for them to train them up in some skills. Then they may not be used by the church, this church, ourselves.' But then I thought of the kingdom perspective. This will all be very useful when they go back to their home country so that hopefully these few years when they are here they would be equipped (Cheung 2005:11-12).

10.3.4.3.3 Increased internal migration

The third sociological challenge for both churches was the increase of internal migration, a recognised phenomenon in British society over recent years (cf. Donovan, Pilch & Rubenstein 2002:6). While this is a challenge for all churches, the impact on minority ethnic churches can be even more severe. Thus, during my research at the Chinese Church, the church treasurer moved away from the Nottingham area and the church struggled to replace him (Prill 2005c:63). The German Church experienced a similar problem.

10.3.4.4 Geographical challenges

As churches ministering to specific ethnic groups, both the German Lutheran Congregation and the Chinese Christian Church, had ministerial catchments which were much larger than a traditional English parish, comparable to other city churches (Prill 2005c:10). One consequence for the German Lutheran Congregation was that they found access a serious problem. Several members of the congregation told me that they found it difficult to come to the Sunday services by public transport (Prill 2005c:68). Transport to and from church and the lack of mobility were also mentioned by the church leaders as two of the main challenges for the church (Sparrow 2005:7; Valance 2005:8). One church leader pointed out that this was not a new issue. To get to church had always required some degree of commitment. She said: 'That has always been a problem. It's not like the church in West Bridgford where everybody lives around the church. People have to travel to get to church' (B. Barthold 2005:4).

Another church leader stressed the changing nature of transport dependency (Sparrow 2005). When church members had been younger and able to drive, distance had not been a major hindrance. But in old age they were less mobile and much more dependent on public transport or lifts given to them. Being asked about the problems which church members faced she replied:

Well the fact that a lot of them don't have transport, which is not very easy. Then the fact that we are getting more dilapidated, if that's the right word. We are getting old and it's not easy to come to the services...I think more people, especially when their husbands were still alive, they could take us ladies who couldn't drive, could be taken to church. I mean a lot of them don't drive anymore. And it's a matter of money too (Sparrow 2005:7).

Another council member told me about his own situation:

Supposing one of these days I can't drive a car. How do we get to church unless you go by taxi? That's seven or eight pounds to the church and seven or eight pounds back. It's all right for people who [have] got that type of money (T. Barthold 2005:10).

The same interviewee said that from his experience the transport problem would keep people from coming to church regularly (T. Barthold 2005:10).

The comments of church council members prompted me to carry out a short survey on the distance that church members actually had to travel to get to church based upon the members' list of the German Lutheran Congregation (GLCN 2004) and the Automobile Association's (2005) *AA Route Planner Great Britain*. The result showed that, on average, members of the German Lutheran Congregation lived a distance of 10 miles from the church building. For most church members this meant that they had to make at least a double bus journey to get to church.

In contrast to the German Church, leaders of the Chinese Christian Church told me that though there was a transport problem, especially for their elderly members, they did not regard it as a serious problem. One council member commented: 'We have a slight problem with that, but not serious, partly because St Nic's is in the city centre. Most people can get there by one bus' (Vong 2005:13). The pastor of the church described the situation as follows: 'So far older folks will have to rely on other church members to fetch them to church and to bring them back...The younger people, of course, have it easier' (Low 2005:16).

Like the German Church, the Chinese Church also had a huge catchment area (Prill 2005c:68). Members of both churches lived not only in different parts of the city but also in the county of Nottinghamshire and adjacent counties of Derbyshire, Leicestershire and Lincolnshire. This had significant implications for pastoral work. Pastoral staff had to travel long distances to visit people in their homes and this was both time consuming and costly. The senior pastor of the German Church told me that he would travel more than 1,000 miles per month on pastoral visitation alone (von Gottberg 2005:9).

In addition to this travelling problem, wide catchment areas made it difficult to create a sense of community. This was particularly true for elderly Chinese less integrated into British society. The fact that they were dispersed over a wide area became increasingly problematic. The pastor of the Chinese Church explained the following about this geographical challenge:

This is a real problem. For example, the Chinese who came from Hong Kong: they basically lived very close to one another, just because it was a small country. But the moment they came to England – I mean, it is such a big country compared to Hong Kong. So the Chinese who live here, they live quite scattered from one another. So this actually poses a problem – not only for the pastors in terms of travelling, but I think it also poses a problem for the Chinese themselves. They would feel cut off from fellow Chinese (Low 2005:14-15).

10.3.4.5 Financial challenges

When I asked one of the German church leaders about the biggest problem of his church he mentioned the church's financial situation. He said: 'Well, we can't raise the money that we need to raise to stay above water, for the start' (T. Barthold 2005:3). While other council members agreed that revenue from donations and contributions was a problem they did not consider the church's financial situation unhealthy. However, the senior pastor pointed out the inherent weakness of 50 years of financial dependency on the mother church in Germany (von Gottberg 2005:7). When I probed further he explained that financial support from Germany had discouraged local responsibility for maintaining financial viability, as was the norm for most other local churches.

In contrast to the German Church, my interview partners at the Chinese Church made no mention of financial problems (Prill 2005c:53). However, the church experienced practical difficulties in not having its own church building and were raising funds to obtain one of their own for both Sunday services and midweek meetings. The status quo presented problems for both the host church and the Chinese Church. One church council member spoke in these terms:

It is an advantage to be there, but on the other hand we are limited. I know St Nick's want to develop their own ministry as well. They are good to us. They don't want to say 'You can't use this anymore.' So they try to accommodate us. But in this sense they are limiting their development. And our development is limited as well because we can't use the church in the morning for morning services. We need to wait until the afternoon. All the services are so

packed. We have to run a very strict timescale. But to try and find something else in the city centre which is convenient is so expensive. We can't afford it as such. We are a small church (Vong 2005:14).

10.3.4.6 Leadership challenges

During my research at the Chinese Church the recruitment of staff became a critical issue (Prill 2005c:63). Since the minister for the Cantonese-speaking work retired in February 2005, and the minister for the English-speaking work returned to his native Singapore in September of the same year, the church had had to find at least one or more new pastors. Like other similar churches, the Nottingham church was in the unenviable position of requiring qualified Chinese pastors who could speak three languages: English, Cantonese and Mandarin, and who had, as one council member remarked, experience in overseas Chinese churches (Vong 2005:15). As a minority ethnic church, the congregation operated in a niche market for UK pastoral staff (Prill 2005c:63). Recruitment was a problem mentioned by several other interviewees (cf. Cheung 2005:11; Fung 2005:14; Vong 2005:15; Yeung 2005:6). According to the chairman of the church council it posed a serious problem for the church:

At the moment we are in great problems because of the shortage of pastoral workers...I'm not completely hopeful about getting pastors in a short period of time. I am the chairman of the council and I've got to think about a contingency plan. It is beyond our control. It is in God's hands. It is beyond our control as to when this pastor, or pastors, can be found (Cheung 2005:11&14).

The reverse was true for the German church. They never experienced problems recruiting ministers because since its inception in the 1950s pastors from the Protestant Church in Germany had been seconded to the church in Nottingham (von Gottberg 2005:4). However, this continuity of supply removed local control. The Nottingham church had no real choice when it came to appointing a pastor because candidates were pre-selected by the church authorities in Germany. Furthermore, most pastors served only a six year term, which created further problems (:5). Each pastor needed time to adjust to working in a foreign country and culture, and some had limited English and little cross-cultural experience.

10.3.5 Viability and the churches' future

Though both churches faced problems and challenges, there was a marked difference in their response (Prill 2005c:5). The dominant mood among the leaders of the German Lutheran Congregation was negative, characterised by feelings of sadness and disillusionment. One church council member gave me his pessimistic forecast of the church's future:

Well, it will be shrinking still further. We have shrunk quite a lot in the last ten years. It's going progressively to get worse...It's a progression we can't stop. There is no way we can stop that at all.... Yes, it will fold up. We've got no future, really....Unless we get some new people in, which is very unlikely, there is no alternative. There is no alternative (T. Barthold 2005:8).

Another church council member found despairing words to express her feelings about the church's future. When I asked her about the biggest problem of the church she replied: 'Well, the fact that we are getting so very old. We are dying out. We are dying out!' (Sparrow 2005:4). And one of the younger church council members said: 'I think, it will fold, it will fold... You have to be realistic about that. It's a shame but that's how it's going to be... It's sad, yes it is sad. But I think we have to be realistic about that' (Hogg 2005:5-6).

There was wide agreement among the German church leaders that the only way forward was a merger with other German-speaking Lutheran Churches in the Midlands (Prill 2005c:5). Though a merger would create further difficulties for the church in Nottingham it was hoped that it would guarantee its existence for several more years. One interviewee said:

The future of the church, a German church or German-speaking Lutheran church, will be reduced. It will be one Midlands church. And we either have to have one pastor who will just do visits or come once a month. The congregation will get smaller and smaller, and we don't need the big houses any more. So if he could come into family homes, and one would just get the few elderly who are still there together (Vallance 2005:5).

Compared to the German Lutheran Congregation, the mood in the Chinese Church was much more sanguine (Prill 2005c:45). When being asked about her view on the future of the Chinese Church a council member gave the following answer:

I think in five years time I would like to see three different strong congregations within the church, and they would be able to integrate with each other. And I would like to see leaders from these three different congregations represented in the church council (Vong 2005:13).

10.3.6 Summary: Arguments for and against minority ethnic churches

The research findings above provide a basis for arguments both for and against the existence of minority ethnic churches. In total, there are six arguments that can be marshalled in support of the establishment of the minority ethnic church:

- **The Language Argument:**

Minority ethnic churches allow Christians lacking fluency in the language of the dominant culture to worship in their mother tongue.

- **The Social Network Argument:**

Minority ethnic churches give people the opportunity to meet people of the same ethnic background and similar life experience.

- **The Cultural Argument:**

Minority ethnic churches can sustain ethnic minority culture by offering language classes and by celebrating cultural festivals.

- **The Safe Place Argument:**

Minority ethnic churches provide a safe place from racial discrimination in wider society and indigenous churches.

- **The Evangelism Argument:**

Minority ethnic churches can evangelise members of their own ethnic group more effectively than indigenous churches.

- **The Pastoral Care Argument:**

Minority ethnic churches are better equipped to meet the pastoral needs of members of their own ethnic group than indigenous churches.

This research also shows that minority ethnic churches face a range of problems. These negatives are grounds against the establishment of such churches. These counter arguments are summarised as follows:

- **The Limited Mission Argument:**

By focussing on members of their own ethnic group minority ethnic churches limit their mission and exclude other ethnic groups.

- **The Recruitment Argument:**

Minority ethnic churches find it difficult to recruit qualified full-time pastoral staff, and, in consequence their ministry is undermined.

- **The Community Argument:**

Minority ethnic churches experience difficulties in creating a sense of community because their members are widely dispersed in huge catchment areas. In addition, minority ethnic churches are isolated from their local community.

- **The Second Generation Argument:**

Minority ethnic churches find it difficult to serve and engage second and third generation immigrants who have either adjusted to or become assimilated into the host culture.

An evaluation of these critical and supportive arguments will be discussed in conjunction with the findings of my first research project above and in the context of my general research question. This triangular discussion follows in the next section of this thesis.

11. Arguments and strategies for the integration of refugees and asylum seekers into indigenous churches

11.1 Arguing the case for the integration of refugees and asylum seekers into indigenous churches in Britain

11.1.1 Introduction

In his article *One Gospel and Diverse Cultures: Towards an Intercultural Mutuality* the Romanian Orthodox theologian Viorel Ionita (1997:54) pleads for a stronger cooperation in mission between minority and majority churches in Europe. He argues that cultural differences should not prevent inter-church cooperation. According to Ionita, cultural differences between churches 'should no longer be considered a reason for separation, but more as a source for sharing among one another and as mutual enrichment' (:55). A similar view is expressed by Dutch missiologist Jan Jongeneel (2003). 'Migrant Christians and their congregations and churches', Jongeneel writes, 'can help established Christianity in Europe to renew its mission and evangelism' (:31). Jongeneel continues:

The changing context in Europe, the process of globalization, and other contemporary changes – these challenge all Christians and their established and migrant congregations and churches to cooperate together and to do mission and evangelism commonly for the sake of God's glory and humanity's salvation (:33).

While I wholeheartedly agree with Ionita and Jongeneel that existing minority and majority churches need to work closely together, I want to argue that their organisational separation might not be a good idea in the first place. It should not be accepted as a given fact of life. One who does not accept it as such is John Stott. Stott (1967:75) believes that heterogeneous congregations are stronger than homogeneous ones. '[T]he more mixed the congregation is,' he writes, 'especially in 'class' and 'colour', the greater its opportunity to demonstrate the power of Christ' (:75). While Stott has only the witness character of 'truly inter-racial' churches in mind (:75), the findings of my two case studies go beyond that. They negate arguments supporting the formation of separate minority ethnic churches for refugees

and asylum seekers and show that there are many more reasons why Christian refugees and asylum seekers should become an integral part of an indigenous or majority church.

11.1.2 Refugees and mission

11.1.2.1 The British church, refugees and the ministry of hospitality in a postmodern age

The British church as a whole has seen a steady decline both in membership and Sunday church attendance in the last two decades. While in 1990 8.1 per cent of the population went to church on Sundays this figure was down to 5.3 per cent in 2005 (Brierley 2005b:2.21). In the same period the number of church members dropped from 6.6 million to 5.6 million (:2.23). This development has prompted British theologians and church leaders to rethink the traditional understanding of church and mission. Thus, a variety of books have been published in recent years offering new strategies and models of being church in postmodern and post-Christian Britain. Among these are titles such as *Intelligent Church* (Chalke & Watkis 2006), *Emergingchurch.intro* (Moynagh 2004), *Changing Communities: Church from the Grassroots* (Hinton & Price 2003), *Invading Secular Space: Strategies for Tomorrow's Church* (Robinson & Smith 2003) *Liquid Church* (Ward 2002), *Transforming Church* (Greenwood 2002) and *Church Next: Quantum Changes in Christian Ministry* (Gibbs & Coffey 2001). Maybe the most influential publication has been *Mission-shaped Church* (CofE 2004), a report from a working group of the Church of England's Mission and Public Affairs Council. The report encourages churches to develop 'fresh expressions of church' alongside the traditional parish system (:43). These fresh expressions include cell churches, café churches, school-based churches, youth and midweek congregations (:44). What all these publications have in common is that they are silent about migrants as potential mission partners for a shrinking British church. Christian refugees and asylum seekers are obviously not seen as agents of change by the majority of British mission experts and church leaders.

In contrast, my research at Cornerstone Church indicates that Christian refugees and asylum seekers can make a contribution to the renewal of the British church. It demonstrates

that Iranian refugees and asylum seekers at Cornerstone have a very positive influence on the majority of British Christians they are in close contact with. They serve as role models, not only in their zeal for evangelism but also in the way they deal with difficulties and hardships. They prompt British Christians to ask critical questions about their own culture and lifestyles. They open people's eyes to sinful structures and attitudes, such as racial discrimination, both inside and outside the church. They also help indigenous Christians to get a better grasp of the church as a worldwide body and underline the importance of Christian unity. In other words, contact with Christian asylum seekers and refugees helps British Christians grow in their faith and practice.

What struck me most during my research was the generosity and hospitality that many Iranian refugees practised (Prill 2005c:13&36). I was impressed by their willingness to open their houses both to Christians and to non-Christians, and to share the little they had. The positive influence of this behaviour was mentioned by several of my British interview partners (Bush 2005:7; J. Taylor 2005:1; R Taylor 2005:3). They emphasised the fact that the Iranian Christians had become their role models in these areas. It is arguable that providing a new model of relationship is the most significant contribution that Iranian and other asylum seekers and refugees can make to the mission of the church in Britain. Writing on the theme of mission in the Gospels, R.G Harris (2004:244) underlines the importance of generosity and hospitality, of which he says:

If well-off Christians in the West were more willing to share and to give generously, this would not solve society's problems, nor those of the world at large, but it would be a powerful missionary tool – creating reserves for the Church to move beyond maintenance towards projects outside its own door and inspiring goodwill between classes and races.

Harris then goes on to stress the role of hospitality for Christian mission. He writes:

If the church feels weak and sometimes helpless in the face of enormous social and political problems, Luke's Gospel also points to at least one area where the individual can make a huge difference. This is the area of hospitality (:244-245).

Both giving and receiving hospitality is, as Christine Pohl (2006:97) says, part of the Christian identity. Thus, Harris (2004:245) shows that hospitality is a profoundly biblical concept. The Greek word for hospitality, that is used in Romans 12:13 and Hebrews 13:2, literally means 'love for the stranger'. In the Gospel of Luke it is hospitality that enables Jesus to get to know

people better and to change their lives. Furthermore, in the Book of Acts it is fellowship and hospitality which helps to unite the early church across its social and racial distinctions.

But hospitality was not only important in biblical times. The need for hospitality is as important today as it ever has been, especially in today's postmodern world where society has become fragmented and individualism is promoted. Among the main traits of postmodernity are widespread relativism, lack of certainty, pessimism, and a deep distrust of hierarchic institutions and bureaucracy as well as scepticism of grand stories that provide explanations of the world (Finney 2000:145; Hilborn 1997:21-22; Lyon 2001:50). The anti-institutional mood of postmodernity, the demise of metanarratives and the rejection of cultural and moral absolutes pose a challenge to Christianity. The church is widely seen as a hierarchical, authoritarian and power-corrupted organisation that leaves no room for people's questions and doubts (Hunter 1992:47). Christian belief is perceived as only one of many belief systems or human interpretations of reality, that are all considered as equally valid, because they all are regarded as equally invalid (Grenz 1996:163-164).

However, one of the consequences of postmodernity is that it increases a longing for community based upon personal relationships and genuine friendships, which many postmodern temporary communities do not offer (Cray 2000:10). Instead, they often leave people, as Jimmy Long (1999:69) puts it, with the 'feeling of homelessness'. In such a climate, Christian hospitality can be a powerful witness, or as Long (2000:328) writes: 'A loving community is the beginning context of an effective ministry in a postmodern culture'. In their book *Emerging Churches: Creating Christian Community in Postmodern Cultures* Eddie Gibbs and Ryan Bolger (2006:140) even speak of a ministry of hospitality. According to Gibbs and Bolger it is a ministry that is modelled on Jesus' ministry. As such it is a ministry that aims to meet both people's immediate needs and their deeper, long-term needs. The ministry of hospitality tries to establish relationships of trust. 'True hospitality', Gibbs and Bolger write, 'represents an offer to others of all that has been received from God' (:140).

In *Ministry at the Margins* Anthony Gittins (2004) examines what it means to be strangers and hosts in a mission context. According to Gittins, Christian hospitality, as an important

element of mission, presupposes that every missionary is prepared to be a stranger, who goes to strange places in order to meet with strangers (:126). For Gittins this means that they expect to receive a formal rather than a warm welcome. This is the price of hospitality missionaries have to pay (126-127). It is a necessary price, because hospitality leads to trust, trust to relationships, and relationships to new communities. Gittins concludes: 'But unless we approach as strangers, there will be no hospitality, for hospitality is the welcome appropriate for a host to extend to a stranger' (:127). A similar thought is expressed by Cathy Ross (2005:6) who writes how important it is for those who give hospitality to experience what it is like to be at the receiving end, i.e. to be a stranger. Ross goes on to say that practicing hospitality has implications both for one's faith and relationships. She notes:

Hospitality can be subversive because it is inclusive. It can begin a journey towards visibility, dignity and respect. Hospitality suggests face to face encounters and burgeoning relationship. It presupposes servanthood and service. Because God is the original host, inviting us into a relationship with Christ, when we practise hospitality we are nurtured, challenged and strengthened in our relationship – both with God and with others (:6).

To conclude, with their Christ-like example, Christian refugees and asylum seekers can help British Christians and their churches to develop a ministry of hospitality. To use the words of Christine Pohl (2003:11) they can help British Christians to develop hospitality as 'a way of life infused by the gospel'. Christian refugees and asylum seekers can help Christians in the United Kingdom to see and experience what it means to be a stranger and thus prepare them for their mission towards their postmodern friends, colleagues and neighbours, as well as to those on the margins of society. For this to happen it is important that refugees and asylum seekers do not form their own separate churches but stay in close contact with indigenous Christians, as is the case in Cornerstone Church. As the example of the German Lutheran Congregation Nottingham and the Nottingham Chinese Christian Church shows minority ethnic churches tend to become insular. This impairs their role model status as agents of mission in Britain.

11.1.2.2 Refugees, mission and the exclusive character of minority ethnic churches

Because of their insularity the influence of refugee churches on indigenous churches is curtailed. Not only is the example of their ministry of hospitality reduced but so are other characteristics of their mission. Given the fact that minority ethnic churches consist of volunteer migrants or forced migrants, or members of a longstanding minority ethnic group, their main focus is determined by their own ethnicity, and they see their remit as targeting their own group. This makes them intrinsically exclusive. They exclude both the dominant ethnic group and other ethnic minorities. Three major problems arise in consequence.

Firstly, as the examples of the German Lutheran Congregation Nottingham and the Nottingham Chinese Christian Church have shown, there is a tendency for such churches to become introverted. Being detached from their local community and its needs means that most of their income and energy is spent on serving and caring for their own church members. The added danger, as both German and Chinese church leaders pointed out, is that such churches become a social club where social and cultural activities become the primary focus of church life (cf. 10.3.4.1)

Secondly, minority ethnic churches are over-dependent upon population movements to sustain their membership and mission. Without the influx of their own ethnic group even a mission-minded minority ethnic church would struggle to survive unless it manages to engage second and third generation members. While in a global city the size of London this might not be the case, it could become a problem for refugee churches in smaller cities elsewhere in Britain. Refugee churches outside the capital are dependent upon the Government's dispersal policy. If the Government decided to stop sending refugees to a certain area, or changed the ethnic group which it sends, then a refugee church would be deprived of new people to reach out to.

Thirdly, and most importantly, the exclusive character of a local minority ethnic church runs contrary to the inclusive character of Christianity and God's mission. Jürgen Moltmann (2000:19), in a paper first delivered at the 1999 conference of *The British and Irish Association for Mission Studies*, argues that 'Christianity is in origin and its very nature a missionary

religion.' If Christianity loses this character, writes Moltmann, it is giving up its identity.

Moltmann then continues:

The negations of this thesis follow accordingly: Christianity cannot be a family religion, a tribal religion, or the religion of a particular people or nation. It cannot be a male religion. And it cannot be the political religion of a particular government. If these religious forms develop, Christianity becomes so deformed as to be unrecognizable (:19).

Applying Moltmann's critique, it is reasonable to assert that minority ethnic churches are in process of making Christianity de facto a *tribal religion*, a religion of ethnicity.

The biblical basis for Moltmann's critique is strong. The inclusiveness and universality of God's mission that Moltmann is writing about can be found in many passages including the mission mandate of Matthew 28:16-20. Matthew 28, verse 19 speaks of *all nations* or, in the original Greek, *panta ta ethne*. The exact meaning of the word *ethne* has been widely debated among New Testament scholars (Senior 1998:346). The question raised is whether *panta ta ethne* includes Israel or whether it refers to Gentiles only (:346-347). The majority of commentators believe the former (Bosch 2004:64). J.P Meier (1990:371), for example, writes that the restrictive mission mandate of Matthew 10:5-6 is overturned by Jesus himself, when dying for all humankind.

Some missiologists have also argued that the phrase refers to the world's various *people groups* (Hesselgrave 2000:414), but Peskett and Ramachandra (2003:182) point out that the Bible uses ethno-sociological terms without great precision. The word *ethnos* used by Matthew, they write, seems to be 'the most capacious term to define a group or people linked by a common history, culture or community allegiance' (:183). Peskett and Ramachandra then continue:

In intertestamental times the word *ethnos* had a somewhat derogatory ring about it: it referred to those who were *not* the people of God. But here in Matthew our Lord's words are inclusive...All are to be invited to become disciples of the risen Lord. The kingdom promised by him is not territorial and the commission is not a territorial commission (:183).

By having their mission focus exclusively on their own ethnic group, minority ethnic churches ignore the fact that the risen Jesus 'boldly and unreservedly, sends his followers to disciple "all nations"' (Bosch 2004:64-65).

11.1.3 Refugees, evangelism and homogeneity

According to Randy Woodley (2004:61) there is a strong emphasis on homogeneity in the Church in North America. Homogeneity, or sameness, is seen as the key to successful numerical church growth. '[The] fastest way to build a megachurch, according to the experts', writes Woodley, 'is to target a single ethnicity, race, culture or income' (:61). The same philosophy can be found in British churches. In their report *Mission-shaped Church* the Church of England (2004:107), for example, encourages its members to plant churches for specific cultural groups. The report then goes on to defend the Homogeneous Unit Principle upon which this strategy is based (:108). The authors of the report present three arguments which they believe justify the planting of homogeneous churches. Firstly, it is argued that God created many diverse cultures and while no culture is perfect they are 'part of God's handiwork' (:108). Secondly, the authors point out that Jesus chose a certain culture and time for his incarnation. Consequently, Christians need to follow this 'incarnation principle' when it comes to church planting. Thirdly, sociological research, the authors claim, has shown that where two cultures are grouped together one culture sooner or later will dominate the other (:109).

The *Homogeneous Unit Principle*, which was first introduced by Donald McGavran has, as Clarke (1995:21) remarks, 'caused some strong feelings.' Harvie Conn and Manuel Ortiz (2001:317) identify two main criticisms. Firstly, critics argue that the principle is the cause of division and racism in the Church. And secondly, they allege that the principle leads to a missiology based on social science and not on Scripture. This latter criticism is quite vividly expressed by DeYoung, Emerson, Yancey and Kim (2004). Thus, they write:

Building congregations around a homogenous grouping is a sociological principle based on what is comfortable and marketable. Unity is the New Testament model of church growth based on the power of the Holy Spirit to reconcile people across socially constructed divides (:132-133).

In his book *Mission between the Times* Rene Padilla (1985) comes to a similar conclusion. Padilla notes:

The New Testament clearly shows that the apostles, while rejecting "assimilationist racism", never contemplated the possibility of forming homogenous unit churches that would then express their unity in terms of interchurch relationships. Each church was meant to portray the

oneness of its members regardless of their racial, cultural or social differences, and in order to reach that aim the apostles suggested practical measures (:167).

Padilla underlines the fact that the early Church grew across racial, social, and cultural barriers (:167). The findings of my research show that this remains the case in contemporary Britain.

I found that there was strong support for homogeneity both at Cornerstone Church and Nottingham Chinese Christian Church (cf. 10.2.3.3.3 & 10.3.3.5). Leaders of both churches held that Chinese or Iranian Christians were more effective in evangelising other Chinese or Iranian people than white British Christians. However, the findings of my research seem to present an alternative reality. Firstly, it was self-evident that Cornerstone Church was much more successful in their evangelistic outreach to Chinese University students and scholars than the Nottingham Chinese Christian Church (Prill 2005c:44). Cornerstone Church attracted a hundred or more Chinese who were interested in the Christian faith. The church ran special seminars and small groups in which Chinese students and scholars had the opportunity to enquire about the Christian faith in a very open and non-threatening atmosphere. Secondly, when I spoke to Iranians who had become Christians in Nottingham, many of them mentioned non-Iranian members of Cornerstone Church who had introduced them to Christianity. They stressed the fact that these church members had played a crucial role in their journey of faith. The analysis of the baptismal testimonies of Iranian Christians appeared to confirm this. The following statement of a male Iranian Christian is a typical example:

The first time I went to church I met Andy and Jane Balsan, and after that I came to Cornerstone every week. I also met lots of other people who talked to me about Jesus. I went to the Easy Access sessions. We also had weekly bible studies in my home. I began to know about Jesus better than before (Gholi 2002:1).

This kind of experience was shared by many Chinese Christians who were baptised at Cornerstone Church. One of them wrote in her baptismal testimony:

I joined a Bible study class after I arrived in Nottingham led by Bill, Paul and Amy. After that, I met many Christians in church and the Globe Café, which is a place organised for international students to get to know British culture and Christianity. They made me think in depth about Christianity. I was influenced by the love they showed (Ng 2005:6).

In her book *God's Foreign Policy* Miriam Adeney (1984:95) makes the claim that ethnic churches are far more effective in their outreach than ethnically mixed churches. According to Adeney (:95-96) this is especially true with regard to international visitors and refugees. However, the findings of my research fail to confirm Adeney's assertion. They suggest that the holistic and incarnational attitude of those reaching out to international visitors and forced migrants is much more important than a common ethnic background. Furthermore, it shows that openness and solidarity are more important for an effective outreach than belonging to the same ethnic group (for a detailed discussion see 15.2.1 & 15.2.2.1).

11.1.4 Refugees and racism

In his book *Urban Christianity and Global Order* Andrew Davey (2001) makes an important observation about the purpose of minority ethnic churches. Writing about the experience of ethnic minorities in Britain, Davey argues that it is characterised by racism and social disadvantage (:95). He then goes on to say that '[m]inority ethnic churches often provide a security and support structure which mainstream denominations have been unable to offer because of competing interests within the local church' (:95). My research at the Nottingham Chinese Christian Church supports Davey's observations. At the Chinese Church I met Christians who had experienced racism and discrimination both in society at large and in English-speaking majority churches (cf. 10.3.3.3). These Chinese Christians considered the Nottingham Chinese Christian Church as a place where they were safe from any form of racial discrimination.

The function of a minority ethnic church as a place of refuge must not be underestimated. As I have shown above, there is sufficient evidence of discrimination and racism against refugees and asylum seekers in Britain (cf. 4.2.2.2). Against this background it is possible to argue that it is essential to have separate refugee churches that provide a safe place for Christian refugees and asylum seekers. However, DeYoung, Emerson, Yancey and Kim (2004) point out that there are other ways of providing refuge for Christians who belong to minority ethnic groups. Thus, DeYoung and his co-authors suggest that a 'church within a church' model can serve the same purpose (:141). They write:

In this kind of church, the overall membership is multiracial. However, there can be special fellowship groups within the larger congregation that exist to meet the specific needs of particular populations...Through this “Church within an Church” model, members can benefit from membership in a multiracial congregation while still having the opportunity to have fellowship on a close level with coethnics (:141-142).

My research at Cornerstone Church shows that such a model can actually provide a haven for refugees and asylum seekers. At Cornerstone I found what some of the church leaders and members of the refugee ministry team called a *congregation within the congregation* model in successful operation. The Iranian congregation was seen as part of the Cornerstone congregation, even though it had its own Farsi-speaking meetings because there were both formal and informal links with the larger English-speaking congregation. Iranian Christians saw Cornerstone not only as a place where they were safe from the kind of discrimination that they were facing outside the church, they also experienced Cornerstone as the only place in Nottingham where they could form substantial friendships with British people. Consequently, the Cornerstone example shows that a separate refugee church is not necessarily the only place that can serve as a harbour for refugees and asylum seekers. The successful indigenous church offers the dual advantage of a place of relative safety and the forum within which refugees and asylum seekers are helped to establish relationships and friendships with members of the indigenous population and other ethnic minorities.

11.1.5 Refugees and culture

11.1.5.1 Language and worship

One of the cultural arguments that Miriam Adeney (1994:95) presents for supporting the idea of ethnic churches is that everyone has the right to worship God in her or his own mother tongue and in a way she or he is familiar with. The opportunity to speak their mother tongue and to worship in their own language was clearly one of the reasons for many of the elderly church members of both the German Lutheran Congregation and the Nottingham Chinese Christian Church to attend these churches (cf. 10.3.3).

However, the example of Cornerstone Church with its *congregation within the congregation* model shows that these specific needs can be met within the context of a multi-ethnic church, too (cf. DeYoung, Emerson, Yancey & Kim 2004:142). Not only did the Iranian Christians at Cornerstone have their own Farsi-speaking house groups and worship services, these events also differed from the services and house group meetings of the English-speaking congregation in style and format (Prill 2005c:15, 24 & 28). Thus, Iranian house groups were less formal than those of the English-speaking congregation. There was a strong emphasis on community and quite often Iranian Christians would bring their children to these meetings. Iranian house group meetings reminded me very much of house churches. The songs and hymns sung in the Iranian service were overwhelmingly Iranian Christian songs, and not just Iranian versions of English songs or hymns. There were times of open prayer and the order of worship would vary from Sunday to Sunday depending on the person who was leading the service. Members of the Cornerstone refugee ministry team did not expect Iranian Christians to mirror the English church. Iranian Christians had the freedom and scope to worship God in their own way.

11.1.5.2 Cultural oases and social networks

One of the findings of my research, both at the Nottingham Chinese Christian Church and the German Lutheran Congregation Nottingham, is that these churches were seen as a kind of cultural oasis that helped their members keep in touch with their own cultural heritage (cf. 10.3.3.2). Both churches were viewed as places where one could meet other people of the same ethnocultural background and those with similar life stories. In addition, the Chinese Church was seen as a place where Chinese culture was passed on to the younger generation. Writing about Latin American immigrants in Europe Miguel Palomino (2004) makes a similar point.

Palomino notes:

Immigrants normally prefer to attend masses and services conducted in their own language. The ethnic church thus is key for the spiritual and moral support of the immigrant, and the priest or minister becomes an authority figure who helps reaffirm the immigrant's identity and culture. Though churches are not social clubs, yet sociologically speaking, they are seen as havens, communities that become the immigrants' extended families (:56-57).

The function of an ethnic church in preserving one's culture is also mentioned by DeYoung and his co-authors (2004:118-120). However, the question is whether this function is as important as Palomino claims. As I have shown above, one of the characteristics of our global age is the emergence of transnational social relations and communities (cf. 3.4.6). This aspect of globalisation has consequences for the accepted understanding of culture. Traditionally, culture has been viewed as something closely connected with place. In the *Oxford Dictionary of Geography* (Mayhew 1997:110), for example, we can find the term *cultural region* which it defines as 'a region characterised by a common culture'. But in our globalising world, as John Leonard (2004:66) writes, culture 'has been separated from geography'. Richard Tiplady (2003b:57) speaks of deterritorialised cultures that 'can no longer be exclusively assigned to certain places or regions.' Thus, it is much easier for today's migrants to keep in touch with their own culture while living in another country. This is made possible not only by the internet, satellite TV, and a growing number of fast means of transport but also by supraterritorial markets which offer familiar food and everyday goods to expatriates enabling them to keep their national identity (Scholte 2000:171). Furthermore, today's cultures are not only deterritorialised but also hyperdifferentiated (Tiplady 2003b:57). Hyperdifferentiation of cultures means that migrants live in different cultures simultaneously. They belong to different worlds at the same time. Last but not least, cultures are more and more hybridised as a result of globalisation (:58). New cultures are formed by mixing existing ones. Leonard (2004:67) notes:

[S]ince culture is freed from geography, people can now identify with cultures from countries that they never lived in. They can mix and match cultures to their liking. In the global cities of our world, where cultures are laid one on top of the other, we should expect many new hybrid cultures to be forming.

Jan Aart Scholte (2000:180) points out that the current hybridisation of cultures is not a completely new phenomenon. Immigrants of all times have found themselves between two different cultures. 'However', Scholte (:180) continues, 'the immediacy of the world in contemporary conditions of globalization has greatly multiplied and intensified experiences of being several selves at once.'

Consequently, it can be argued that the idea of the migrant church as the centre of cultural maintenance and social life has lost its significance in an age of globalisation. My research supports this view. At the German Lutheran Congregation social and cultural elements played an even more important role in the past (cf. 10.3.4.1). In the first decades of its existence it was the social life and the German culture that brought many people to the church. The church was at the centre of the German community in the Nottingham area (Von Gottberg 2004). Regular visits by the German consul to the church, surgeries held by the German Embassy on the church premises, and a flourishing German-speaking school for children organised by church members, were clear signs of the central role the church played at that time. In recent years the German Lutheran Congregation has lost this function for the vast majority of German-speakers in Nottingham, despite the fact that there are a growing number of younger Germans who come to the area as short term visitors or permanent residents. Like the German Lutheran Congregation, the Nottingham Chinese Christian Church had a group of elderly people for whom the church was a place that helped them to maintain their cultural identity (cf. 10.3.3.2). But, significantly, a multi-ethnic church like Cornerstone managed to attract far more Chinese students and university scholars than the Nottingham Chinese Christian Church. In other words, for younger Chinese people who came to Nottingham, the Chinese Church was obviously less attractive than an English-speaking multi-ethnic congregation. They apparently did not feel the need to attend a Chinese church and appeared more willing to engage in social experiment. Some of them went to an English-speaking church with the positive intent of learning more about British culture (Prill 2005c:44).

11.1.6 Refugees and the practical side of church

According to the critics of multi-ethnic churches like Miriam Adeney (1984:96) the dominant culture in society will also dominate church life if its worship is based on the culture of the majority group. That the life of a multi-ethnic church is controlled by the culture of the majority group is a potential risk that cannot be ruled out. In an article entitled *The Multiethnic Church: Unity Inside vs. Community Outside?* Robert Lupton (1996) tells of his own experience with a multi-ethnic urban church in the United States. Lupton writes:

As time went along, however, we began to notice that the style of worship and the planning of activities was being influenced by our more educated members. The less confident among us seemed gradually to drift to the periphery of congregational life. Even though we took great pains to include everyone..., thoughtful gestures could no longer conceal the fact that the strong were in charge. In their desire to merely be responsible, the stronger inadvertently skewed things toward their own cultural and theological preferences. The out-classed members eventually sensed the subtle shift and, when not carefully attended, would quietly slip away (:6).

However, what critics like Adeney fail to acknowledge is that ethnically-kindred churches are confronted with challenges and risks, too. Thus, my evidence from the Nottingham Chinese Christian Church and the German Lutheran Congregation shows that minority ethnic churches also face a variety of practical problems. One problem is the recruitment of qualified pastoral staff (cf. 10.3.4.6). The Nottingham Chinese Christian Church was struggling to find new pastors for their three congregations. One of the main reasons for this was that there were not enough potential UK candidates who fitted the job profile. Overseas Chinese pastors from Hong Kong or Taiwan tended to go the United States because of the higher stipends on offer (Prill 2005c:63). The same factors applied when Cornerstone were looking for an Iranian pastoral worker for the Farsi-speaking congregation (Prill 2005c:22-23). After failing to appoint an Iranian pastor church leaders decided to sponsor an Iranian bible college student and to employ him after his graduation, committing financial support of almost £2,000 per year towards his training with a part-time starting salary of £10,000 (Cornerstone 2006a:19). The Iranian Christians would not have been able to do the same as an independent church. They benefited from the fact that they were part of an indigenous church that was willing to spend a significant amount of money on the Farsi-speaking ministry.

Another challenge which minority ethnic churches face is what can be called the community challenge. Both the Nottingham Chinese Christian Church and the German Lutheran Congregation Nottingham found difficulty in creating a sense of community (cf. 10.3.4.4). The main reason for this was that their church members and regular visitors were widely dispersed in different areas of Greater Nottingham and beyond. As a result less mobile elderly members of the German Church found it difficult to come to church and take part in the church's activities. At Cornerstone Church Iranian refugees and asylum seekers were confronted with a similar transport problem. But here this problem was overcome by English

church members who organised transport for members of the Iranian group by giving them lifts to and from the church. A related community challenge was the isolation of minority ethnic churches from the local community. Both the German and the Chinese churches had no contact with the immediate community where they met for Sunday worship, whether civic or Christian.

11.1.7 Refugees and their second generation

According to Miriam Adeney (1984:94-95) another reason for the establishment of ethnic churches is that God is glorified by ethnic and cultural diversity. She asserts that this is best achieved through a great variety of mono-ethnic churches. Adeney writes that ‘God anticipates all peoples and tribes and kindreds and nations swirling around his throne in a kaleidoscope of color, not an undifferentiated beige mass’ (:94). However, what Adeney overlooks is that minority ethnic churches are not necessarily as culturally uniform as she assumes. Thus, my research shows that the children of Christian immigrants, i.e. the second generation, may differ significantly in their cultural identities from their parents. I came across this second generation phenomenon not only at the German and Chinese churches but also during my time with the Iranian Christians at Cornerstone Church (cf. 10.3.4.3; Prill 2005c:16). The most obvious cultural difference was the language facility of first and second generation immigrants. At the Chinese church it was striking that the British born second generation used English as their first language while their parents’ ability to speak the language of the host country was limited. In the Iranian group the situation was similar. Iranian parents would speak Farsi to their children and the children would answer them in English. According to the Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain (2002:36) this kind of cultural diversity is a standard characteristic of immigrant communities in the United Kingdom. In their report *The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain* the commission members write that immigrant communities are ‘less unitary, more diverse and varied, than is normally imagined’. The report then goes on to say:

New communities remain strongly identified with family and cultural and religious traditions of origin. But these are also being integrated into evolving self-conceptions. A sense of identification is weaker for younger members than it is for their elders. Although many continue to express allegiance to distinctive cultural traditions and religious beliefs, there is a visible decline in actual participation across the generations (:36).

This second generation phenomenon posed a severe problem for the German Lutheran Congregation and the Nottingham Chinese Christian Church. At the German Church all services and church activities were held in German only. Unsurprisingly, the anglicised second generation was not present at the church. The church became what Ron Benefiel (1996:40) calls a memorial church, i.e. a church 'with the limited mission of caring for aging saints and preserving the memory of its heritage'.

In a first attempt to respond to the fact that the second generation felt much more comfortable speaking English than Chinese, the Chinese Church had decided to introduce a weekly bilingual English-Cantonese service. Since the second generation did not feel comfortable with this service either, it later introduced a weekly English service. By doing so the church opened itself up to non-Chinese Christians. During my research at the Chinese Church the English-speaking congregation was joined by an Indian Christian and an Italian Christian, both of whom preferred to worship in a minority ethnic church (Prill 2005c:50).

The situation for the Iranian Christians was slightly different but they too benefited from the fact that they were part of a de facto multi-congregational church. While their parents attended the Farsi-speaking service Iranian children took part in Cornerstone's English-speaking Sunday school programme. In other terms, Cornerstone Church, with its *congregation within the congregation* model, offered a place of spiritual nurture for both generations (see also 11.2.2.2.2; DeYoung, Emerson, Yancey & Kim 2004:143).

11.1.8 Refugees and the New Testament church

11.1.8.1 Multi-ethnic church as the standard model of church

According to the North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention (NAMB undated) the planting of ethnic churches is not only an important strategy for today's church but it is also an approach that was used by the early church. Thus the Board states:

Ethnic church planting since its beginnings have strengthen[ed], unified, and drawn solid leaders to start New Testament Churches. Just like the apostle Paul, Ethnic Church Planting has planted cultural churches throughout North America. Paul looked toward places such as Galatia,

Macedonia, Achaia, and Asia. Today new exciting ethnic congregations are being planted in Toronto, Miami, San Diego, and Seattle (NAMB undated).

What the Southern Baptist Mission Board here suggests is that the planting of mono-ethnic churches was at the heart of Paul's mission strategy. This view is in sharp contrast to what Curtiss DeYoung (2004) and his co-authors say about the nature of the New Testament church. For them it was the planting of multicultural churches that dominated the mission of the early church. They write:

The early congregations of the church of God were culturally diverse. In Jerusalem they bridged the diversity of culture found among the Jewish people of the time. Outside Jerusalem, congregations bridged the separation between Jews, Samaritans, and Gentiles. Followers of Christ continued to establish multicultural congregations beyond the time recorded in the New Testament into the second century (:37).

My own research into the nature of the New Testament church confirms this latter view (cf. 6.2.1 & 6.2.2). While the church in Jerusalem was a mono-ethnic community it was nonetheless linguistically and culturally diverse. Leadership was shared between members of the Aramaic-speaking majority and the Greek-speaking minority. Other churches, such as the churches in Antioch, Philippi, Thessalonica, Beroea and Corinth, were also ethnically mixed. The evidence is that the multi-ethnic character of these Pauline communities was a result of Paul's theology and mission strategy. Paul believed in the unity of all believers beyond racial, social or gender distinctions. He deliberately planted and fostered multi-ethnic churches. The fact that the members of his missionary teams came from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds reflects his universal approach.

According to Manuel Ortiz (1996:131), Paul's teaching about the unity of all Christians in Galatians 3:28 'is fundamental to establishing a multiethnic church.' Other important passages, writes Ortiz, are Ephesians 2:14-15, 19 and Colossians 3:9-11 (:131-132). The former emphasises the fact that Christians are a new humanity while the latter stresses that the 'Christ Culture' has removed any cultural distinctions. Finally, Ortiz mentions 1 John 4:7 as crucial for establishing a biblical foundation for the multi-ethnic church model (:132). Stephen Rhodes (1998) makes the same case based on the Old Testament. In *Where the Nations Meet* he writes that multicultural churches fulfil God's promise to Abraham to bless all nations (:35).

What all these arguments have in common is that they are purely dogmatic arguments. Of course, that does not reduce their significance, but the question remains: Is there a Scripture based argument which resonates in an age of globalisation?

11.1.8.2 Multi-ethnic church as a contrast society in the age of globalisation

In his book *Jesus and Community* Gerhard Lohfink (1984) develops the idea of the church as a *contrast society* or *counter society*. The church as a contrast society is a community of holy people, of brothers and sisters who belong to God and who have a life pattern that is different from the world's understanding of life (:131). It is a society without racial and social barriers (:126). The contrast-society is characterised by attributes such as love, patience, goodness, and humility (:126). According to Lohfink this model of church is a truly biblical model. 'The entire New Testament', he writes, 'sees the church as a contrast-society which stands in sharp contrast to the world' (:132). Unfortunately, the Church has lost this perspective (:132). The reason, for this, Lohfink argues, is the emphasis on personal piety rather than the holiness of the church as a whole.

In *Church: Community for the Kingdom* John Fuellenbach (2004) takes up Lohfink's model of the church as a contrast-society. For Fuellenbach this church model has application in an era of globalisation (:201). The process of globalisation, he writes, is further justification for the church to return to its original state of being a contrast society. According to Fuellenbach, the church as a contrast society in a global age is a community that practices global solidarity with the victims of globalisation. Fuellenbach notes:

If globalization could grow into global solidarity and cooperation also with the poor and marginalized, then it would mean greater unity among the peoples of the earth and a greater respect for the person, who is created in Gods' image. It is exactly in this context that the church today must once again consider itself as a contrast society, which, in contrast to a society of competition and success, will understand itself as being on the side of those who drop out of this process since they can neither produce nor consume (:202).

Fuellenbach goes on to say that the church today is challenged to become a community that is ruled by compassion and justice (:202).

While one can only agree with Fuellenbach's call for justice and solidarity it is worth noting that his view of globalisation comes very close to that of the hyperglobalists who understand globalisation first and foremost in economic terms (cf. 2.1.1). Thus, Fuellenbach writes that globalisation has divided the world 'into haves and have-nots', that it has created two sections in the world whose relationship is one of 'exploitation and dependency' (:201). With such a view of globalisation it is not surprising that Fuellenbach overlooks the role that the church plays as a contrast society at local level.

According to the transformationist view of globalisation, modern society is rapidly changed by both integrating and fragmenting forces (cf. 2.2.3). These contradictory forces are inherent to migration. As discussed above, globalisation has a culturally integrating effect when the culture of migrant communities becomes transnational (cf. 11.1.5.2). However, parallel fragmenting forces of globalisation are at work too, when they trigger the growth of ethno-nationalism (Scholte 2000:182). According to Scholte (2000:168), the growth of ethnic movements must be understood as a defensive reaction to an increase in supraterritoriality. However, when a local church embraces both voluntary and forced migrants instead of helping them to set up their own ethnic churches it becomes a truly contrast society because it becomes a model of God's alternative community. A multi-ethnic church can be a place where racism, stimulated by ethno-nationalism, is overcome. The evidence at Cornerstone is that this was exactly the experience of a number of Iranian refugees and asylum seekers (cf. 10.2.5.1). They clearly saw the church as a contrast society. For them the church was the only place where they could make friends with indigenous people and experience love and acceptance. And since the Iranian group included a high proportion of single men Cornerstone became the forum in which they could participate in the contrast society by finding indigenous Christian life partners (cf. 10.2.3.1; Howard 2005:10).

11.2 Strategies for the integration of refugees and asylum seekers

11.2.1 Stumbling blocks on the way towards integration

My research shows that there are a number of stumbling blocks preventing the smooth integration of refugees and asylum seekers into an indigenous church. Some of these stumbling blocks have previously been identified by a number of scholars. Several proponents of the multi-ethnic church model have described the issues that churches can face when they set out on a journey to become a multi-ethnic church. My findings add to this list and suggest that some issues can make the integration of refugees and asylum seekers difficult or even jeopardise it. In the following chapters I summarise the stumbling blocks specified by others in the literature on multi-ethnic churches. After that I will discuss the *new* barriers that my research has identified.

11.2.1.1 'Old' stumbling blocks: Language, culture and ethnocentrism

According to David Wells (2004:2), one of the hard issues that churches are confronted with is language barriers. Wells argues that if there is one language which is used in church predominantly, persons who are less capable of speaking that language find it difficult to be understood by the majority of people in church. My Cornerstone research confirms this. Language problems were universally identified by Iranian refugees and asylum seekers, church leaders and members of the refugee ministry team, as one of the main barriers to integration (cf. 10.2.3.2.2; 10.2.4.3; 10.2.5.3). The fundamental importance of language is also mentioned by Darrell Jackson (2005) in his Scottish case study. In his article entitled *From Strangers to Friends: The churches in Europe in their encounter with the global South* Jackson describes the attempts of a Church of Scotland congregation to integrate a group of Iranian refugees and asylum seekers. Language training played an important role in this process. Jackson notes:

The church has been working with the Farsi group to provide English language training. The argument for this is that English is a useful common language for the refugees of different language groups to use among themselves. It also seems to be the case that some members of the church feel that it would be better to teach the local language to enable the Persians to integrate more rapidly into local communities and society at large. Some of the refugees are also taking

language classes in the indigenous language. Church members are helping to teach English after Sunday morning worship (:5).

Like the leaders of Cornerstone Church, members of this Scottish Presbyterian parish church seemed to see the language barrier as a barrier that the Iranian refugees had to overcome. Furthermore, like some Cornerstone leaders, there were members in this church who believed that it was the task of the church to help Iranian refugees to assimilate into British society as quickly as possible. Jackson (2005:6) writes that some church members believed that the 'priority should be to integrate the refugees more closely into the host society'. For them this meant 'finding appropriate housing, teaching the local language, and finding employment' (:6). Integration was defined as a one-sided process.

Other obstacles to achieving a multicultural church that Wells (2004:2) lists are cultural ignorance, ethnically-based stereotyping by members of the host culture, and racism. Kathryn Antil (2004:62-63) identifies similar barriers in Canada. Antil speaks of indifference, stereotyping, discrimination and ethnocentrism as obstacles to forming a truly intercultural church. She defines ethnocentrism as the conviction that one's own culture is more advanced than others (:63). In a church context this might mean that Christians believe that their own leadership style, or the theological training of their clergy are superior to that of Christians from other countries. As a result of such attitudes indigenous Christians become blind to the positive contributions that Christians from other parts of the world are able to make. Antil writes: 'Basically, it is the attitude that the immigrant must learn "our ways" because they are the best ways of doing things' (:63). Rob Brynjolfson (2004:53), a pastor of a bilingual church in Canada, uses the term 'cultural imperialism' to describe this kind of mind-set.

As a reason for indifference towards Christian immigrants, Antil (2004) cites the busyness of indigenous Christians. '[M]any Canadians', she notes 'are too busy to take heed of their ethnic neighbours. Work, social engagements, entertainment, and church allow them little time to reach out to the foreigner within their midst' (:62). While Wells and Antil speak of racism as a stumbling block, Brynjolfson (2004:53-54) identifies a lack of acceptance and concurrency. Brynjolfson writes about his own experience in a church that had a group of Christian immigrants:

When our lingual-specific ministry chose independence from the larger congregation, it was essentially due to a lack of concurrency, or acceptance. We gradually came to the conclusion that we were better off on our own because we could not obtain the assurance that the vision of the larger church, values the needs of the lingual-specific congregation. Essentially, we felt tolerated, but never accepted. Frequent reminders of this came in the form of veiled threats implying that the door was open (:53).

A further stumbling block Antil (2004:62) calls 'paternalism', while Brynjolfson (2004:54) speaks of 'a lack of sensitivity in the decision-making process'. This barrier presents itself when Christian immigrants are not treated as equals (Antil 2004:62). Amongst other things they do not find themselves represented in church leadership (Brynjolfson 2004:54). They are, as Wells (2004:2) points out, excluded from leadership responsibilities though they might take an active part in the daily life of the church.

Some writers assert that a strong belief in homogeneity can obstruct the transition to a multi-ethnic church. Brynjolfson (2004:55) argues that commitment to the homogeneous unit principle leads to the expectation that Christian immigrants should adapt to the dominant national culture and to the organisational culture of the local church. This expectation is fostered by the conviction that the process of cultural adaptation is an automatic one. Craig Garriot (1996:31) points out that the advocates of the homogeneous unit principle usually emphasise the *not yet* aspect of the kingdom of God, while the supporters of the multi-ethnic church stress the *already* timing of God's kingdom on earth.

Finally, Wells (2004:2) argues that differences in people's worldview and spirituality can inhibit the formation of a multi-ethnic church. Such differences, he writes, can lead to disillusionment and judgement.

The evidence of Cornerstone shows that the barriers mentioned by Antil (2004), Brynjolfson (2004) and Wells (2004) can also be found in the British church. Some British members at Cornerstone acknowledged their indifference toward Iranian Christians. Like Antil, the church manager pointed to the busy life-style that many church members led as an explanation for this phenomenon (Hampton 2005). He said:

There are some people who are very involved with the Iranian group. Other people, simply by the nature of their day, don't have the time to make a lot of new friends and put themselves out into this particular area. And that probably carries the majority of people (:4-5).

Another attitude evident at Cornerstone was belief in the superiority of one's own culture and theological tradition (cf. 10.2.3.2.1). I also encountered stereotyping. Thus, the group of Iranian Christians was seen by British church members as a homogeneous group, rather than a collection of individuals with different educational and social backgrounds. The church manager confirmed my observation (Hampton 2005:5). He admitted that the majority of church members would probably 'group them all together'. I also came across some ethnically-based stereotyping. Thus, it was assumed that Iranian Christians would be more familiar with a patriarchal style of leadership and a submissive role for women in society and church. Addressing cultural differences one of my interview partners said:

I'm appreciating that at ground level, because we are all sinners saved by grace; but there are issues in terms of behaviours and lifestyles and cultural differences, some of which require challenge and addressing on [an] individual basis with folks. Other issues which arise more for the group as a whole in terms of how they relate to, for example, might be women in the church or it might just be anybody in the church (Gribbin 2005:4-5).

Another interviewee assumed that women in the Iranian group felt isolated for cultural reasons (J. Taylor 2005:4), while another interviewee believed that Iranian culture was one in which deceit and the use of half-truths was commonplace (P. Lewis 2005b:3).

Cornerstone's church leadership demonstrated a paternalistic attitude towards the Iranian refugees and asylum seekers in a number of ways. The leadership was exclusively white and British (cf. 10.2.3.3.3). Other ethnic groups were not represented either. Iranian refugees were excluded from church membership, and they were not consulted when the church leadership decided to employ two pastoral workers for the group. The decision was a unilateral one by the church leadership, ratified by the church membership and announced to the Iranian Christians in one of their services (Prill 2005c:82). This was even more remarkable for a church committed to congregational church government.

These leadership attitudes appeared to stem from two firmly held views: a strong belief in homogeneity and a belief in the principle of personal choice and preference (cf. 10.2.3.3.2).

These views seemed mutually supportive. According to the principle of personal choice, individuals can choose freely from many different options according to their own preferences (Boevel 1999:29). Thus, one of the church leaders told me:

[Y]ou can't cater for absolutely every different group that comes in to you. So I think it is a question of people of 'what you see is what you get'. We say this to anybody who is even British that comes from another church into Cornerstone. And even different churches have got different flavours. A small church that is, maybe, traditional with old ladies and old hymns and they maybe say 'That's what we like'. Well, if that's what they like they have come to the wrong church if that's what they are wanting (Webster 2005:13).

Theo Sundermeier (2000:36) speaks of the 'multi-options society' while Michael Moynagh (2001:18) uses the term 'It-must-fit-me World' to describe such an attitude, which is counterproductive when it comes to the integration of Christian refugees who have needs that are very different from indigenous church members.

11.2.1.2 'New' stumbling blocks

11.2.1.2.1 The challenge to change

In his article entitled *Global Society: Challenges for Christian Mission*, Vinoth Ramachandra (2004:15) calls upon indigenous churches in the West not only to be willing to learn from Christian immigrants from the southern hemisphere but also to work together with them in urban mission. For this to happen, writes Ramachandra, traditional church leaders in the West need to be humble and wise. A similar point is made by Samuel Escobar (2003). Like Ramachandra, Escobar (2003:18) calls for new partnerships in mission between western Christians and Christian immigrants from Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Such partnerships require the leaders of western churches to change their way of thinking. Escobar speaks of 'the need of a serious self-appraisal'. He then goes on to say that '[t]his is not easy for respectable, middle-class evangelical churches that have a steadier, institutionalized, well-mannered, predictable kind of church' (:18). What Escobar and Ramachandra suggest is that a lack of humility and the reluctance to change from traditional views on being church can be serious stumbling blocks to the development of new partnerships. The evidence of my research confirms Escobar's and Ramachandra's evaluation. Resistance to change can subvert

partnerships between indigenous and immigrant Christians. This is especially the case when Christian immigrants are forced migrants who wish to become part of an indigenous church. However, my Cornerstone research indicates some of the reasons why church leaders find change difficult and these go deeper than maintaining traditions and need to be taken seriously.

Trust and mistrust

Despite the many positive attitudes which Cornerstone's leadership had towards refugees and asylum seekers, there were also distinct areas and levels of mistrust. Two critical areas were prominent. Firstly, there was the question of the ethical conduct of refugees and asylum seekers (cf. 10.2.3.3.1). Some church leaders were concerned that Iranian refugees and asylum seekers were involved in illegal activities. Secondly, there was the question of the genuineness of conversion (cf. 10.2.3.3.1). Some church leaders questioned the motives of refugees and asylum seekers in wanting to be baptised. They assumed that asylum seekers would request baptism largely to assist their case for asylum. Darrell Jackson (2005) mentions the question of conversion and baptism as key issues which the ministry among refugees and asylum seekers posits. Jackson writes:

It is likely that some of the Farsi group see baptism as a possible means of speeding up the process of gaining refugee status. For others, their investigation of the Christian faith has prompted a genuine search for personal faith and discipleship. Some members of the church are unhappy with baptizing those who request without a genuine experience of Christian conversion (:5).

In fairness to those who questioned the depths of conversion and Christian commitment among Iranian refugees and asylum seekers, the church had been unwittingly misled by some individuals (Prill 2005c:86). However, Cornerstone's church leaders who were most suspicious were those who had the least personal contact with Iranian refugees and asylum seekers (Prill 2005c:41).

In his article *Valuing Trust* David Hilborn (2004) argues that mistrust is the root of many problems within church and society in 21st century Britain. Hilborn notes:

No doubt many of the spiritual and social problems which blight our nation today have their root in a breakdown of trust – between different classes and ethnic groups, between parents and children, government and governed, bosses and workers, neighbours and colleagues (:1-2).

Hilborn (2004:2) goes on to say that the Christian Church has, in Jesus Christ, the ‘greatest antidote to mistrust’. He recognises that the church herself has a poor trust record. Against this background he suggests that Christians re-discover the biblical concept of trust, and practice this in a way that persuades people to trust them as individuals, the church as an organisation, and Christ as their Lord and Saviour. Hilborn points out that the Bible portrays God not only as someone who can be trusted but also as someone who has trust in human beings and entrusts them with certain tasks (:2). And by doing so God is taking risks. Hilborn notes:

Even today, as the world faces a whole range of ecological challenges, from global warming to deforestation, God entrusts us with working together to find solutions. In commanding man and woman to become one flesh, to be fruitful and multiply, and to name the animals, God devolved to them some creative power, and took the risk that such power might be wielded wrongly (Gen. 1:26-2:24). When this happened at the fall, he did not abandon his errant children, but drew them back to himself (:3).

What Hilborn is saying here is that trust is at the heart of God’s mission. Consequently, trust should be the underlying principle of everything the church does. And this involves taking risks and being willing to forgive when people have abused trust. A trusting environment is a prerequisite for the successful integration of asylum seekers and refugees into an indigenous church. However, building trust, as Gibbs (2005:128-129) points out, takes even more time and patience when it involves people who have already suffered from the effects of broken trust, the experience of many refugees and asylum seekers.

Change management, anxiety, and power

In his book *The Good Management Guide for the Voluntary Sector* John Harris (2002:65) writes that ‘[b]oth the public and voluntary sector are having to learn to deal with many layers of change, and to accept that change is a never-ending process’. This insight is especially relevant in our rapidly changing global society, and it is relevant for Christian churches in the west. But unfortunately this is easier said than done. Almost inevitably organisational change is frequently construed as a threat. The church is no exception. While today there are some in the church in Britain who see the need to change, others vehemently resist any suggestion of

this (Lawrence 2004:42). As John Finney (1989:133) writes, the reason for resistance to change is primarily a fear of danger:

Moses thought so as he approached Pharaoh, and Paul thought so as he made his way ‘with much trembling’ to Corinth (1 Cor 2:30). Christian leaders down the ages have found that proposing and implementing change is hazardous work.

According to Finney (1989:133), it is the task of church leadership to communicate its vision for change to the congregation and to see that its vision is implemented. To be successful church leaders need to take a number of factors into consideration including the morale of the church and the feelings of those involved (:139). Richard Higginson (1996:92) points out that the creation of a specific vision and the communication of this vision is generally unproblematic. It is only when leaders start implementing their vision by introducing substantial changes that resistance comes. In such cases, Ian Smith (2006:77-78) suggests that there are a number of strategies to adopt. Smith recommends an open and honest approach, a gradual introduction of changes, and discovery of compromises which lie outside the planned changes (:78). He finds that change is made easier when leaders can point to examples where similar changes have already been successful. Finally, he argues that it might be necessary to make space for opponents (:79). Smith writes:

Sometimes this is what has to be done to accommodate those who cannot be persuaded. As long as this does not affect the rest of the parish in a detrimental way it may be a good option to consider. However, be very careful and reserve this option for when all else fails (:79).

The threat of change is intensified when it impacts church leadership - when it repositions those who are supposed to lead the church through the process of change. This is exactly what I found at Cornerstone. My evidence shows that the process of becoming an *international church* had threatened as well as encouraged the church leadership (cf. 10.2.3.3.1). Thus, church leaders feared that the growing influx of Iranian Christians could change the policies of the church and thus its direction. There was anxious talk of a hostile takeover, comparable to company mergers in the business world. The full-time church leaders, the senior pastor and the assistant pastor, were most sensitive to the apparent change in the balance of power within the church. They seemed afraid that they would lose power and control. Such apprehensions might be justified in a small church, but in a larger church like Cornerstone, with a membership of over 300 people, it appeared irrational (Prill 2005c:87).

Against this background, it is understandable that the church leadership had neither a clear vision nor detailed strategy for the integration of Iranian refugees and asylum seekers. Though the leadership as a whole was committed to the integration of Iranian Christians, the fear of losing control and influence appears to have prevented them from developing a coherent vision and outlining preferred strategies to the church membership.

Negotiating barriers of this nature are critical for integration success but difficult to achieve. The analogy of a takeover that one church leader used points to one means of resolution. When two companies merge, or one company is acquired by another, they usually face a variety of challenges. One challenge is the clash of two distinctive corporate cultures. 'The problem in mergers', writes Oliver Recklies (2001:3), 'is that people from very different organizations (and cultures) are expected to work together, to discuss, and to solve complex strategic and operative tasks'. Another problem that companies face is that mergers and acquisitions normally create an atmosphere of uncertainty and insecurity among employees (Hannagan 2005:302). Employees tend to be concerned about the security of their own jobs, potential new line managers or possible relocations (:302). To deal with these and other issues, firms rely on help from outside. In his book *The Essence of Mergers and Acquisitions* Sudi Sudarsanam (1995:101) underlines the importance of external advisers for any merger or acquisition. Sudarsanam points out that most companies do not have the *inhouse expertise* to manage a merger or acquisition successfully on their own (:101). They therefore turn to merchant banks, accountants, lawyers or strategy consultants for support (:102).

This model for managing change is applicable to churches that want to integrate Christian refugees and asylum seekers. If they turned to external mission consultants who would accompany them through the integration process it is more likely that the best outcomes would be achieved. Such a role could be fulfilled by ecumenical para-church bodies such as Churches Together or the Evangelical Alliance, depending on a church's affiliation and preference. The task of these consultants would be to help church leaders analyse and understand the culture of their own church, reflect theologically on the issue of integration and its impact on the church's mission, and assist all stakeholders: the church leaders, church

members and refugees, to achieve mutual understanding, as they work together to develop a sustainable integration strategy.

Reactive leadership, church culture and globalisation

My research evidence suggests that the lack of a clear vision and specific integration strategies was also rooted in leadership style and church culture. Bryman (1999:34) and others recognise that the management of an organisational culture is a core element of leadership. The close connection between leadership and culture is especially observable in the case of the founders of an organisation and their lasting influence on the organisation's value system and preferences (:34-35). Linstead, Fulop and Lilley (2004:107) put it this way:

In particular, leaders can exert a powerful influence on the culture of their organization, especially if they are the founders. Organizations are replete with stories and myths about founders and significant leaders who came after the founder (:107).

Linstead and his co-authors go on to say that leaders can shape the organisational culture in many different ways. They can shape it by the way they react to problems, by being role models for members of their organisation, or by their influence on the organisation's structure and policy. Andrew Brown (1998) points out that there are different manifestations or elements of an organisation's culture. Firstly, there are basic assumptions. These are 'deeply rooted assumptions people share, and which guide their perceptions, feelings and emotions about things' (:27). They are assumptions about human nature, human relationships, or humanity's relationship to their environment (:28). Secondly, there are beliefs, values and attitudes. Beliefs and values are concerned with ethical codes of conduct and people's view of what is true and false while attitudes connect both values and beliefs with feelings (:28-29). Thirdly and finally, there are artefacts, which can take the form of rituals, stories, myths, symbols, or heroes (:12). With these elements in mind, Rosenfeld and Wilson (1999:270) have produced the following definition of organisational culture:

The basic values, ideologies and assumptions which guide and fashion individual and business behaviour. These values are evident in more tangible factors such as stories, ritual language and jargon, office decoration, layout and dress code among individuals.

Robbins (1987:359) points out that in almost every organisational culture one may find subcultures. These subcultures will embrace the central values of the dominant culture and in addition some values unique to members of the group that has developed that subculture. While in principle every group in an organisation can develop a subculture, this is most likely to be the case where groups are separated geographically or fulfil a specific task within the organisation.

Today we can find different classifications of organisational cultures (cf. Hannagan 2005:45-48). One classification distinguishes between power, role, task and person cultures (:45). Whereas in a power culture one can find a strong belief in taking risks, people in a role culture believe in 'the importance of security and predictability' (:45). In a task culture the importance of team work is emphasised, while in a person culture people have only their own personal interests in mind (:45). Another popular typology divides organisational cultures into creative, exploring, anticipating, reactive, and stable cultures (:46).

The senior pastor's formative influence on the church's culture at Cornerstone was conspicuous (Prill 2005c:78). Senior pastor for 36 years, he had shaped the church's culture through his preaching and teaching ministry (cf. 10.2.3.3.3). These gifts were considered to be his main ministry. Church members were quick to tell all kinds of stories about him and valued his contribution to the life of the church (Prill 2005c:78). For some church members he was a spiritual role model. A short quotation from the church's website supports this observation. In a section on the church's history we find the following passage:

So, in 1969, Peter and Valerie Lewis arrived at the Hyson Green Baptist Church - and the Church has never been the same since! In the following years, through Peter's ministry, God has changed the church from a liberal/social one to an evangelical one, and the church grew both numerically and spiritually, and has continued growing into the church it is today (Cornerstone Church 2005a).

In contrast to his forthright and organised exposition of Scripture, the senior pastor's leadership style can best be described as reactive. In consequence, the dominant culture of Cornerstone Church has followed suit and is reactive (cf. 10.2.3.1). 'A reactive culture', writes Hannigan (2005:47), 'is one where risks are accepted provided that they are small, and it is oriented to the present and accepts only minimal change'. It is a culture that can be

epitomised by the slogan 'roll on the punches' (:46). The leadership's attitude towards the integration of Iranian refugees into the church underlines the reactive character of Cornerstone's dominant culture. The leadership expressed their willingness to integrate Iranian refugees and asylum seekers but it seemed that at the same time it wanted church practice to remain as unaffected as possible. It was also reactive in being focused on the present with no real vision for the future of the Iranian group. The same was true for members of the refugee ministry team. This conservative approach can especially be seen in the leadership's reluctance to invite Iranian Christians into the membership of the church.

The Cornerstone example demonstrates that both leadership style and church culture are important factors determining the integration of refugees and asylum seekers into an indigenous church. Thus, a reactive church culture, as I found at Cornerstone Church, can impede the integration of Christian refugees and asylum seekers in its attempt to minimise risk and maintain the status quo. If this is true for a reactive church culture it must be even more true for a *stable* culture, one that is averse to all change, avoids all risk, is backward-looking and holds the conservative slogan 'Don't rock the boat' (cf. Brown 1998:73).

More positively, there are other cultures more capable of integrating refugees and asylum seekers successfully. These cultures are prepared to take more risks, are willing to accept incremental or radical change, and are future oriented. Organisational cultures that meet these criteria are an *exploring* and *creative* type of culture (cf. Brown 1998:73, Hannagan 2005:47). An exploring culture is one that is focused both on the present and the future, and works on a risk against gain trade-off. Its slogan is 'be where the action is'. In even greater contrast, a creative culture is one which is completely future oriented and prefers unusual risks. The motto of this organisational culture is 'invent the future'. Church cultures of these two types are more likely to promote integration as a mutual process that requires adjustment and change from all parties.

According to Eddie Gibbs (2005:92), mission-oriented churches need a new understanding of leadership that pays tribute to the cultural changes in the western world. In view of the needs and opportunities of postmodernity Gibbs calls for flexible, sensitive, future

oriented and venturesome styles of church leadership (:92). However, the challenge of postmodernity is not the only reason why a new leadership style is needed. As my research shows, the challenges of globalisation in general, and its migratory aspects in particular, require such a new style of leadership, too. Leaders of mission-minded churches need to be aware not only of cultural trends in society but also of global trends that affect the mission of their local churches (cf. 10.2.3.3.5). Gibbs calls churches to recognise the changing context within which they operate when he says:

The ethnic makeup is also changing. Global economic pressures have triggered significant migrations from parts of Asia, Africa and Eastern Europe. The waves of migrants create new permanent residents and citizens, and also seasonal workers...Consequently, pastors, even of predominantly white congregations, face more and more cross-cultural ministry challenges. Thus pastors need to be sensitive to the potential misunderstandings and tensions within their surrounding communities (:47).

But what does this mean in concrete terms? John Leonard (2004:70) argues that leaders of multi-ethnic churches or 'churches between the cultures', as he calls them, should be at home in many cultures.²⁴ They are people, Leonard continues 'who have the ability to lay out before God's people the vision of Revelation 5:7, that the heavenly body of Christ, made up of every tribe, tongue and nation, must have a visible and present expression on earth in local bodies of believers to the glory of God' (:70). In Dan Sheffield's article *Leadership Requirements for the Multi-Cultural Congregation* we find a similar notion. Sheffield (2002) presents a profile of leaders of multicultural churches. According to this profile there are five specific qualities such leaders should possess. Firstly, leaders of multicultural churches should have a 'theology of diversity' and a vision which are both the result of personal inter-cultural experience, a study of the Bible, and theological reflection. Secondly, they should be able to communicate this vision in a way that helps the church to own it, too. Thirdly, they should be leaders who are willing to give up power and to develop an attitude of servanthood. Fourthly, they should be leaders who see the need to learn continually about other ethnic groups and their cultures. Last but not least, they should develop their own intercultural skills that enable different

²⁴ Similarly G. and G.J. Hofstede (2005:341) who call for a bicultural management in multinational business organisations: 'Persons in linchpin roles between foreign subsidiaries and the head office need to be bicultural, because they need a double trust relationship, on the one side with their home culture superiors and colleagues and on the other side with their host culture subordinates.'

ethnic groups in the church to be in a constant dialogue with each other.²⁵ In a more recent book Sheffield (2005:99) speaks of the need for multicultural leaders to develop a ‘catholic personality’. Sheffield notes:

Leaders for multicultural congregations must go through a personal process of adjustment. This adjustment will require destabilizing periods of cultural ineptitude, anger and frustration. It will require a conscious searching out of new ways to see previously held paradigms and accepted knowledge. It will require the acquisition of new cultural knowledge and new patterns of seeing, hearing, and expressing. It is this process of adjustment and transformation that produces “the catholic personality” (:99-100).

As my research indicates, the *catholic personality* that Sheffield advocates is a quality that leaders who want to integrate refugees and asylum seekers need to have, or one which they need to be willing to develop.

11.2.1.2 Mission and its eschatological constants

In *Constants in Context* Stephen Bevans and Roger Schroeder (2005:283-284) argue that currently there are three models of mission that are found in various church traditions. Firstly, there is the *missio Dei* model that understands mission as the participation of the church in the mission of the triune God (:286-287). This model can be found in the Roman Catholic Church and Orthodox churches, as well as in Protestant churches that are committed to the *Conciliary Process* (:296). The second model emphasizes both the kingdom or reign of God and the need to bring liberation to the world (305-306). This model is used in the Roman Catholic Church and in conciliar Protestant churches (:318). Finally, there is a model that defines mission as the proclamation of Jesus Christ as the saviour of the world (:323). This model is popular not only in Roman Catholic circles but also in Evangelical and Pentecostal churches (:340-342). According to Bevans and Schroeder the Evangelical and Pentecostal variant of this model of mission is characterised by a certain ecclesiology and eschatology. Bevans and Schroeder note:

Traditionally, Evangelical and Pentecostal ecclesiologies have been “low” ecclesiologies, in that the human dimension of the church is emphasized over the divine. This is matched by an eschatology that is future oriented, and one that makes the mission of the church urgent (:343).

²⁵ Holden (2002:299-300) argues that cross-cultural managers should fulfil the role of facilitators. He lists six core-competence activities that cross-cultural managers should facilitate: (1) transfer of knowledge, values and experience, (2) collaborative learning, (3) networking, (4) interactive translation, (5) participative competence, and (6) creation of a collaborative atmosphere. In addition, they need to have certain attributes. These attributes include: (1) a good general education, (2) international experience which has widened and deepened their mind, (3) knowledge of a modern foreign language, and (4) tact (:302).

My research indicates that Cornerstone best fits Bevans' and Schroeders's third typology. It had the attributes of an evangelical church with a strong focus on proclamation and evangelism (cf. 10.2.3.3.2). It had a high Christology, while its ecclesiology was very low. Communion was only celebrated as a memorial meal, and baptism was only seen as a human act of witness and not as initiation into the visible church (cf. 10.2.3.3.3). Consequently, church leaders had no problem in baptising Iranian asylum seekers and refugees and at the same time withholding membership status. This policy caused frustrations among Cornerstone's Iranian Christians and was seen by them as a problem (cf. 10.2.5.3). Put otherwise, a low ecclesiology can actually be an integration obstacle for refugees and asylum seekers seeking membership of an indigenous church.

The same can be said of a future oriented eschatology. According to Bevans and Schroeder (2005:43) an eschatology that is futurist in orientation 'tends to regard the world and human history as ultimately unimportant in the scheme of salvation'. Its preoccupation is the eternal destiny of individuals (:43). When a church, like Cornerstone, understands mission first and foremost in terms of evangelism with conversion as its main goal, the integration of new Christians into the local Christian community can become a secondary issue.

On the other hand, an inaugurated eschatology with its focus on both the present and the future allows for an understanding of mission that is rooted in both time frames. 'The eschaton', writes Wilbert Shenk (1996:92), 'represents the goal toward which the reign of God is moving. Mission takes its orientation from that goal'. Those who hold an inaugurated view are likely to understand the church as a place where, as Schroeder and Bevans (2005:58) put it, 'one can experience already the full reality of God's salvation'. The church is seen as place that provides an anticipation of the final destiny of humankind (:58). With such an eschatological view the integration of strangers into the local church becomes a primary task. An example of such a position can be found in Dan Sheffield's (2005) book *The Multicultural Leader*. Sheffield writes:

The eschatological vision of Revelation 7:9, of all nations and tribes gathered around the throne, must begin to take place in the Body of Christ in this present age. The church community should become a place where people feel safe to reach out and embrace strangers – others - because those strangers have been, first of all, accepted and embraced by Christ (:37).

The same point is made by David Wells (2004). Referring to the vision that is presented in Revelation 7:9-12 Wells writes that '[t]he local church has the opportunity today to demonstrate aspects of the unified worship of the future heavenly community' (:3).

11.2.2 Stepping stones on the way towards integration

The findings of my social research show that, in parallel with the stumbling blocks which impede integration, there are a number of stepping stones which facilitate the integration of refugees and asylum seekers into an indigenous church. Some of these stepping stones can be found in the literature on multi-ethnic churches but I specify others which have not been identified so far.

11.2.2.1 'Old' stepping stones: Meeting needs and creating friendships

According to Jonathan Lewis and Ken Peters (2004:21) it is important for churches which want to become intercultural to build bridges between the dominant culture and the culture of the minority group. They argue that bridge-building is necessary to overcome the clash of different worldviews and value systems which bar the integration process. The bridge itself should consist of different elements. Firstly, identification and accommodation of the needs of the people group seeking incorporation into the church is vital (:23). Lewis and Peters write:

Most people come to Christ through personal crisis and need. It is no different with people groups. Christ has an answer for all man's needs, particularly those deepest needs to know God and understand one's worth in His eyes. But there are also physical needs and sociological needs that can be met as a way of creating bridges to another culture (:23).

While Lewis and Peters mention physical and sociological needs, it almost sounds as if meeting them are secondary and optional. The findings of my Cornerstone social research suggest that a contextual and holistic approach which caters for the spiritual, physical, and emotional needs of asylum seekers and refugees is crucial for successful integration (cf. 10.2.4.5.1). It quickly became evident that the refugee team at Cornerstone were effective because of their contextual and holistic approach towards ministry. Though evangelism was important, their primary response was to meet the practical needs of refugees and asylum seekers in advocacy work, education, and emotional care. This approach brought a positive

response from Iranian refugees and asylum seekers and created a relationship of trust with team members (cf. 10.2.5.1). The Cornerstone model of refugee ministry shows that this form of outreach is complex, that many strands of mission need to work in parallel and that integration is central. Moltmann (2000:20) urges Christians to adopt this multi-faceted approach to mission:

But evangelisation and the verbal witness to God's coming kingdom and his righteousness and justice cannot stand on their own, in isolation. They belong within the all-embracing charge to heal and to liberate the sick and helpless world in the 'at-handness' of God's kingdom.

Secondly, Lewis and Peters (2004:24) argue that is necessary to create a welcoming and friendly atmosphere. This goes beyond superficial friendliness. It requires a greater understanding and sensitivity to other cultures. The way to create such an environment is to make room for personal encounters. 'Perhaps the only way to really overcome cultural barriers', they write, 'is to gain experience with the culture' (:24). Cornerstone is a good example of this approach. Members of the three different groups that I interviewed: Iranian refugees, refugee workers and church leaders, stressed how important personal encounters and friendships between Iranian and British Christians were in facilitating integration (Abbott 2005:16; Hampton 2005:4; Davoud 2005:2; J. Taylor 2005:7). One interviewee said:

It is about a series of events and situations where you kind of bring people together and once people experience the person rather than the prejudice, the idea, the fear, then a lot of those things are resolved and people's attitudes towards people change (Gordon 2005:24).

To foster such encounters and personal friendships, the church, together with the Iranian group, organised Iranian meals and others socials, such as an Iranian New Year's party (Prill 2005c:13&71). These events were attended by both Iranian and British Christians. One church leader made the following comment about these events:

[T]he Iranian group put on a meal for the whole church on a Sunday, which I think was a spectacular success. Fantastic Iranian food and a lot of English people stayed, and that really built some bridges, and was well appreciated. That's something we certainly intend to do again (Bush 2005:6).

In addition to these contact events, each of the three Iranian house groups were invited by their English-speaking counterparts to join them for an evening of bible study and worship. Additionally, Iranians were invited to take part in sports activities, such as a weekly

football match that was organised by church members (Prill 2005c:74). Finally, both Iranian and British Christians emphasised the importance of involving Iranians in a ministry where they could serve side by side with other Christians (Nima 2005:6; Omid 2005:3; J. Taylor 2005:2).

My research shows that these encounters also helped members of the dominant indigenous group to reflect on their own culture (cf. 10.2.4.5.3). This reflection had led some of my interview partners to recognise the negative aspects of their own culture and value system (Howard 2005:11; R. Taylor 2005:4). One mentioned the structural sins of British culture and society (cf. 10.2.4.5.3). In his book *The Wolf Shall Dwell with the Lamb* Eric Law (1993:9) points out the importance to the learning process of these encounters. Cultural clashes, he argues usually do not happen on the external but on the internal cultural level. On this level people are unaware of why they feel or react in a certain way. Law continues:

To be interculturally sensitive, we need to examine the internal instinctual part of our own culture. This means revealing unconscious values and thought patterns so that we will not simply react from our cultural instinct. The more we learn about our internal culture, the more we are aware of how our cultural values and thought patterns differ from each others. Knowing this difference will help us to make self-adjustments in order to live peacefully with people from other cultures (:9).

11.2.2.2 'New' stepping stones

11.2.2.2.1 A real incarnational presence

The contextual and holistic approach of Cornerstone's refugee ministry team had undoubtedly a very positive effect on the integration of the Iranian refugees and asylum seekers. However, the evidence of my research suggests that the incarnational focus of this ministry played an important role, too (cf. 10.2.4.5.1).

Missiologists have long debated the centrality of Christ's incarnation to mission. In 1967 J.G Davies (1967:34) wrote that in order to participate in God's mission the church must replicate Christ's incarnation. 'The Christian life', Davies argued, 'is the life of Christ lived in his disciples, and this participation in Christ is at the same time participation in his mission to

the world' (:34). Reasserting this view over thirty years later, Janos Pasztor (2001:144) claimed that without Christ's incarnation and the giving of the Holy Spirit, the mission of the church was meaningless. Since mission is God's mission, it has to be conceptualised as the mission of the God who became flesh. Jesus crossed the widest barrier possible when he left his heavenly Father and became incarnate as a fully human being in a particular place and at a particular time in history (Bowen 1996:26). As God incarnate, he experienced the same limitations and struggles that human beings experience (Frost & Hirsch 2004:36).

Because of this debate, the term *incarnational ministry* has been widely accepted and used for more than two decades (Billings 2004:187). However, as Billings points out, there are a variety of different ways in which the concept of incarnational ministry is used today (:187). There are, for example, those who use the phrase to describe the process of inculturation. An example of this usage can be found in the Church of England (2004) report *Mission-Shaped Church*. The authors identify five values for a missionary church. They suggest that a missionary church is focussed on the Trinity, that it is transformational, relational, and incarnational as well as committed to make disciples of Christ (:81-82). Amplifying the claim that a mission-minded church is incarnational, the report states:

A missionary church seeks to shape itself in relation to the culture in which it is located or to which it is called. Whenever it is called to be cross-cultural then its long-term members or initial team lay aside their cultural preferences about church to allow the emergence of a form or style of church to be shaped by those they are seeking to reach (CofE 2004:81).

Other authors, such as Gailyn Van Rhee (1996:72), understand incarnational ministry first and foremost as 'identificational ministry'. He argues that Christians 'must become God's message in human flesh dwelling among people' (:73). In similar vein Mark Norridge (2004) asserts that mission means identification with people. In his article *Incarnational Mission* Norridge speaks of 'complete identification' with the target group. He writes:

As an incarnational community we are called to complete identification with those to whom we are reaching. This includes their pain and their sufferings, as well as their pleasures and their joys. Following the footsteps of the Isaianic Servant we can be part of absorbing their pain, even as Jesus did on the cross (:14-15).

Having identified Philippians 2:5-11 as the most basic text on Christ's incarnation Norridge (2004:9) argues that complete identification involves three steps: a denial of rights

(:9-10), a self-emptying (:10), and cultural adoption (:11). Just as Jesus did not exploit his divine status during his earthly ministry the church in mission in a post-Christendom world must not insist on certain rights. Clinging to strength would be counterproductive. 'Respect and a voice', Norridge writes, 'is gained most successfully, not by the assumption of a position or right, but by the demonstration that God is able to affect the world not least through his community' (:10). Equally important is it to empty oneself of anything that could create a feeling of superiority (:10). What is needed is the attitude of a listener and learner rather than that of a teacher. In a cross-cultural context this means that the recipient culture is to be learned and embraced (:11). However, this is certainly more difficult when the cross-cultural ministry takes place on one's own doorstep and not in a far away country (:10). In his article on the relationship between anthropology and mission Darrell Whiteman (2003:408) describes the process of cultural adoption:

In the same way in which God entered Jewish culture in the person of Jesus, we must be willing to enter the culture of the people among us whom we serve, to speak their language, to adjust our lifestyles to theirs, to understand their worldview and religious values, and to laugh and weep with them.

Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch (2004:39) speak of 'a real and abiding incarnational presence' that the church needs to practise among the people it is reaching out to. Such an incarnational presence is necessary, as Frost and Hirsch write, 'because you cannot become part of the organic life of a given community if you are not present to it and do not experience its cultural rhythms, its life, and its geography' (:39).

Cornerstone's refugee ministry team was incarnational in its approach, and no more so than in its handling of language difference (cf. 10.2.4.5.1). Team members learned Farsi in order to be able to communicate with Iranian refugees and asylum seekers in their native tongue. One of them told me about the effects of learning Farsi:

I think it has built a bridge. People are very proud, very happy and they are so willing to help me and they are very kind. It is very interesting, actually, speaking to the Iranians in church in Persian. I feel far more comfortable than speaking to Iranians outside church. Those inside church I feel like it's my family. I can make mistakes (Howard 2005:8-9).

The same church member travelled to Iran to improve his knowledge of Farsi and learn at first hand about Iranian culture and its political and economic environment from which the

Iranians at Cornerstone Church had fled (Prill 2005c:51). Further, an incarnational presence was practised when British team members accompanied Iranian asylum seekers to court hearings (Prill 2005c:33) serving as witnesses and supporting them in emotionally charged and stressful situations. And finally, the members of the refugee team who opened their houses to give accommodation to asylum seekers who had fallen out of the asylum support system, either because they had been refused asylum or been granted refugee status, demonstrated incarnational presence in the clearest possible way.

11.2.2.2 The congregation within a congregation model

In their book *United by Faith* DeYoung, Emerson, Yancey and Kim (2004:141-143) recommend a *church within a church* model for multiracial churches in the United States of America. The evidence of my research shows that such a model can be useful for the integration of Christian refugees and asylum seekers into an indigenous church in Britain. As my analysis of the New Testament church has shown, this multicongregational church model is anything but new (cf. 6.2.1). The church in Jerusalem, for example, consisted of an Aramaic-speaking majority group and a Greek-speaking minority. The latter was made up of immigrants from the Diaspora. Although these two groups had their own meetings they did not see each other as separate churches. They were both represented in the church assembly and accepted the apostles as their leaders. Furthermore, there was no pressure on the Aramaic-speaking minority to assimilate culturally.

In his book *One New People* Manuel Ortiz (1996) distinguishes between three variations of the multicongregational church model. Firstly, there is the 'renting model', where an indigenous church makes its premises available to a minority ethnic group on a rental basis (:66). Ortiz cautions against this model because relationships are superficial, as with most relationships between landlords and tenants, and cannot be regarded as truly multi-ethnic (:67). The renting model has much in common with the non-immigrant model tested above (cf. 9.2.1). Like the church in the non-immigrant model, any church using the renting model will fail to engage with asylum seekers and refugees and will retain its exclusive nature. A church that follows this model ignores the principles of unity and equality (cf. 6.3.1 & 6.3.2).

Hence the renting model is as unsuitable as the non-immigrant model for the integration of refugees and asylum seekers.

Secondly, there is what Ortiz (1996:69) calls the 'celebration model'. In this model a church invites minority ethnic groups to participate in its life and ministry. This step tends to be motivated by the wish to see the second generation of an ethnic minority becoming members of the church (:69). Combined services are celebrated on a regular basis to demonstrate that the kingdom of God is active in a world of racial discrimination (:69). However, the church is not willing to change its own tradition and culture (:70). The celebration model resembles the assimilation model that was part of my scenario test (cf. 9.2.2). Like the assimilation model it seeks to incorporate members of a minority ethnic group into the church on condition that they fit into the church's culture (cf. 9.2.2.2). Cultural assimilation becomes the prerequisite for church membership and full participation in church life. The celebration model goes some way towards recognising that Christian unity needs to be lived out in the local church. However, it clearly ignores the integration principles of equality (6.3.2), mutuality (cf. 6.2.3), mixed-leadership (cf. 6.3.4) and mixed-ministry (cf. 6.3.5).

Ortiz finally mentions the 'integrative model' (:72). In the integrative model the minority ethnic groups are encouraged to contribute to both the church's life and structure. All members of the different ethnocultural congregations are equally members of the church. Significantly, every congregation is represented on the church's leadership team (:73). A church that follows this model may typically have common services on special days such as Christmas or Easter (:80). The integrative model shares elements of the pluralist model (cf. 9.2.3). As in the pluralist model, the integration principles of equality and mutuality are prized (cf. 9.2.3.3). However, in contrast to the pluralist model, the principles of shared leadership and ministry are valued.

A slight variant of Ortiz's (1996) integrative model is suggested by Martin Goldsmith (2006:103):

Perhaps churches should start homogenous midweek meetings, with their various members gathering separately according to their race, culture and age. On Sundays they could then meet together to demonstrate their unity in Christ.

Goldsmith (2006:103) goes on to argue that homogeneous meetings might be more appealing to the older generation, while younger Christians might be more open to mixed gatherings. However, the evidence of the Nottingham Chinese Christian Church shows that the younger, second generation found it difficult to attend a weekly bilingual service, too (cf. 10.3.4.3.1). This type of service appears not to have met the expectations of the different language and age groups within the church (Chong 2005:2). Because of that the church decided to introduce weekly single language services, in Cantonese and English, and subsequently Mandarin as well. Only the monthly communion service was celebrated as a multilingual service. A similar arrangement was agreed at Cornerstone Church. While the Iranian Christians had their own Farsi-speaking services they joined the English-speaking congregation for the monthly communion service (cf. 10.3.4.3.1).

On the one hand a *congregation within the congregation* model recognises the need of people to worship in their native tongue in a culturally appropriate manner and their need to meet people of the same ethnic background and with similar life experience (cf. DeYoung, Emerson, Yancey & Kim 2004:141-143). The evidence at all three churches: the German Lutheran Congregation Nottingham, the Nottingham Chinese Christian Church and Cornerstone Church, shows that maintaining cultural solidarity is an important aspect of church life (cf. 10.2.5.3; 10.3.3.1; 10.3.3.4). On the other hand, the strength of the multi-congregational model is that it reinforces the unity of all believers and allows refugees and asylum seekers to make the transition from one ethnic congregation to another without changing church. Furthermore, it gives ethnically mixed couples and families the opportunity to worship under the same roof. In this way, the *congregation within the congregation* model offers a solution to the second generation problem (cf. 10.2.5.1; 10.3.4.3.1). Finally, a significant advantage of Christian refugees and asylum seekers belonging to a multicongregational church is that they are not limited in their mission to members of their own ethnic group. On the contrary, they can serve as role models for their indigenous fellow

Christians and become agents of mission in a post-Christian and postmodern society (cf. 11.1.2.1).

The evidence of my social research suggests that the melting pot model (cf. 9.2.4) with its emphasis on multi-lingual services, house-groups and activities is not the best strategy for the integration of refugees and asylum seekers into an indigenous church. The melting pot model appears too ambitious in its attempt to create a new mixed church culture with which the various ethnic and language groups within the church can identify. While the model is right to stress the importance of common activities and events, as well as the sharing of leadership, it overlooks the fact that refugees and asylum seekers need to have their own separate gatherings if they want to grow in their Christian faith. What is needed, as Christopher Duraisingh (2002:498) puts it, is 'a space that safeguards differences and yet builds up common sharing'. This is something that the *congregation within a congregation* model provides.

12. Conclusion

12.1 Summary

The best way to integrate Christian asylum seekers and refugees into the Christian community in the United Kingdom is by inviting them to become part of local British churches. For the integration into a local indigenous church a *congregation within a congregation* approach is an effective strategy.

Because of their exclusive nature as minority ethnic churches, independent refugee churches would not only limit God's mission but also run the danger of becoming self-centred and inward-looking. Furthermore, in an age of globalisation, the function of a minority ethnic church in helping its members to preserve their own culture and pass it on to the next generation by operating as a cultural oasis becomes less important.

The evidence of my research shows that in a postmodern, post-Christian society like Britain, Christian refugees and asylum seekers can serve as role models and agents of mission when they are closely linked with an indigenous church. Their sheer presence can inspire indigenous Christians to re-consider their own lifestyles, to recognise sinful structures in both society and church, and realise the catholicity of the Christian Church. Their way of living the Christian life can remind British Christians of the significance of Christ-like characteristics such as generosity, humility, and hospitality; it can motivate British Christians to develop a ministry of hospitality which is crucial for reaching out to postmodern westerners. In summary, Christian refugees and asylum seekers have the potential to make a significant contribution to the mission of the British Church.

My findings show that there are factors that can either foster or hinder the process of integrating asylum seekers and refugees into an indigenous British church. Factors that impede integration are low ecclesiology, a conversionist approach to mission and a negative attitude towards change. The results of my social research suggest that there are a variety of reasons

why church leaders may be unwilling to allow major changes. These reasons include: anxiety over the potential loss of power and control, a reactive leadership style and reactive church culture, success in other areas of ministry, and an ignorance of globalisation. Factors that can foster the integration of refugees and asylum seekers include an incarnational approach to mission and the use of a *congregation within a congregation* model. This model not only allows refugees and asylum seekers to worship in their own language and in a way that is culturally relevant to them, as if they were an independent refugee church, it also offers them an indigenous haven where they are safe from racist attacks and discrimination. Unlike an independent refugee church, it provides refugees and asylum seekers with the opportunity to make friends with members of the host population, to find indigenous Christian spouses and to worship together with their children in the same church. Finally, the *congregation within a congregation* model is congruent with the multi-ethnic church of the New Testament, the biblical model of church.

12.2 Practical suggestions and recommendations

On the basis of my research I am able to offer the following practical suggestions and recommendations towards the integration of Christian asylum seekers and refugees into a local church:

First, church leaders should reflect theologically on the following issues: forced migration, asylum, globalisation and mission, the multi-ethnic nature of the Church, the church's organisational culture and leadership style. Theological reflection on these issues could help leaders identify and overcome anxieties, reservations, and prejudices against asylum seekers and refugees and internal integration barriers. Where issues have been identified it could prompt leaders to ask for help from outside to overcome them (cf. Grundy 1998:135). External help would be available, for example, from consultants with extensive experience of multi-congregational churches and refugee ministry. In addition, leaders could visit other churches which have gained experience in ministry among asylum seekers and refugees.

Second, the church leadership should create a vision for the integration of asylum seekers and refugees. For Lovett Weems (1993:39) a vision is a 'dream' or a 'picture of what is possible'. A vision, Lovett notes, 'gives meaning, direction, and life to one's efforts' (:40). A verbalised and shared vision is essential whenever an organisation is involved in strategic changes (Waldock & Kelly-Rawat 2004:69). The lack of a clear vision shared by members of an organisation is one of the main reasons for the failure to change (:69). Church leaders should construct vision in two ways: through careful theological reflection and 'solid, painstaking analysis' (Higginson 1996:87). Analysis should be based upon the collection of data from inside and outside the church (cf. Weems 1993:49). Data from inside the church includes the ethnic composition of its membership, the ability to speak foreign languages, the extent of interpreting skills and the cross-cultural experience of church members. Data from outside the church includes the number of refugees and asylum seekers in the community, their ethnic background, age and gender distribution.

Third, church leaders should communicate their vision of a multi-ethnic church to church members and to the Christian asylum seekers and refugees who attend the church. Johannes Reimer (2004:54) points out that the effective communication of vision cannot be a one-off event. Local church transformation can take time (:54). Reimer suggests that the communication of the leadership's vision needs to be a multifaceted holistic proclamation process (:60). The process should involve all church leaders according to their gifting, as well as external speakers (:68). Further, it should be inclusive encompassing Sunday services and the whole church programme: workshops, seminars, bible study groups or house groups (:70). Against this background, the church leadership should commission a sermon series on migrants and foreigners in the Old Testament (cf. 5.1) selecting the following passages: Exod. 1:1-22, 12:31-41, 22:16-31, 23:1-13, Deut. 5:12-15, 2 Kgs. 24:1-20, 25:1-30, Ps. 137 and the Book of Ruth. Parallel to this series the church's house groups should consider the church's mission in the Book of Acts. To complement this programme, church leaders should invite visiting speakers able to deliver seminars developing a Christian perspective on the pivotal themes of trust, racism, globalisation, and the British asylum system. The overall aim of this holistic proclamation is to convince the church that the leadership's vision of a multi-ethnic

church is rooted in God's vision and to enable both refugees and church members to take ownership of the vision.

Fourth, church leaders should implement their vision of a multi-ethnic church. In order to build up trust and to foster friendships between asylum seekers and refugees, on the one hand, and indigenous and other Christians on the other, church leaders should introduce the following measures:

- Church leaders should invite Christian asylum seekers and refugees to become church members.
- Church leaders should ask Christian asylum seekers and refugees to nominate representatives to the leadership team.
- Church leaders should encourage refugees and non-refugees to serve together in the various ministries of the church.
- A combined Holy Communion service should be celebrated monthly. Each service should contain elements of the different services celebrated in their respective congregations. The sermon should be preached alternately in English and another language. The preachers should follow the *principle of condescension*, keeping their words as simple and clear as possible so that they can be understood by everyone present (cf. Reimer 2004: 50-53).
- Central church festivals such as Christmas, Easter and Pentecost should be celebrated as combined services.
- A combined prayer meeting should be held once a month. At this meeting everyone should be able to use his or her native tongue.
- House groups or cell groups of refugees and non-refugees should be grouped together in clusters. A cluster group meeting should be held every three months. This meeting could either be a social event, a prayer meeting, a bible study or a combination of all three.

- Church leaders should organise social events that help indigenous Christians learn more about refugee and asylum seeker culture.
- Conversely, church leaders should organise social events that help asylum seekers and refugees to learn more about the dominant culture.

12.3 Questions raised and suggestions for future research

The following list suggests a number of possible directions for research of this type in order to build on the evidence and conclusions of this study:

First, at Cornerstone Church, my focus was on Iranian asylum seekers and refugees. This group was the most visible group of asylum seekers and refugees in the church (cf. 10.2.1.1). Iranians were also one of the larger groups within the refugee population in the United Kingdom (cf. 4.2.2.1). By exploring the position of a prominent group my research does not indicate how to integrate asylum seekers and refugees who are not part of a larger group. In other terms: How can asylum seekers and refugees be integrated into a local church when the *congregation within a congregation* model cannot be applied? Are other models applicable?

Second, this study confirms the significance of the same barriers to integration that are consistently referred to in the literature on multi-ethnic churches (cf. Brynjolfson & Lewis 2004; Law 1993). Besides identifying other important barriers, my research goes on to show that there are a range of positive factors which facilitate the integration process. It would be presumptuous to assume that my lists of stumbling blocks and stepping stones were complete. Further research in this field is needed, not least to take account of the changing impact of globalisation.

Third, during my research at Cornerstone Church Nottingham a significant variable was the high incidence of Chinese students and scholars present in Sunday morning services (Prill 2005c:44). A few had been Christians before they came to the UK, but the majority had become Christians as a result of Cornerstone's evangelistic outreach into Nottingham's Chinese academic community. Two Cornerstone church members of Chinese origin told me that this

group needed to be more integrated into the church (Prill 2005c:73). In my interview with the senior pastor he had told me about his idea of offering a simultaneous interpretation for Mandarin-speakers in the Sunday morning service, but this never materialised for financial reasons (cf. 10.2.3.2.2). The Chinese translations of the sermon which had been distributed in the service had to stop as well because the only available translator found it too demanding to translate a sermon from English into Mandarin every week. These failures of communication prompt the wider question: would the *congregation within a congregation* model achieve as much success with others as it has with Iranians?

Appendix

Appendix 1: Research Report: The Integration of Iranian Asylum Seekers and Refugees into Cornerstone Evangelical Church Nottingham

Appendix 2: Audit Report

Appendix 3: The Most Popular Hymns and Songs sung at Cornerstone in 2005

Appendix 4: Research Report: The Mission and Ministry of the Nottingham Chinese Christian Church and the German Lutheran Congregation Nottingham

Research Report:

The Integration of Iranian Asylum Seekers and Refugees into Cornerstone Evangelical Church Nottingham

Foreword

Dear

This report contains findings of my research into the ministry among Iranian refugees and asylum seekers at Cornerstone Evangelical Church Nottingham. My research took place between February 2005 and April 2006. It involved participant observation and semi-structured interviews with church leaders, church members involved with the Iranian group and Iranian asylum seekers and refugees.

I would very much appreciate if you could please read this report and comment on it. Your comments will help me to make sure that my findings and interpretations reflect a true picture of the situation at Cornerstone Church.

Thank you very much!

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1. An Analytical and Theological Description of Cornerstone Church

(1) Historical Background and Affiliations

Cornerstone Church is a free church that is affiliated to the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches and the Evangelical Alliance. It started as a house group from a large Baptist church in the centre of Nottingham in the early nineteenth century. In 1883 it became a separate church with its own building in Hyson Green, an inner city district of Nottingham. This building served the church for a hundred years. In 1969 the church left the Baptist Union of Great Britain because of theological reasons. Three years later it joined the Fellowship of Evangelical Churches. In 1983 the church moved to a former social club, which was converted into a church building, and the name of the church was changed from Hyson Green Baptist Church into Cornerstone Evangelical Church. Because of the continuing growth of the congregation the church moved to Margaret Glen-Bott School at Wollaton, now Nottingham Bluecoat School, in 1992.

(2) Location

Cornerstone does not have its own church building. Instead, the congregation meet regularly at Nottingham Bluecoat School's Wollaton Park campus for their Sunday morning and evening services, quarterly members' meetings, evangelistic events, concerts, socials etc. Most of these meetings take place in the school's assembly hall. In addition, the church is renting a large room on the school premises, which it uses for prayer meetings, children's worship services, youth groups and other events. Also, for the church office the church is renting two rooms in the school's main building. The Bluecoat School, a Church of England aided secondary comprehensive school, is located close to the University of Nottingham's main campus. Together with the school, the church hopes to build a Worship Centre, which can seat one thousand people, on the school campus in the near future.

(3) Church Structures

Cornerstone Church practices congregational church government in the sense that it considers the church to be completely autonomous under the headship of Jesus Christ. It is led by a group of elders, who are elected by the church members. The eldership currently consists of nine elders. The senior pastor and the assistant pastor are ex-officio members of the eldership.

Besides the two pastors, Cornerstone also employs a youth minister, a pastoral assistant, a church manager, a church secretary, a part-time bookkeeper, and two trainees. Moreover, the University of Nottingham's International Students' Chaplain, who is officially employed by Friends International and funded by Cornerstone, is regarded as a quasi member of staff. While the staff members have a weekly team meeting, the church eldership meets fortnightly on a Tuesday evening and twice a year for a full-day.

(4) Churchmanship and Vision

Cornerstone Church can be described as an evangelical church in the Reformed Baptist tradition. As such it practices believer's baptism by immersion and holds to the so-called Doctrines of Grace. While the elders of the church must subscribe to these doctrines, this is not expected from other church members. They are supposed to agree with the more general Confession of Faith. The church also welcomes people into membership who have been baptised as infants and who consider their baptism as valid.

The vision of Cornerstone is to 'be a church committed to glorifying God'. It aims to do this through corporate praise and worship, prayer, evangelistic and social outreach to the local community, a biblical teaching ministry and participation in world mission.

(5) Membership and Church Life

Cornerstone Church Nottingham is one of the large Independent churches in England. It has about 300 members who not only come from all parts of Nottingham but also from many denominational backgrounds. The membership can be a full membership or a so-called associate membership. The associate membership is for

Christians who expect to be in Nottingham only for a short period of time and who do not want to give up their home-church ties.

Over the last fifteen years Cornerstone has seen a significant increase in membership. At the end of 1990 the church had 124 members. Five years later the membership was 204. By 1999 the membership was 290 and at the end of 2004 there were 315 church members. In other words, the membership increased between 1990 and 2004 by over 150 per cent.

Together with the increase in membership the number of those who attend the Sunday worship services has also increased. According to a census carried out as part of the English Church Census 2005 the morning service is attended by 600 people compared to 450 people five years ago. About 170 people come to the evening services.

With the growth in recent years the church has also become more international and ethnically diverse. There are approximately 35 different nationalities gathered in the Sunday services. Seventy-seven per cent of those who attend the morning service are white while almost a quarter, twenty-three per cent, belong to non-white ethnic groups. In other words, the percentage of people from ethnic minorities is almost three times higher than the percentage of ethnic minorities in British society. Within the membership approximately fifteen nationalities are represented.

At the centre of Cornerstone's church life are the worship services. There are the weekly services on Sundays, special guest services, and the quarterly prayer and praise service. A typical feature of all these services is a worship that is lively and contemporary. The music is drawn largely from modern songs and traditional hymns. The congregational singing is led by a music group that plays various instruments including piano, guitars, drums, violin and flute. In every Sunday service, there is an international prayer time, when the congregation prays for one of the international workers who have been sent out by Cornerstone.

The services attract a huge number of university students and young professionals. During university term time students make up 28 per cent of the Sunday morning congregation and 34 per cent of the Sunday evening congregation. Fifty-eight per cent of all those who attend the church regularly are between 20 and 44 years of age. Twenty-one per cent are older than 44 years and 21 per cent are under 20. Forty-five per cent of the Sunday congregation are male while 55 per cent are female.

Besides the services house groups play an important part in the life of Cornerstone Church. There are currently nineteen house groups which are attended by more than 320 people. Every church member is encouraged to join one of the house groups which are part of the church's 'growing big by growing small strategy'. House groups are considered to be the best way to get to know people and to become involved in church life. The content and style of house group meetings vary from group to group. Each house group is led by two to four church members.

There is a great variety of other ministries at Cornerstone Church. These ministries include children and youth work, evangelism, pastoral care, home ministry and international work. The international work includes the work with international students and their spouses, the sending and supporting of international workers and the ministry among refugees and asylum seekers. Cornerstone supports nineteen international workers who serve with Christian mission and development agencies such as Tear Fund, OMF, People International, International Teams etc. or train for such a service respectively.

(6) Refugee Ministry

The refugee ministry at Cornerstone Church started in 1998 when the church supported one of its members, Ms Debbie Abbott, to go overseas as a refugee worker with International Teams. For two years Debbie Abbott worked with asylum seekers and refugees in Austria and Albania. During that time she was invited by Cornerstone Church to speak about her ministry and to lead seminars about refugee issues in the church on several occasions. The church also supported a group of four members, including the church manager to go on a short term team to a place in Albania where Debbie Abbott was based. Since then several church members, both as individuals or groups have been to Austria to work among refugees on a short term basis.

The refugee ministry in Nottingham began in October 2000 when Debbie Abbott returned to Nottingham. At the same time the government started to send asylum seekers to Nottingham as part of its dispersal policy. Church members became aware that many asylum seekers were lacking clothing and footwear and with the support of the church leadership they organised a fundraising event at the church. In view of the increasing numbers of asylum seekers coming to Nottingham the church asked Debbie Abbott to form a refugee ministry team that would reach out to asylum seekers and refugees in the city. In cooperation with a local Baptist church the team began to organise coffee bars for men and women, English classes and a mothers and toddlers group.

While in the beginning Cornerstone's refugee ministry was more or less a general refugee ministry it more and more developed to a work with specific people groups. All these groups differ in their format, composition, size and their relationship to Cornerstone Church.

The Spanish-speaking group is made up of asylum seekers and refugees from Latin America. The group is supported by Spanish-speaking members of Cornerstone. The group usually meets in the home of one Latin American family for bible study and socials. Most of the group members also attend the English-speaking service at Cornerstone.

The largest group and the group with strongest formal links to Cornerstone is the Iranian group. The Iranian group consists of approximately 45 adults and 10 children and teenagers. The majority of these Iranians were Muslims when they first came to Britain as asylum seekers. Over the last five years about thirty Iranians have become Christians and have been baptised at Cornerstone. Some of them have moved on to other places in the UK, but most of them are still part of the group.

The Iranian group meet every Sunday for their worship service in a room on the school campus, which is rented out by Cornerstone Church. The service starts at 11.10am and usually last till 12.10pm. The services are attended by an average of 35 people. Among these are 4-5 non-Iranian members of Cornerstone and 30 Iranians. The majority of the Iranians are men. There are usually 7-10 women and one or two toddlers in the service. The rest of the Iranian children attend the different English-speaking children's groups, which take place at the same time. About two thirds of the Iranians join the Cornerstone congregation for their main service, which begins at 10.30. At about 11.00 they leave the English-speaking service for their own Farsi-speaking service. After the Farsi-speaking service almost all Iranians re-join the congregation of the English-speaking service for coffee and tea in the school's main hall.

During the week there are three Iranian Bible study meetings. These meetings take place in the houses of members of the Iranian group. There is one bible study group for new Christians and seekers, one bible study group for women and one for more mature Christians. The groups are led by Iranian and British Christians.

2. Attitudes towards Integration

(1) Church Leadership

The church leadership is very committed to the Iranian ministry. It provides the Iranian group with a room for their weekly Farsi-speaking services, pays for weekend retreats for the group, and sponsors the theological training of a group member at an Iranian Bible College in the South of England. In addition, the leadership has nominated one church elder to act as a contact person for the group. This elder regularly attends the Farsi-speaking services and seems to be highly respected by the Iranian Christians. Last but not least the church leadership has decided to employ two part-time workers for the Iranian ministry from September 2006 onwards.

Regarding the future of the Iranian group the majority of church leaders believe that the formation of a separate independent Iranian church is not an option. In other words integration into Cornerstone is what the church leaders consider as the best way forward. The main argument against a separate Iranian church and for the integration of Iranian Christians into Cornerstone Church is what might be called the second generation argument. Several church leaders expressed their doubts that an independent Iranian church would be able to serve the needs of the second and third generation of Iranians.

Although different church leaders have different views on the details of the integration process and its feasibility their general model of integration that they have in mind is the assimilation model. For some church leaders this means that the members of the Iranian group will become British. They see it as the task of the church to support the assimilation of the members of the Iranian group into British society. While other church leaders do not expect the Iranian Christians to give up their national Iranian identity completely they still expect them to change and to adjust to the church, its culture and theological positions.

(2) Iranian Asylum Seekers and Refugees

The majority of Iranian Christians at Cornerstone Church consider themselves to be part of the church. The idea of a separate Iranian church is strongly rejected by them and the future of the group is seen within the context of Cornerstone Church. There are different reasons for this attitude. The most frequently mentioned argument is a theological one. For several Iranians the unity of the Christian Church is very important. One of them puts it this way:

“All Christians together form the family of God. We are all the same. Race and language do not really separate us. It’s not a good thing to have a separate church. We should all be together in one church. I believe that we Iranians should be integrated into Cornerstone. There shouldn’t be an Iranian church, a German church or an English church. We are all one in Christ. We all have the same aim. Our aim is Jesus.”

Other Iranian refugees point out how important the church has been to them as a place for making friends with non-Iranians. They stress that it is almost impossible to meet and to get to know British people outside the church. The support that they receive from Cornerstone strengthens their self-worth and dignity. There is agreement among the Iranian Christians that the church is helping them to integrate into a society that is prejudiced against refugees. Also, the children in the group would find it difficult to attend a purely Iranian church as their command of English is already better than their Farsi.

While there is widespread agreement among the Iranian Christians that they want to be part of Cornerstone Church, there are clearly different opinions about the best way of integrating into the church. For some Iranians the way to integrate is to assimilate. Though they see the necessity of a separate Iranian service for the time being, they want to see the Iranian group worshipping together with the main congregation in the future. They vehemently reject the idea of calling an Iranian pastor for the Farsi-speaking group. There is obviously the fear that an Iranian pastor could lead the group into a separate Iranian church. Other members of the Iranian group understand integration more as a mutual process that demands change and adjustment from all sides.

(3) Refugee Ministry Team

Like most of the church leaders and Iranian refugees those directly involved with the Iranian group at Cornerstone Church see the group’s future within Cornerstone. While integration into Cornerstone is not regarded an easy enterprise the formation of a separate Iranian church is not considered an option for the Iranian Christians either.

There are different reasons why members of the refugee ministry team want the Iranian group to be part of Cornerstone Church. Firstly, some team members believe that a separate Iranian church would neither be good for the second generation of Iranians nor would it be wanted by them. Secondly, it is argued that the presence of Iranian refugees gives church members the chance not only to serve them but also to learn from them.

Thirdly, it is claimed that the Iranian refugees experience racial discrimination and that Cornerstone Church is a kind of safe place for them. Last but not least it is argued that a separate Iranian church, made up of Iranian asylum seekers and refugees would put a significant amount of pressure on the time and energies and emotions of its members.

The majority of church members who are directly involved with the Iranian group understand integration as a gradual and mutual process, that requires change and adjustment from all parties involved. They stress that they do not wish the Iranian Christians to give up their culture or Christian identity.

Interestingly, it seems that none of the team members has a clear view of the final outcome of this integration process. There is quite a degree of uncertainty. However, there seems to be an overall agreement that the model of a Farsi-speaking Iranian congregation within the larger English-speaking church is the best solution for the time being.

3. Integration Barriers

According to the church leadership the main integration barriers are language barriers, cultural differences, and lifestyle issues. Regarding the language barrier church leaders hold that the lack of English makes communication between Iranian and non-Iranian Christians in the church difficult. It also prevents some Iranians from getting actively involved in the church life and from profiting from the church's teaching ministry.

With regard to the life-style issues some church leaders are concerned that Iranian Christians were involved in illegal activities such as working in the black market.

The church leadership clearly regards it as the task of the church to support the Iranian Christians in overcoming language and cultural barriers. Some leaders stress the importance of social events, where Iranian Christians could mix with British and other church members, practice English and get to know British culture better.

Like the church leaders most members of the ministry team regard language problems and cultural differences as integration barriers. Examples for cultural barriers are a different understanding of leadership and the different role of men and women in Iranian and British culture. Regarding the language problems it is argued that it would be difficult for the majority of the Iranian Christians to follow the sermons preached in the main English-speaking service. The reason for this is not only their lack of English but also the style of the sermons, that require a very high 'level of English' in order to be understood fully. Another integration barrier mentioned by team members are both ignorance and reservations against refugees among church members. Also, there is the church's membership policy for refugees that is seen as a problem for the integration process. Finally, the fact that the Persian-speaking ministry is only one of out of many ministries and that members of the church leadership have different priorities is regarded a problem for the integration of the Iranian refugees.

Like the church leaders and the members of the refugee ministry team the Iranian Christians at Cornerstone consider language problems and cultural difference as barriers for their integration both into the church and into society at large.

Some members stress that the church has to play its part in overcoming cultural barriers. At Cornerstone, for example it is expected that church members and regular visitors approach the pastoral staff if they want to get involved in a specific ministry. For this purpose a leaflet entitled 'How to serve at Cornerstone' is regularly distributed among the Sunday congregations. This seems to be a culturally inappropriate way to involve Iranian Christians in the life of the church, or as one Iranian puts it:

You know Iranians don't ask you. They want to be asked. It's a very different culture. It's not like asking people 'Who wants to help with tea and coffee?' It's like 'Reza, you have to help the church. You have to come and do the coffee!' Not of course in a pushy way, but in a wise way. Because you know you have to have a good understanding of the culture. If you go to an Iranian church it doesn't matter if you serve coffee or preach as long as you do that.

This is obviously an area where the church needs to be more sensitive. The same is true with regard to the membership issue. On the surface the members of the Iranian group seem to be content with the status quo, but there is clearly some degree of frustration about this issue within the group. One Iranian told me:

"In my opinion this is really, really important for Iranian people, because they need to know what's going on in church. And they can ask questions and they don't feel separated. When they become members they feel the church is their home, they feel they are serving God. In the Iranian group they don't know a lot about the English

church. They support each other and go out to evangelise other Iranians, but they don't serve the church. They want to help, it's part of our Iranian culture."

Another Iranian put it this way: "I would like to become a member as well. But nobody has asked us. Nobody has asked us to become a member or to come to the members' meetings."

Some Iranian Christians clearly feel excluded by the church's membership policy. This feeling of exclusions can also be seen in other areas. Thus some Iranians do not understand why the weekly Iranian bible studies, in contrast to all other Cornerstone house group meetings including the Spanish speaking group are not mentioned in the church's notice sheet.

4. Steps towards integration

The majority of church leaders and the church members involved with the Iranian group hold that personal contacts and friendships between Iranian and non-Iranian Christians are crucial for the integration process. They believe that house groups and social events, such as church meals are good opportunities for Iranian and non-Iranian Christians to meet and to get know each other.

One team member believes that furthering friendships is more important than having common worship services, whereas another member of the refugee ministry pleads for an active participation of Christian refugees in the main English-speaking services. He argues that refugees should be encouraged to use their gifts and to get involved in the various ministries at Cornerstone Church.

Most of the church members involved with the Iranian group think that the steps towards integration are steps to be taken by both refugees and non-refugees.

5. Benefits of Integration

The members of the refugee ministry team agree that their involvement has changed their perspectives and that they have personally benefited from this ministry. One interviewee admitted that she had been rather ignorant and cynical about refugees and asylum seekers before she met members of the Iranian group at Cornerstone. Several of my interview partners said that the Iranian Christians had become examples to them, that they had inspired them in their own Christian lives. When being asked what it meant to him to be involved with Iranian Christians one team member said:

"To me the very big feeling early on was a feeling of gratitude I suppose for what I have and the things I have taken for granted. These people had to escape their country and they've come here with absolutely nothing. And yet on the Sunday morning would still be upstairs praising God for being gracious to them. And here we are in our comfortable homes, with comfortable jobs, everything, our family around us and we sometimes aren't as gracious. And that was a real blessing to me. Yea, it really struck home, and spiritually it spoke to me that if you got Jesus and nothing else that's enough."

He then went on to say that it helped him both to understand better the universal character of the church and to experience God in a new way. He told me:

"I spent most of my time in this country, it just reminds me that God is not a God of the West, he's not an English God, he's a God of the whole world. Iran is somewhere, that in this country no one knows about really. So it's great to know that he's just as relevant to Iranians of Muslim background. Yes for me personally those are the two main things in terms of learning how blessed I've been and to appreciate God in a new way. It just opened my eyes to different cultures, different people. And you kind of realize how we have our own ways as well."

Another team member spoke about how refreshing it was for him to worship and pray together with Iranian Christians. One church member told me that the ministry had had an enormous influence on his 'own discipleship and spiritual development'. He said that he had learned more about himself and his own culture. Other team members emphasized that they had learned hospitality, humility, and generosity from the Iranian Christians.

6. Conclusion & Recommendations

(1) The congregation within a congregation model seems to be a good strategy. It gives Iranian Christians the chance to worship in their own language and style. At the same time they are part of an indigenous church, which is important for both the first and the second generation. This model seems to be accepted by the three groups I interviewed.

(2) Social events organised by the church, such as the Iranian meals have undoubtedly helped to foster integration. The church needs to continue in its effort to bring Iranian and non-Iranian Christians together.

(3) In my view, there are several steps that can be taken to help the Iranian Christians to identify even more with Cornerstone Church

(a) Membership

The church leadership should re-think their membership policy as this might be a stumbling block for the integration of Iranian Christians into Cornerstone.

(b) Prayer & Praise

Iranian Christians should be encouraged to join the church for the monthly prayer and praise services. These events are opportunities to practise unity in Christ.

(c) Notice Sheet

The church should consider publishing the details of the weekly Iranian bible studies in the church notice sheet.

(d) Farsi-speaking service and bible studies

All church leaders (pastors & elders) should consider visiting the Iranian service on a Sunday morning and the weekly bible studies. Other church members should be encouraged to attend these events at least once.

(e) House group clusters

It would be good if the Iranian house groups would become part of a cluster of house groups that has regular cluster groups meetings.

(f) Service

The Iranian Christians should be encouraged to get involved in different ministries in the church.

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AUDIT REPORT

23rd April 2006

1. Research Projects

In 2004 Thorsten Prill asked me to audit two qualitative research projects. Both projects were case studies based on (a) two minority ethnic churches, and (b) a church that had a ministry with refugees and asylum seekers. The two minority ethnic churches were the German Lutheran Congregation Nottingham, and the Nottingham Chinese Christian Church. The church that was involved with refugees and asylum seekers was Cornerstone Church, Nottingham. The German Lutheran Congregation is part of the German speaking Synod of Lutheran, Reformed and United Congregations in Great Britain. The Chinese Church and Cornerstone are Free Churches affiliated to the UK Evangelical Alliance.

2. Meetings

Between December 2004 and April 2006 I had four meetings with Thorsten. At these meetings he informed me about the research process and its progress. We discussed the aim of his research, general research questions, research procedures, the selection of interview partners etc. Additionally, Thorsten provided me with the following documents: a research journal, interview guides, interview transcripts, index cards with codes, research reports and responses by research participants. Thorsten told me that he would follow the Empirical Theological Cycle according to Faix, which was unknown to me. When he explained it to me it reminded me of the Pastoral Cycle that was developed by Joe Holland and Peter Henriot.

3. Research Question

Thorsten's general research question of how to integrate refugees into the Christian community was and continues to be very relevant for the Church in the UK. There has been a constant increase of immigrants to the UK from outside Western Europe in recent years. This influx of both Christians and non-Christians poses a challenge to the British Church and her understanding of mission.

4. Selection of Research Sites

The research sites were well chosen. Cornerstone Church Nottingham was attended by a significant number of asylum seekers and refugees and the Persian-speaking group was one the largest of its kind in the UK. The German Lutheran Church and the Chinese Church were both representative examples of minority ethnic churches in Nottingham. Between them they cover 80 years of 'being' a minority ethnic church in a British environment. Each one stems from a different cultural background: the German Lutheran Church is a Western European cultural community moving into another Western European cultural community. Whereas the Chinese Church is an Asian church moving into a Western European host community. Because of the differences between the research sites they were ideal for a cross-cultural case study.

5. Selection of Research Participants

Regarding the selection of his interview partners Thorsten applied a purposive sampling strategy. He observed and interviewed only people he considered relevant to his research questions. This made sense since he wanted to understand two particular cases in greater detail. In my opinion, the number of interviewees was sufficient for a qualitative research project. Thorsten applied the principle of saturation to his interviews. This meant that whenever he believed an additional interview in a particular participant group would not add any new insights into his research, he would end interviews with that particular participant group.

6. Research Strategies & Ethics

Thorsten used a combination of different research strategies, i.e. interviews and participant observation. By doing so he was able to see if people's words would match their behaviour.

His interviews and observations were conducted with prior consent of the research participants. To protect the Iranian Christians, who were mostly converts from Islam, Thorsten decided to use pseudonyms. In addition he used the method of respondent validation which gave the participants the opportunity to feed back on, correct and clarify his findings.

7. Data Collection

The majority of interviews were conducted with individuals on a one-to-one basis. Only two focus groups were formed. One was with refugees and the other was with those who were directly involved in refugee ministry. Personally I think that the use of more focus groups would have been beneficial for his research. In a focus group individuals have the ability to interact and feed off each other, thus enabling the participants to challenge each other and clarify opinions and ideas. Also, on a practical note, the use of more focus groups would have saved time. Having said that, I understand that there were practical reasons and personality issues that made a more extensive use of focus groups difficult.

From seeing the transcripts of Thorsten's interviews I could see that the interviews were conducted properly, that is without bias and closed questioning.

8. Data Analysis

For the data analysis Thorsten used qualitative coding. In two coding stages he went through his material (interviews and notes). By doing so he developed a huge number of different codes. For this process he used index cards. I understand he felt most comfortable with this approach, but there is a variety of social research software which could have been used to make the process less time consuming.

9. Conclusion

I was able to fully comprehend the research process and findings. All the material from the various phases of research were available to me and were clear in their methodology and results. From my discussions with Thorsten and witnessing of his research material I know that the research procedures were followed properly.

David D. Howard

The Most Popular Hymns and Songs sung at Cornerstone in 2005

Title	Frequency	Theme(s)
In Christ alone	11	Atonement/Personal Salvation
Kings of kings, majesty	10	Personal Salvation
You're the word of God the Father	9	Salvation, Creation, Resurrection
Jesus is Lord	8	Atonement/Salvation
Light of the world	8	Personal Salvation
See what a morning	8	Personal Salvation, Resurrection
Blessing and honour	8	Praise
Above all powers	8	Personal Salvation
There is a day	8	Second Coming/Salvation
How deep is the Father's love for us	7	Atonement/Personal Salvation
When I was lost	7	Atonement/Personal Salvation
You are my anchor	7	Personal Salvation/ God's Guidance
Lord I come before your throne of grace	6	Personal Salvation
Jesus, Redeemer	6	Personal Salvation
O the deep, deep love of Jesus	6	Personal Salvation
In him I have believed	6	Christian Life
God gave us his son	6	Personal Salvation /Evangelism/ Sanctification
Come, see his glorious light		Atonement/Personal Salvation/Praise
When I survey the wondrous cross	6	Atonement/Personal Salvation
I see the Lord	6	Personal Salvation/Praise
Befriended	5	Personal Salvation
Beloved and blessed	5	Personal Salvation/Praise
Blessed be your name	5	Praise
The splendour of the king	5	Praise
Praise to the Lord	5	Praise/Creation/Salvatio
When love came down to earth	5	Personal Salvation
Only by grace can we enter	5	Atonement/Personal Salvation

Source: Cornerstone Church, 2005c. Music Record 2005

Research Report:

The Mission and Ministry of the Nottingham Chinese Christian Church and the German Lutheran Congregation, Nottingham

Foreword

Dear

This report contains the findings of my research into the ministry and mission of the Nottingham Chinese Christian Church and the German Lutheran Congregation Nottingham. My research took place between January and December 2005. It involved participant observation and semi-structured interviews with leaders of both churches.

I would very much appreciate if you could please read this report and comment on it. Your comments will help me to make sure that my findings and interpretations reflect a true picture of the situation of these two minority ethnic churches.

Thank you very much!

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1. An Analytical and Theological Description of the Churches

(1) Historical Background

The Nottingham German Lutheran Church was officially founded with a congregation of about 20 people three years later in November 1951. Most of the founding members were ex-prisoners of war, nursing staff in the local hospitals, au pair girls or students. Many of them were displaced persons or refugees from the former Eastern provinces of Germany, which after World War II had become part of Poland or the Soviet Union respectively. In the beginning the church was served by a German pastor who was based in Hull, Yorkshire. In 1961 it was transferred to a pastor who lived in Leicester. During this time the congregation met for its services in the hall of St Nicholas Church, an Anglican inner city church, and later on the premises of Castle Gate Congregational Church, likewise situated in the city centre of Nottingham. In 1967 the German Lutheran Congregation purchased its own church building, a former Methodist chapel that had been erected in 1907 and used by the Methodist Church for almost sixty years. In 1969 a church hall and a flat to accommodate the senior pastor and his family were added.

The beginnings of the Nottingham Chinese Christian Church can be traced back to the year 1971 when English-speaking Chinese University students and nurses mainly from Hong Kong, Malaysia and Singapore formed a bible study group in Nottingham. The group was led by a pastor affiliated with the Chinese Overseas Christian Mission. In the late 1970s members of the group attended a mission conference. At this conference they were moved by the fact that there were many non-English speaking Chinese living in Nottingham. The group felt called to reach out to these people and after a while they started to use Cantonese and instead of English as the main language in their meetings. A few years later the Cantonese service was transformed into a bilingual English-Cantonese service in order to meet the needs of those who spoke only little Cantonese. In the 1994 the constitution was changed and the Nottingham Chinese Christian Fellowship became the Nottingham Chinese Christian Church.

(2) Affiliations

The German Lutheran Congregation Nottingham is a member church of the German-speaking Synod of Lutheran, Reformed and United Congregations in Great Britain. Together with congregations in Birmingham, Coventry, Leicester, Derby and Lincoln it forms the Midlands district of the German-speaking Synod. The German-speaking Synod combines twenty-two congregations with 1,759 members and ten ordained ministers in England, Wales and Scotland. The Synod has close links with the Protestant Church in Germany, Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, and the Church of England. The Nottingham congregation is a member of Churches Together in Nottinghamshire & Derbyshire.

In contrast to the German Lutheran Congregation the Nottingham Chinese Christian Church is an independent inter-denominational church. The church is affiliated with the Evangelical Alliance and the Chinese Overseas Christian Mission. The latter is a Christian mission agency which aims to bring 'the gospel to the Chinese scattered over Europe through pioneering evangelism, church planting, training and literature work'.

(3) Church Structures and Finances

The church structures of the German-speaking Synod of Lutheran, Reformed and United Congregations in Great Britain are based on federal principles at all levels. Each congregation is responsible for Christian life in its own area, while the districts and the Synod carry out joint tasks with which their members have entrusted them. Every congregation has got its own church council. The church council of the German Lutheran Church Nottingham consists of eight members and meets every other month.

As an independent church the Nottingham Chinese Christian Church practices congregational church government. It is led by a church council whose members are elected by the church members for a tenure of one year. A re-election is possible. The ministers of the church are ex-officio members of the church council. In September 2005 there were six members, both men and women on the council.

At the beginning of my research in February 2005 the Chinese Church had two ministers. There was one part-time minister who oversaw the English-speaking ministry, while another full-time minister was responsible for the Cantonese-speaking and Mandarin-speaking work. The former went back to Singapore in December 2005 and the latter retired in summer 2005. In addition, there was a Mandarin-speaking bible college student who did her placement with the Nottingham Chinese Christian Church. The minister's salaries were completely raised by church members and friends of the church.

In 2004 the Nottingham Chinese Christian Church had a total gross income of £42,702 while the total expenditure was £46,589. This is significantly more than the income and expenditure of the German Lutheran Church in 2004. Thus, the German Lutheran church had an income of £17,462 and a total expenditure of £21,424. While the German Lutheran Church generates most of its income from renting out its premises to students and other churches, the Chinese Church heavily relies on the contributions of its Cantonese-speaking group which form the core of the church membership.

(4) Location

The church building of the German Lutheran Congregation, which includes a church hall and a flat, is located in Aspley, a district of Nottingham. Since the formation of the Midlands district and the decision to move the pastor's seat to Birmingham in 1989 the flat and the church hall have been rented out to Luther College Study Centre, which is part of Luther College, Decorah, Iowa, U.S.A. . Luther College is an undergraduate liberal arts college affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

In contrast to the German Lutheran Church, the Chinese Church does not have its own church building. Instead, the church meets for its worship services and socials at St Nicholas' Church, an Anglican parish church in the centre of Nottingham. This is the same church the German congregation used for their meetings in the fifties and early sixties of the last century. The Chinese Church is hoping to buy or build its own church building in the future.

(5) Churchmanship and Church Life

The churchmanship of the German Lutheran Congregation is neither liberal nor evangelical, but moderate conservative and traditional. The Sunday worship services are at the centre of church life. There are two services every month. One service takes place on the second Sunday of every month and the other on the last Sunday. According to the German Lutheran tradition communion is celebrated once a month. The services follow the traditional Lutheran liturgy. The hymns are taken from the German Protestant Hymn Book. The congregational singing is accompanied by an organ.

The Nottingham congregation has currently 65 members, while the church district has a total membership of 220. The church in Nottingham has seen a significantly decline in membership over recent years. At the same time the average age of its members has increased. In March 2005 the average age was 75 years.

The Nottingham Chinese Christian Church is a broadly evangelical church. As a member of the British Evangelical Alliance it subscribes to the EA's statement of faith. Apart from that it does not hold any theological distinctives like the German Lutheran Church which holds to the Lutheran Confessions and the Barmen Declaration of Faith. In its Mission Statement, which was updated in March 2004, the Chinese Church gives a description of its vision. According to this statement it aims to be a life-changing church, where people can become Christians, grow in their Christian faith, and form a loving and prayerful community that serves one another and helps one another to identify and use their spiritual gifts. The statement ends: 'We all actively share the local and global mission of the Chinese church, by bringing the gospel to the Chinese community in particular, and to the wider world'.

At the centre of the church life are the worship services. There are three services conducted in three different languages on a Sunday. An English language service, that takes place between 1.00 and 2.15pm, and two Chinese services, one Cantonese-speaking and the other Mandarin-speaking, which run simultaneously between 2.45 and 4.00pm. From my observations the regular attendance of the Cantonese-speaking service is between 60 and 80 people, while the Mandarin-speaking service attracts 30 to 40 and the English service 20 to 30 worshippers. The

Mandarin-speaking service is mainly attended by students from Mainland China while the English-speaking congregation consists of British born or brought up Chinese and students from Hong Kong and Singapore. The Cantonese congregation is made up of mainly middle aged and elderly people who originate from Hong Kong. Most of them are involved in the restaurant business.

On the first Sunday of every month there is a joint English-Cantonese-speaking service which is celebrated as an all-age worship service. On the last Sunday of every month there is a joint Cantonese-Mandarin service. Holy Communion is celebrated on the first Sunday of every month and is usually followed by an Agape Feast. This feast has the character of a social at which traditional Chinese food is served. In addition to the services, the church offers a Chinese class for children from 1.15 -2.15 every Sunday, which is followed by Sunday School from 2.30-4.00. From my observations there are approximately 20 to 25 children who come to the Chinese class and the children's programme. The Sunday School is compulsory for those children who attend the Chinese class.

During the week, five different fellowship groups meet in different areas of Nottingham. The nature of these meetings varies from bible-study, theological seminars, and social events to outreach activities. The Cantonese-speaking Joy Fellowship, which is attended mainly by elderly church members, meets at St Nicholas' Church in Nottingham city centre. The same premises are used for the monthly meetings of the Cantonese-speaking Women's Fellowship group. The English-speaking Barnabas Fellowship group for young British Born Chinese and English-speaking Chinese overseas students hold their meetings at Oasis Christian Centre, an independent charismatic church between 8.00 and 10.00 on Wednesdays, while a Cantonese/Mandarin-speaking student group meets at St Andrew's Church, an Anglican parish church which is located north of the city centre on Friday night. Likewise on Friday two groups of Mandarin and Cantonese-speaking students meet at Beeston Evangelical Free Church, which is located close the University of Nottingham's main campus.

The church distinguishes between three classes of membership: full membership, associate membership and junior membership. In order to be eligible for full membership applicants must have attended the church over a period of at least six months. Membership applications need to be made to the Church Council. After an informal interview carried out by at least two church council members the council decides if the applicant will be welcomed into membership of the church. In September 2005 the church had a membership of 48. Most of these members belonged to the group of middle aged Cantonese-speakers.

2. Reasons for Attending the Churches

My research shows that there are many different reasons or motives why people not only attend the Nottingham Chinese Christian Church and the German Lutheran Church Nottingham but also are actively involved in these two churches. These different reasons can be roughly divided into five categories: language, cultural, sociological, theological, and missiological reasons.

(1) Language Reasons

During my visits to the Nottingham Chinese Christian Church I observed that most of the elderly church members spoke Chinese not only to each other but also to the younger people in the church whose first language was English. When I was introduced to some of these older church members I realized that they had only a very limited command of English. Some of my interview partners later confirmed to me that many older church members did not speak much English at all.

The majority of these elderly church members were Cantonese-speaking Chinese who originated from Hong Kong. Undoubtedly, these Cantonese-speaking Chinese would have found it extremely difficult to worship in a purely English-speaking church due to their lack of English. In other words, Chinese Church was the only place in the Nottingham area where they could worship and have Christian fellowship in their mother tongue.

Like in the Chinese Church language played an important role for people who attended the German Lutheran Church, though the basic situation was completely different. The elderly people who attended the German

Lutheran Church spoke both English and German fluently. From my observations I would say that some spoke English even better than their German mother tongue.

While for both elderly German and Chinese church members the opportunity to speak their mother tongue seemed to be an important factor for attending these churches it struck me that the elderly Germans were more or less bilingual while the elderly Chinese spoke only Cantonese. During my research I was able to identify two reasons for this. Firstly, most of the Cantonese-speaking Chinese came to Britain in order to work in the restaurant business. Due to the nature of this work there were both very little need and opportunities for them to learn or to improve their English. In contrast, most of the elderly Germans worked alongside British people in different industries during their working lives. Secondly, many German immigrants married British citizens or people from other ethnic minorities such as Poles, Lithuanians or Ukrainians, whereas the majority of Chinese immigrants married people from their own ethnic group.

(2) Cultural Reasons

Closely related to the language reason is the second category of motives. During my research it became obvious that both churches function as a kind of cultural oasis where one can meet people with the same or a similar ethnocultural background. The churches are places that remind people of their home country and their native culture. They are places where people can meet friends that have had similar experiences in life.

Besides a place where one can meet people of the same ethnocultural background the Nottingham Chinese Christian Church also serves as a place where Chinese culture is passed on to the next generation. Thus, the church runs Chinese language classes which are attended not only by children from church families but also by children from non-Christian families who otherwise have no links with the Chinese Church.

In addition to the language classes, the Chinese Church celebrates typical Chinese festivals, such as Chinese New Year, which attract non-Christian ethnic Chinese from the Nottingham area.

While the German Lutheran Church no longer offers German language classes for children it still organizes events such as the Oktoberfest and the German Christmas Bazaar that attract a huge number of non-church members of all-ages who have some sort of links with Germany and German culture.

(3) Sociological Reasons

What struck me during my research at the Chinese Church was that the desire to be with Chinese Christians was relatively strong among the English-speaking second generation, the so called British Born Chinese, as well as among English-speaking ethnic Chinese students from Singapore, Hong Kong, or Malaysia. I could identify three reasons for this phenomenon.

Firstly, it became obvious that there was a strong self-consciousness of being different among the English-speaking church members and regular visitors. Whenever my interview partners spoke about the relationship between English-speaking Chinese and the dominant white British culture terms such as 'different' or 'difference' were used quite frequently. Secondly, in conversations with two church members, both of a BBC background I learned that they had personally experienced racial discrimination in British society and were convinced that British society at large was prejudiced against ethnic minorities.

It seemed that for some people the Chinese Church functioned also as a refuge from racial discrimination or from what they perceived as such. For them the church formed, as one church council member put it a 'safe' environment. Thirdly, other interviewees emphasized that they had had some negative experience in English churches which they would not classify as racial discrimination. From their understanding the problem consisted in the inability of indigenous churches to integrate foreigners and members of ethnic minorities into their communities.

In contrast to the Chinese Church the German Lutheran Church Nottingham did clearly not function as a refuge from discrimination. All my interview partners seemed to be fully integrated into British society. Most of them had British citizenship and spoke very positively about the British way of life. Since the church offered only two

services a month one lady told me that she would attend her local Methodist church on the other Sundays. However, three of the interviewees indicated that the situation had been different in the beginning of the church in the 1950s, shortly after the end of World War II. There were still reservations against the former 'enemy' in some parts of the British population at that time. Consequently German immigrants felt to some degree isolated.

(4) Theological Reasons

When I interviewed the leaders of the German Lutheran Church I also learned about theological motives people had for coming to this church. I learned that there were certain distinct theological traditions and teachings that attracted people especially to the church services. Thus, two council members told me that the German Lutheran liturgy was very important to them. Another theological distinctive mentioned by the senior pastor of the church was the Lutheran understanding of the sacraments, especially of the Eucharist.

At the Chinese Church I could not identify any distinct theological doctrines or traditions that attracted people to this church. On the contrary, the interviewees emphasized how much they appreciated the inter-denominational character of their church, or as one church leader said: "In our church we don't have the denominations, we are just Christian. But English churches all have different denominations, different labels, different doctrines."

(5) Missiological Reasons

When I spoke to the leaders of the Chinese Church about the church's mission most of them said that their church had an evangelistic task to fulfil among the Chinese people of Nottingham. One church leader even argued that the Chinese Church could evangelize ethnic Chinese more effectively than indigenous English churches. To him this was the main reason that justified the existence of a minority ethnic church like the Chinese Christian Church Nottingham. The view that it was easier for Chinese to evangelize Chinese was shared by other leaders of the Chinese Church.

While the majority of church leaders in the German Lutheran Church expressed the desire to see more people joining the church, there was with the exception of the senior pastor no awareness of the evangelistic dimension of the church's mission. For them the opportunity to evangelize German-speakers in the Nottingham area was clearly not a motive for their church involvement. At the Chinese Church I also came across the argument that the church could minister to Mainland Chinese, who stayed in Nottingham for a limited time only more effectively than other local English churches.

3. Challenges for Churches

Both the German Lutheran Church Nottingham and the Nottingham Chinese Christian Church were facing problems and challenges. Some of these problems and challenges were shared by both churches others could be found in of one of the two congregations only. Altogether I was able to identify six different groups of challenges: missiological, theological, sociological, geographical, financial, and leadership challenges.

(1) Missiological Challenges

By their nature both churches the German Lutheran Church and the Nottingham Chinese Christian Church limited their mission to people who belonged to the same ethnic group. Both churches had a clear focus on ethno-cultural minorities. Thus, all the services and other church events in the German Lutheran Church were in German. The only exceptions were funerals which were hold either in English or as bilingual services in English and German. The Chinese Church offered an English-speaking service and an English-speaking bible study group, but both were attended almost entirely by Chinese Christians. Against this background it did not come as a surprise that neither the German Church nor the Chinese Church seemed to have much contact with the local communities in which their church buildings were located.

The danger for such churches is that they become not only inward-looking but end up as communities where the social life is more important than the spiritual. This danger was seen by leaders of both churches. Leaders of the German Church mentioned that for many years the church had been not much more than a social club and that it was still seen as such by some people.

Another missiological problem that I could identify among some church leaders of the German Lutheran Church was a distorted understanding of mission. Not only did they have their focus on German-speakers only, they also understood outreach first and foremost as reaching out to German-speaking Lutherans. In other words, the mission of the church was to bring German-speaking Lutheran Christians into the church. The idea behind that was that the church would not grow through evangelism but through gathering people of the same denominational background.

(2) Theological Challenges

The Nottingham Chinese Christian Church called itself an inter-denominational church. From my observation this reflected the situation of the church very well, since the church members and regular visitors that I met came from various denominational backgrounds, such as Presbyterian, Baptist or Free Evangelical. What they had in common was that they were Christians of Chinese origin. This situation required a willingness to respect different theological views and to make compromises with regard to secondary issues. Without such a willingness to compromise, as I found it in the Nottingham Chinese Christian Church there is the danger of tensions and conflicts between people who hold different theological convictions. As a denominational and confessional church the German Lutheran Church did not really face this danger. The danger for a church like the German Lutheran Church is that it excludes people who have a different church background.

(3) Sociological Challenges

As a result of my observations and the interviews with church leaders I became aware that both the German Lutheran Church and the Nottingham Chinese Christian Church were confronted with several sociological problems and challenges.

(a) The 2nd Generation Problem

Firstly, there was what can be called the 2nd generation problem. At the German Lutheran Church it was obvious that the second generation was almost non-existent. The church membership was more or less made up of first generation immigrants. There were no younger people in the Sunday services. When I asked the church leaders about their own children and grandchildren I learned that many of them were completely anglicised. While some of their children were still able to speak or at least to understand some German their grandchildren had no longer any links with the German culture or language.

The fact that the German Lutheran Church was an aging church without any young people had consequences for the daily life of the church. Thus, the church found it very difficult to recruit not only members for the church council but also for other ministries in the church.

In the Chinese Church the situation was different insofar as there was a presence of second generation Chinese immigrants, the so called British Born Chinese whose first language was English. Although members of this group were anglicised to some extent there were still strong links with Chinese culture and Chinese values. In fact these links were so strong that members of this group would tend to marry only Chinese people.

Being both confronted with their specific 2nd generation problems the two churches decided to deal with it differently. In the German Lutheran Church the 2nd generation problem seemed to be accepted as a given fact, while the Chinese Church decided to take action. For many years there had been only a bilingual English-Cantonese service which had not been satisfying for members of both the first and the second generation. To meet the needs of both groups the church introduced a weekly English-speaking service in 2004.

(b) Global Migration & Education

Secondly, it occurred to me that one of the two churches was very much affected by globalization. Over recent years Britain has seen a huge influx of Chinese students. Thus the number of Chinese students in UK Higher education rose from 35,200 in the academic year 2002/3 to 47,740 in 2003/4. With around 1,000 Chinese students the University of Nottingham is one of the most popular Higher Education institutions.

This influx of Chinese students created a twofold challenge to the Chinese Church:

First of all there was the challenge to reach out to this group with very limited personnel and financial resources. Secondly, most of the Chinese students and scholars spent only a relatively short time in Nottingham. They were people in transition. That made it not only difficult to integrate them into the church but also the church could not expect long term commitments from them. There was the danger that this could have a de-motivating effect on the local church when they saw people leave after a short time.

However, it was pointed out to me that there was also a positive side to this issue. While it was true that the students did not stay for long the church had the opportunity to help them to grow in their Christian faith and equip them for their future ministries in their home countries in East Asia.

(c) Increased Internal Migration

The third sociological challenge to both churches was the increase of internal migration in British society over recent years. While this is a challenge for every church, the implications for minority ethnic churches who serve a small group in society can be even more serious than for indigenous churches. Thus, during my research at the Chinese Church the church treasurer moved away from the Nottingham area and the church was struggling to replace him. The German Church I was told had been confronted with a similar problem.

(4) Geographical Challenges

As churches that aimed to minister to certain ethnic groups both the German Lutheran Church and the Chinese Christian Church had ministerial areas which were much larger than a traditional English parish where people lived in walking distance from the church building.

For the German Lutheran Church this posed a serious problem. During my research at this church several members of the congregation told me that they found it difficult to come to the Sunday services by public transport. The transport to and from church and the lack of mobility were also mentioned by the church leaders as two of the main challenges to the church. In contrast to the German Church, leaders of the Chinese Christian Church told me that though there was a transport problem especially for their elderly members they did not regard it as a serious problem. .

Like the German Church the Chinese Church had a huge catchment area. Members of both churches lived not only in different parts of Nottinghamshire but also in the adjacent counties of Derbyshire, Leicestershire and Lincolnshire. This had implications for the pastoral work of the churches. Members of the pastoral staff had to travel long distances to visit people in their homes. This was both time consuming and costly. In addition to this travelling problem, the ministerial areas made it more difficult to establish a real sense of community.

(5) Financial Challenges

When I asked one of the German church leaders about the biggest problem of his church he mentioned the church's financial situation. While other council members agreed that the revenue from donations and contributions was a problem they did not consider the financial situation of the church as unhealthy. However, the senior pastor pointed out that the 50 years of financial dependence on the mother church in Germany had not been helpful. When I probed further he explained that the financial support from Germany had not encouraged local church members to support the church financially as it was the case with other local churches.

In contrast to the German Church my interview partners at the Chinese Church did not mention any financial problems. However, it was obvious to me that the church found it difficult not to have its own church building due to a lack of funds. To use the facilities of other churches both for the Sunday services and the midweek meetings was only a second best solution. It created problems both for the host churches as well as for the Chinese Church.

(6) Leadership Challenges

During my research at the Chinese Church it became obvious that the church had a recruitment problem. Since the minister for the Cantonese speaking work retired and the minister for the English-speaking work returned to his native Singapore the church had to find at least one if not two new pastors. The church faced the problem that there was no real market in the UK for qualified Chinese pastors who could speak three languages, i.e. English, Cantonese and Mandarin and who had, as one council member remarked experience in overseas Chinese churches. As a minority ethnic church the congregation operated in a kind of niche for which it was difficult to find pastoral staff in the UK

In contrast to the Chinese Church the German Lutheran Church never had any problems to recruit ministers. From the beginning of the church in the 1950s pastors from the Protestant Church in Germany were seconded to the church in Nottingham. The problem with that was that the church had no real choice when it came to appoint a pastor. The candidates were pre-selected by the church authorities in Germany.

4. The Future of the Churches

Though both churches were confronted with various problems and challenges, it struck me that they reacted to these problems in very different ways. The mood among the leaders of the German Lutheran Church was characterised by a feeling of sadness and disillusionment. One church council member told me about his view on the church's future:

“Well, it will be shrinking, still further. We have shrunk quite a lot in the last ten years. It's going progressively to get worse...It's a progression we can't stop. There is no way we can stop that at all.... Yes, it will fold up. We've got no future really....Unless we get some new people in which is very unlikely there is no alternative. There is no alternative.”

There was wide agreement among the German church leaders that the only way forward was a merger with the other German-speaking Lutheran Churches in the Midlands. Such a merger would not improve the situation of the church in Nottingham but it was hoped that it would guarantee its existence for some more years. Compared to the German Lutheran Church the mood in the Chinese Church was much more optimistic. When being asked about her view on the future of the Chinese Church a council member gave the following answer:

“I think in five years time I would like to see three different strong congregations within the church and they would be able to integrate with each other. And I would like to see leaders from these three different congregations represented in the Church Council.”

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MISSION AT THE EXIT RAMPS OF THE REFUGEE HIGHWAY IN AN AGE
OF GLOBALISATION: INTEGRATING REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS
INTO THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

by

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S U P P L E M E N T

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Interview No. A01

Interviewee: Mrs Debbie Abbott

Marital Status: Married

Occupation: International Teams Refugee Ministry Leader, Nottingham

Church: Cornerstone Church

Interviewer: Thorsten Prill

Date: 16 February 2005

Duration: 1 hour

Thorsten: Please tell me something about the refugee ministry at Cornerstone. How did it all start?

Debbie: It started in year 2000, but I guess you could say it started before that in a sense that Cornerstone supported me personally to go overseas as an international worker to work with refugees and they supported me financially and prayed for me and let me speak and lead seminars about refugee issues at church weekends. So there was some awareness and they also supported a team of four to go on a short-term team to where I was based and that included the church manager and that seemed to have quite a big impact on people.

Thorsten: When was that?

Debbie: That was in 1998.

Thorsten: And when did you come back to Nottingham?

Debbie: I came back to Nottingham in the year 2000. Shall I clarify what happened after that?

Thorsten: Yes, please.

Debbie: I came back to Nottingham in 2000 and I was in negotiations with the leadership of Cornerstone and one of my roles was to work in the same mission I was with, it was to mobilise people in Cornerstone to go maybe on short-term teams and also to be a spokesman for the organisation I was with, but up to that point there hadn't been as far as people knew many refugees in the Nottingham area. So people were interested, but there was a sense that

that was over there. So people didn't feel directly involved and that changed when I came back to Nottingham in October 2000.

Thorsten: So there were refugees in the Nottingham area that people weren't aware of?

Debbie: There were a few and obviously there were some more established groups that have been there for a long time, that you know about already. But the government's policy had changed in the summer of 2000 and they started sending people that applied for asylum throughout the country and Nottingham was one of the receivers of asylum seekers.

Thorsten: You are talking about the dispersal policy now...

Debbie: Yes, also, as a result of that short-term team back in 1998 one of the people that had been on the team had developed a heart and an interest in issues regarding asylum seekers. And so she heard about/was involved in some preliminary meetings, about what could be happening in Nottingham, because it was planned in a sense that local organisations knew that they were likely to disperse people to Nottingham and she had got herself involved in those planning meetings and she talked to me about what maybe Cornerstone could do at that point. And the decision – one of the needs that was actually highlighted by the potential receiving organisations in Nottingham was the need for clothing and footwear and things for people. And so she organised a clothing drive and actually, from what she'd seen on her short-term team with me and discussed it with me, she actually did a presentation and a very successful appeal and that actually started up the first Christian ministry to asylum seekers in Nottingham.

Thorsten: And that was at Cornerstone Church?

Debbie: No, the presentation was in Cornerstone, fundraising and an encouragement to people not to give the worst, but to give the best in terms of toys, clothes and things like that. And that was, the Southwell Diocese hosted that at St. Katherine's House in an old church building they opened up once a week for people to get clothing. And it was through that that I started going to those meetings and I have started to meet asylum seekers.

Thorsten: And that was with support of the church?

Debbie: It was my own initiative at that point, but this group of interested people that eventually became the Notts Refugee Forum – they wanted to put on an outreach event to just invite asylum seekers to a meal and that happened in Nottingham in 2000. We advertised it in the newssheet at Cornerstone and quite a lot of people came along to that meal. And so that some people that are still involved started their interest there.

Thorsten: How many refugees do you have now at Cornerstone Church, who come to church or are in some ways linked to the church?

Debbie: I think that could be seen as two different questions. There are some people that are linked because of the various programmes we've had over the last four years. I'm sure you'll fill in the gaps in the history, but the initiative to partly based on what I had seen that had worked in the past – those need to bring people together and a chance for them to meet Christians, local Christians. So I initiated, but Cornerstone backed me in having coffee bars for men and for women, to have a warm and safe place where they could meet each other and meet local Christians – and through that to have like a friendship evangelism and also an avenue for working out what people's needs were and what sorts of support - and so from that there are some people that we have a loose contact with or individuals have relationships with over the last four years. So there are some people that have been involved with say 'teaching English' or friendship with a family for four years, but they are not actively involved - those individuals might not be going to Cornerstone now or vice versa.

And then, in terms of people involved on a Sunday – I think that's a different question. As I said, there is obviously the South American group and the Ethiopian group and then there is those mainly from Albania etc. that don't go to Cornerstone, but have links with people from the church and maybe have various other fellowship groups. So there is those numbers and then those who actually attend Cornerstone on a Sunday morning. I'm not sure about the accurate figures now, but approximately about between 20 and 30 mainly Iranians and then there are fringe people that come for extra events, which can be up to 50 or 100. And there is probably about 3 Ethiopians and occasional South Americans and occasional other people groups.

Thorsten: So the Ethiopians have their own meeting? When do they meet?

Debbie: The South American group came out of the women's group that we started on a Wednesday afternoon and a lot of the relationships with women and families have come from that. And out of some of the teams that gradually developed of volunteers started a Bible study for women and from that some South Americans came along and by time there was a split into two Bible studies and one became just mainly for South Americans and so Spanish became the main language and that has now developed into a Spanish speaking Tuesday night Bible study/fellowship and at least half the people going to that group now are not refugees and are either linked in some way. They have been invited by South American refugees or in fact they are Spanish speakers/native Spanish speakers and they want to be involved or they like speaking Spanish.

Thorsten: Are there links with the local church?

Debbie: Yes, well, most of the people from the UK that are involved have links with Cornerstone. Some of the South Americans would like to come to Cornerstone, but one of the difficulties about integration is that Cornerstone isn't an inner city church. Most of these people live across Nottingham and not just in one area. Up to recently for some people transport is a big issue and they wouldn't have cars and easy access to come to Cornerstone as the general Cornerstone population do.

Thorsten: You mentioned the Ethiopian fellowship. Could you describe that fellowship? Have they links with local Christians?

Debbie: All these things keep on changing. So the links with Cornerstone were very strong initially in a sense that it was built on... I met a couple of Ethiopians that lived on City Road and as a team we've had a lot of links with the four houses where there has been a lot of asylum seekers put together. We have done Bible studies, teaching English etc. - a lot of support for those individuals in the houses and one of those houses was mainly made up of Ethiopians. Some of them were believers. They started coming to Cornerstone on a regular basis and they built relationships with people at Cornerstone that have been quite strong including the involvement for one or two individuals in housegroups. They approached us to say that they would like to meet together to do Bible study and they would like input from Cornerstone - something similar to the initial scheme for Firm Foundations we set up. They

used to go to Firm Foundations, but as it was dominated by Farsi speakers it made more sense to have something more geared for them. Again, there was the language problem as they had more English than the Iranians, but not to the same level to cope with a 40-minute sermon. So, there was a small group that used to meet on a Sunday morning going out during the sermon part and the rejoining the congregation after the service. That ranged from up to between about five to twelve to fifteen people. Alternate weeks it was led by someone from Cornerstone Church and the other times by a speaker coming up from the Ethiopian Fellowship in London. Links were established between that Ethiopian Fellowship, which is one of the main churches that has a real evangelistic heart for the Ethiopians.

Thorsten: And this group doesn't any longer?

Debbie: This group does exist, but in a different format. Partly because of the different refugee churches and immigrant churches. A lot of these Ethiopian and Eritrean refugee groups have actually left Nottingham now or have been forced to leave for a variety of reasons. So, in a sense some people became believers; we had new believers out of that group and people that made fresh commitments, but a lot of those original core group have left and some of the personal circumstances of that group have changed. Because of the nature of where the people are at they are having to get two buses to get to Cornerstone. There was the cost and the difficulty of getting buses on a Sunday morning. So the group asked if we could find them a more central location nearer to the areas where they were living in the inner city. Mansfield Road Baptist Church agreed to host them on a Saturday evening at a time that suited them. That seem to, that has worked very well. They were also having Bible studies in people's homes as well and they are part of a wider fellowship of this Ethiopian Church, but Ethiopian small groups are starting up all over UK as a result of the dispersal of Ethiopians/Eritreans around the country. There was also the issue of Orthodox input as well. But now that group varies in size. (*interruption because of mobile phone*) It is a small group, and they would like to meet in a more central location in the city of Nottingham and they have asked me to try and find somewhere in the city. The group stopped initially when a lot of people left and the commitment of the local leader, and we couldn't get them at the same time. But they reformed at the end of the summer and it was approximately ten people plus some children.

Thorsten: Do you think that it was first of all language reasons why they wanted to have their own group?

Debbie: Yes, I mean some of these people do go to local churches and actually one time when I attended their meeting I met some people that were looking for a local church that lived around the corner from Cornerstone and they started going to Cornerstone. Their children are very happy in the events – so sometimes it could link that way, but, yes, people wanted to worship together in their own language and have a message they could understand.

Thorsten: Can we come back to the Iranian Fellowship within Cornerstone. Can you tell me a little bit about this fellowship? When did it start and how did it develop over the last years?

Debbie: Right, again it went back to relationships that us as a team of volunteers built up with individuals. A lot of the Iranian relationships initially started by Iranian men attending the men's café on a Tuesday night that we held at Mansfield Road Baptist Church with up to 50 people coming every week. Most of the volunteers we had were men from Cornerstone and they built relationships with Iranians who were spiritually interested and wanted to know more. So those individuals invited people to Cornerstone and so Iranians started attending Cornerstone doing individual Bible studies with people outside, but there was the desire to come to church on Sunday and they were coming regularly to Cornerstone. There was difficulties with people not understanding, not having a basic level of English. I also felt the desire to meet up with other people for their own people groups. The Iranian groups I have seen around the world there was a real keenness to meet up with like-minded people wherever they are and so we felt there was a real need. There was a golden opportunity to give more teaching both in terms of building up people that had become believers, but also to those who were interested or could potentially be seeking. That's why we started up Firm Foundations in – probably – 2001, Easter time. No, 2002, the Coffee Bars we started in 2001 and the following Easter with the input from Cornerstone from the leadership as well we started up a separate teaching session during the Sunday service. The other big influence for the Iranians, why that work has really grown is that we've had support from Elam Bible College that initially provided students on placement with us for a month, who could just focus on reaching out to other Iranians doing Evangelism. I mean, I feel that that had a bigger impact on people's

development and it also helped equip with the follow on meetings, the regular Elam meetings has helped/equipped the team to become more experienced in knowing culturally how to relate to Iranians from the Islamic background.

Thorsten: Where do you see the future of that fellowship?

Debbie: (laughs)...a good question....hm, I don't really feel it is my decision to make that, ah...to be actively involved in that decision making.

Thorsten: Where would you like to see it going?

Debbie: My focus has always been integration and I feel that as believers we have unity and fellowship irrespective of our culture or our background, our original belief systems and that we should be able to accept and learn and grow and the diversity is actually healthy and makes being a believer in a church a lot more exciting and more well rounded as a community. I also recognise that there are differences in communities and I think there needs to be space for it. How it's developed so far has partly been in a sense that there was the need for people to have some separate language teaching, even if it was done by translation. That was too disruptive to do in a main service, but I would like to see that there isn't a separation between the Iranian group and people feeling part of a wider church. That there is a mutual sense that people are actively involved in serving irrespective whether people have a label of being an asylum seeker or refugee and international student or whatever. I see that we always go to people who we feel understand us best and that's made a lot easier with language. So I see that there is a need for fellowship groups that would be Farsi speaking. But I don't know maybe with the development of having more Iranian leadership that that leadership may decide they don't want to be more integrated with Cornerstone and that would be their choice. But I think individuals will be – and definitely second generation, the children of the people that are settling here wouldn't want to be necessarily in a separate group. So I would like to see more integration, not less.

Thorsten: What could the church do to further that integration?

Debbie: Well, I think some things are happening now that there is in a sense that there is the opportunity for people to participate even from the front to be prayed for, but to also lead

things, to be involved in worship. I think it was already a healthy thing to let people sing a song at Christmas time that was in a different language. I think there are lots of initiatives. I think there is always the need to show more hospitality. I think it is not a one way thing. I think those that have come new to the church, Iranians do need to have an openness and willingness to get involved whether it's putting out chairs, helping with children's work or the variety of needs the church has, helping with the PA – some people are doing that and they are actually helping their own integration. And social interests, things are involved, I know that Ethiopians are involved with welcoming other people, with the catering team and things like that. So I see it as a two way thing, not just the church has to do things. The church being – I hope – both these new people that have come that they can also be involved in making the decisions themselves. Special events like the Iranian meals open to the whole church I think are very good and that the social events that Cornerstone now have been hosting like the Iranian Christmas party is helpful because it gives a sense of other things meeting within the church is confined in buildings. And I think I am sure it has helped knowing that there has been prayer for this ministry. I think also now the agreement from the elders that we can irrespective of whether someone is an asylum seeker or has got refugee status, but more on a sense where people are at spiritually that they can become members of Cornerstone will actually further this and will help people to feel more part of the church.

Thorsten: That's new to me. I always thought that the criteria for membership was permanent residence at one time.

Debbie: Yes, that has changed. As a leadership team we have been concerned – there was a time of difficulty and it wasn't very clear, I guess, from the elders' point of view they were reluctant to open up the doors for people to become members. I didn't really share their reasoning, but I understand some of their concerns. You probably need to ask them about those concerns. But a group of us in the leadership have felt for a long time that we have wanted people who have made commitments, that are committed to the local church, that are growing spiritually and meet any of the criteria that would be for anyone else who came to Cornerstone, wanted to be a member and be actively involved, that there should be no difference irrespective of people's status in this country. And the eldership last year, last October/November agreed to this with the sense that they would respect the leadership of the

refugee groups to know those people better, to be able to see where they are spiritually and also equip and to understand what it means to be part of church membership.

Thorsten: Was that a problem in the past with some refugees, because they couldn't become members?

Debbie: Yes, there is always issues that the differences, maybe some of the differences with people being immigrants and coming with the legal status in question. It means that some people have felt that if they are seen to become members of a Christian church and get baptised and have a piece of paper that says 'member of a church' that that might help their asylum case. And we know it's well documented that people have done that in the past and so therefore there has been some caution - well, a lot of caution and we have actually been advised by ethnic groups themselves to be aware of that by Iranian groups and other groups around the country. So we are careful that we - in fact, actually we have in the past demanded a higher level of really knowing where people are at because we know people are really desperate and if they think anything is going to help them, then they will use it. But we also know that God uses those circumstances to bring people to Him and many people may have come for what we might not consider a spiritual hunger initially, but have come to know the Lord. So we are not closed to people coming for that reason, but we've had to set some clear policies for ourselves, but also to prove when people then ask us to go to Court with them to stand up and say 'this person is a believer, we are totally behind them' - that we have to feel that we can really do that and not feel that there is something else going on there.

Thorsten: You mentioned that you would like to see more integration of refugees into the church, but you also said that you are not sure how the people within the Iranian fellowship think about that, that there might be people wanting to say 'We want to have our own church'. Are you or the people involved in refugee ministry, are you talking with them about these issues or are you not talking about it?

Debbie: It has gone through different stages. I am not sure what the debate is at the moment. But in the past it has been up for debate and discussion and initially the new believers there was a desire for them to lead everything themselves. But there wasn't a consensus of opinion and people actually changed their minds when they realised that they actually didn't feel

spiritually mature enough. But also the nature of going back to/ of being someone who is an asylum seeker that newly been granted refugee status that there is so many other pressures on their time and energies and emotions that to actually take on leadership of a church or a fellowship was actually really difficult. So one of our emphasis has actually been trying to build up leadership, to identify and build up leadership qualities and free people up to know what their spiritual gifts are to use them – not just to lead us, but everyone because it is very easy for it just to go down on a few people . Also we've been encouraged to be aware that the role of leadership is viewed quite differently in other cultures for example in the Iranian culture. So the standards that would be set on leaderships in an Iranian culture wouldn't so much be of team leadership, but would have been one pastor leading and everyone else just doing what the pastor says. Our style tends to be more cooperative, so from that point of view there is a different emphasis and we feel that it wouldn't be healthy to put all that on one individual and there wasn't an individual that was willing or able to take on that role. And also with time it has changed. The Iranian group have been saying that they want involvement in Cornerstone, they like to be part of Cornerstone. They appreciate the input they get from individuals and the church and that they want teaching and training and they want their children to go to the English speaking groups and they like what's going on. But that doesn't mean that everyone feels comfortable in Cornerstone or that they don't struggle with being asked questions about why they are here and what their identity is. People have that in the wider UK environment as well.

Thorsten: My last question – do you think the refugee or especially the Iranian group are accepted by the congregation at Cornerstone or do you think there are different views in the church with regard to refugees and their integration into the church?

Debbie: I am sure there are different views (*laughs*). There are a small chore group that have active daily/weekly involvement with people and who feel very passionate about integration, about the needs, the issues that people have and they go around with their evangelistic fervour and their friends and that will may be supportive of that. There are the range of views shared by society – there is a lot of ignorance. I think there is a need for more continuing education for people to address the issues that the media presents and to make people realise that it is only part of the story. Usually, the more information that people have the more they are

actually shocked by the imbalances in the system and actually start to see the individuals behind the stories of the abuses of the system. So I think that would be one area that could help. But some people already have that idea. It is a big church. Not everyone knows the people who are asylum seekers. They don't know where they are coming from and whatever else. The more events or some of the things we've been talking about or the more things that go on for the integration, I am sure that will help things. Some people think it is a nice idea, but they are too busy and there is the support of prayer for individuals. But some of it is seen as that is just another ministry in the church and that appeals to some people, but it doesn't affect me personally. I know people that have got involved even on a nominal level it has definitely changed their attitudes and I've seen those people – even if they've come just for one training session – I've then seen them actually go up and talk to people and make friendships. And I think that's one of things what it's all about. So, yes, I think there is a long way to go, but I think we've come quite a long way already.

Thorsten: Thank you very much.

Debbie: You are welcome.

Interview No. A02

Refugee Ministry Team Focus Group Members:

Name: Mr Alan Bush

Marital Status: Married, two adult children

Profession: HM Tax Inspector, Inland Revenue

Ministry Involvement: Elder of Cornerstone Church, responsible for Refugee Ministry

Church: Cornerstone Church

Name: Mr Robert Gordon

Marital Status: Single

Occupation: Social Worker, Derbyshire County Council

Ministry Involvement: Volunteer, Refugee Ministry, Cornerstone Church

Name: Mr David Howard

Marital Status: Single

Profession: Theologian

Ministry Involvement: Refugee Worker, Cornerstone Church

Moderator: Thorsten Prill

Date: 16 February 2005

Duration: 2 hours 15 minutes

Thorsten: I'd like to start with two statements. Let me read out the first one. And maybe Rob can read the second one, please.

Each racial and ethnic group should evangelize within their own group for the greatest effectiveness...Ethnic congregations can be a mayor vehicle for evangelization and recruitment. While religion is the ultimate focus of congregations, converts often admit that they initially attended a church out of a desire for ethnic fellowship. Once they began attending, they were introduced to Christian beliefs and slowly underwent religious conversion. Thus, the ethnic character of the congregation is a primary draw for new members and converts. Without uniraical congregations, these people might never have become Christians. Taking this element out of the church may hinder the ability of the Gospel to reach new people, particularly new arrivals.

Rob: The congregations of the first century church endeavoured to create inclusive assemblies built on the foundation laid by the message and example of Jesus and empowered by the Holy

Spirit. The first-century church did struggle internally with the ethnocentrism and the bigotry of society, but a theology of oneness enabled them to prevail in their efforts at developing inclusive congregations. When possible, the congregations of the first-century church multiracial and their membership included people from across the many other lines that divided society-economics, gender, culture, language, disease, and career choice. The New Testament model is a congregation united by its faith in Jesus Christ....Congregations when possible, should journey toward becoming integrated multiracial congregations...We are called as Christians to live, work, serve, and be together, forging community that can occur only with God's help.

Thorsten: What do you think about these two statements?

Rob: Well, I think it is obviously true that people are often drawn to Christ through people of their own culture because they can identify with them. We have noticed with the Iranians for instance that Jesus often seem to speak to them through dreams and this is something that all the Iranians hold self evident and yet so it is completely alien to us. So I think there is something about specially being able to evangelise to people within your own culture. But I don't think it follows from that that you should have this uni-cultural church. I think certainly we found that – I would say in Cornerstone that people have been drawn to the church through Iranians coming along to Cornerstone, but they are not the kind of primary group. And I think you do need to have a separate service for them because they can't speak English or very little. But at the same time I think we need to encourage their links with the rest of the church. So looking to the long-term as their English improves, they become more aware of the English culture, gain more English friends they may then become part of the local body of Christ. The illustration of the body in the New Testament is quite instructive. I think we **are** part of one body and it might take a bit more integration. But I think the Iranians have a lot to teach us just as we have a lot to learn from them.

Thorsten: Thank you, Rob. What do you think about that, David or Alan? Do you agree with what Rob has just said?

Alan: Yes, essentially I do agree. From my own personal experience my involvement with Iranians began through actually going and spending an evening with a couple. Because it was

explained to me that this would be a good way to start really testing whether this was an area of ministry I really wanted to move into by actually going to someone's house and befriending them. And things developed very quickly in terms of my own conviction that this was right, but from a position of leadership one of the questions that was really being exercised by my mind is *where are we going with this ministry and how can it be effective in the long-term* because one of the frustrations that I have personally is that I don't have the language. This is an important factor when we are talking about integration. Is it realistic to expect that in 5 years time - speaking primarily about the Iranian congregation at Cornerstone - is it realistic to expect them to be fully integrated with the rest of the church? The main problem being one of language, but we mustn't lose sight of cultural differences as well. Thinking about this only recently I was amazed really to look back how people's English has developed. Many of the Iranians recognise that they need English. They want to learn English so a lot of them have been going on college courses. Then you look at the children of the people and their English is better than their parents' and as these young people grow up, they are going to be bi-lingual. So the process of integration in the next generation will actually be - I think will become easier and if these people were only mixing with people from their own race then I think they are going to be missing out on life, because if they are hoping to be staying in this country long-term at school and whatever, their grass-root English has got to be good for employment prospects. Maybe this problem will become easier. We have seen how the children have overtaken some of the adults in their understanding...

Rob: ...and also with friendships with English people. But I think we have to be prepared to look to the long-term. This is almost a generational thing that it takes a long time. It's not like almost trying to integrate two companies. It is really trying to look for something which takes a very long time to accomplish. The Iranians themselves, I think, most of them recognise this. There are a few people who would see the attractions of a separate Iranian church, but they seem to be very much in the minority. But as Alan says *How do you do it?* Language is really a huge barrier. The Iranians are starting to do little jobs for the church and they join the main church after their separate service. But it is very much the Iranians are in one corner and it is very difficult to get them to speak to English people. But it is also perhaps a bit to expect them to take the initiative and it is trying to encourage English people to do what we have done -

which is actually to take the initiative and reach out to these people through friendship and it is scary and it is going into the unknown. And it is perhaps a bit embarrassing for English people. We don't know the rules of engagement as it were. You know, that's the only way to integrate – not through, hmmm, I suppose services together, but through friendships forming and people feeling kind of more comfortable with each other.

Alan: I think, following on from that, perhaps David can say something in a moment. But one of the things that has impressed me I think is helping us to start that journey of integration is the fact that David has taken the time and bother over two or three years to begin to understand Farsi because one of the problems we grapple with is because we don't know the culture and more importantly we don't know the language – *How do you assess people?* – You know someone wants to be baptised for example. How do I as an English person make the judgment as to whether this person is a genuine convert to Christianity and David having quite a good grasp now of Farsi is helping us to be able to make judgments. But in the longer term, somebody who Cornerstone is now supporting to go to Bible College – Nima – who is bilingual – that sort of person would be invaluable. I would say key to any integration process because they can have this discernment and make these judgments so much easier than we can. The easy thing in one sense would be to say *You need a separate church. We are never going to breach this divide.* But I think the hard work is beginning to pay off and I think David can probably add more to that.

Thorsten: So, language is a problem. But culture is a problem as well. Both are related – would you agree with that. Because language can be seen as a vehicle for the culture.

Alan: Yes, the culture is fascinating, but it is a problem. You know, I have learnt that in Iranian culture you would even invite your enemy to your house and give him food. So when somebody said to me *You are always welcome in my house* it was wrong for me to assume therefore that everything is ok between us. That's just a little example of misunderstandings that can arise.

Thorsten: What can the church do to help people in the church to understand these cultural issues?

Alan: There is two things from experience that I can mention that we have done. One was - the Iranian group put on a meal for the whole church on a Sunday, which I think was a spectacular success. Fantastic Iranian food and a lot of English people stayed and that really built some bridges and was well appreciated. That's something we certainly intend to do again. But another thing we've done is using our web of house groups is to actually go and do presentations for house groups taking along a couple of people who have gone down the refugee route if you like and for them to share and give testimony. From my own house group that has resulted in at least two families that I know of now independently having Iranians into their own home and being invited back. So they consider that they have got friends. People that aren't regularly involved in refugee ministry, but who feel that there are other people that they can talk to. That is so important and I think that's the way ahead. I know that we've had invitations to go to other house groups. That it spreading the message and helping English people who may have lots of suspicions - what they read in the newspapers about refugees and people coming and taking over our country - that they can see these are normal people with fears, with aspirations, with dreams and with problems. And they are delightful people and they can also teach us a huge amount about hospitality.

Thorsten: So the main thing is really to meet people and to get to know people. David, Alan mentioned that you have been learning Farsi - maybe you can tell us a little bit about that, why you've done it.

David: Why I have learnt Farsi. Essentially, it was when I went to Iran to see a friend who is leading a church out there. He just cornered me one day and said that - hm, this is embarrassing to say really, and I've never said that before - but he took me to one side and said *David, I have seen a lot of foreign people working with Iranians in my time and you have a gift/a blessing from God, he says you don't speak the language, you are not Iranian, but the more time you spend with people the more higher they think of you. This is quiet unusual. Usually, missionaries, they learn the language, they dress like them, they learn the culture then they go in and people find it fascinating for a while, but after a few years the natives have lost their interest. But you have a responsibility now. God has given you that and you have to do something with it. What you have to do is learn the language.* A few months beforehand as

well, maybe a year before he had been telling me in e-mails and phone calls that I should be learning Persian. But from that time I decided... I've been playing with it previously, but I decided from that time that I needed to take it seriously and so when I came back I started finding time every day to practice. Listening to people's advice – because they always said to me *oh, to learn a language you've just got to speak it, you've got to be brave, make mistakes, but just speak it*. My heart was saying *Don't do that, learn as much as you can before you start speaking to people*. I decided to just listen to the advice of language learners who were learning English and go for it. It's gone very well. It's been very difficult finding time every day, feeling getting nowhere. It is a very slow process and I feel I've been banging my head against a brick wall on many occasions. Especially, when no matter how many words you learn – on average I've been learning 20 or 30 words a week for a year and I'm still at that rate. I'm thinking I just can't do this, but when people come up to you and they just say *It means so much to us you've done this. Thank you very much. It is amazing. It's wonderful and it makes us feel really good*. Then it is all worthwhile. And it's like at church on Sunday – one lady brought another lady to church and she's coming over, she says *David, David, go on speak Persian with her* and I was talking to this lady and she's like *Waow, I've never heard an English person anyone English speak Farsi before...*

Thorsten: That sounds like the Iranians are proud that you speak Farsi, that you've made the effort to learn Farsi.

David: Yes, I think it has built a bridge. People are very proud, very happy and they are so willing to help me and they are very kind. It is very interesting actually, speaking to the Iranians in church in Persian. I feel far more comfortable than speaking to Iranians outside church. Those inside church I feel like it's my family, I can make mistakes, it doesn't matter whereas outside I'm very shy. As a response to your earlier question, the saying that a uni-ethnic church is the only way to go – I know that a number of Iranians certainly at the beginning of the ministry came to church specifically to learn English. The attraction that brought them to church was learning English. They could practice their English, it is a nice environment. There are always friendly English people. Because essentially refugees and English people don't mix outside the church and they met these friendly people that were nice

to them. And especially singing the songs, because they could hear the words and see the words at the same time – that brought people into church. I think in terms of integration in the church there is two very practical issues I think that are essential to be taken into consideration. One is children – the children of refugees will become English. We are seeing it already. I was at a house the other week where the mother was saying to the child – the child wanted something and mother explained where it was, child couldn't find it, everybody was getting frustrated. The father in frustration just said in English. *It is in a red box on top of the wardrobe* and she runs upstairs and comes down with it. And the mother was like *ah, I can't even talk to my own daughter, she is my daughter, but I can't talk to her*. And so for the children to have an interest in church and being connected to the church there has got to be an English part because they are already losing their links. They are four or five years old and they are losing their link with their culture.

Thorsten: So it is not only language. It is the culture...

David: Well, yeah the culture is the language. The children are playing in English, when they are playing they speak English. They talk Persian with their parents, but they play with each other in English. They'll talk to each other in English. And if you want to keep the children in church and give them something that is appealing and attractive to them we need integration. Another practical reason I was thinking is just simply marriage. Most refugees are single men. If they are going to be Christians, you want them to stay Christians for their whole life, they need a Christian relationship. Where are they going to meet Christian girls? The only place is in church. It's not that I'm saying we should set up a dating agency. But speaking practically – most people get married, most people want to get married. And in the church we believe in Christian partners. Both people should be Christians. If you want that, they've got to have connections with an English church. So I think those two points alone should be a practical motivating force for integration. Another vital benefit of integration is friendship with English people. As I said earlier – ethnic communities don't tend to mix with English people whereas in church they do and they can. And that is amazing. It stops feelings of alienation, ghettoisation, being different. When you talk to refugees who aren't Christians. They will all say they don't have English friends. But everybody who comes to church, even if their English

is rubbish. They all say they have English friends. Maybe it's just one or two people in the church. But they've got it. They've got that link. They don't feel alienated. They know they can go somewhere, if they don't understand something. They can go and get help without asking for help. Because they are your friend. They will do it. But I think as well we need to understand what we mean by integration. I think we've got to be careful. When we say integration, do we mean they've got to become English and fit into how we do things or is it give and take between the two cultures that we are going to learn something from them and they can contribute as well. I think if the church means by integration that they have got to become English then it will fail. Because everybody is proud of their background. Which is why the English people are saying they've got to become English, because they are proud of their heritage. And trying to expect somebody else to give up their heritage I think is impossible.

Thorsten: So you are actually saying the refugees, they've got something to give to the English people/to an English speaking church...

David: Yes, definitely. I think personally looking at my own discipleship and spiritual development over the last few years. Mixing with ethnic minorities in Britain has really shown me the sins inherent in my own culture. Not as I can see all of them, but a lot has been really highlighted to me. Sin in my own culture that I would never have conceived or seen without mixing with other cultures. That has been a great benefit to me and my own spiritual walk. And I think as well if we are an evangelical church/a Bible believing church the biblical precedent is for multi-ethnic churches. I think for that reason alone the church should do it. If we are a Bible believing church, we can't pick which bits of the Bible we believe. So I think you are doing vitally important work in terms of analyzing the text/analyzing the Bible closely and seeing what it says – because if the Bible is saying or just implying - it's just taking it for granted that the church is multi-ethnic. And if the first century church did have to work through problems of integration and working together then it is vital for us to be doing it if we are a Bible believing church.

Thorsten: What do you think about that, Alan and Rob? Would you agree with what David just said about the things that the church can learn from the refugees?

Alan: Yes, I believe there is a great deal to learn. Just on a personal note here, an illustration that this integration is beginning to work. I felt confident on Sunday to share with one of the Iranians who asked me how my family was because families are very important. It is always a matter of *how is your wife? How is your family? How is your sons?* And I said they are all fine, but my father has been in hospital. He has got problems with his brain. And my Iranian friend said *I will pray*. In the evening I meet Rob at Cornerstone and he said *How is your father?* And I thought *How does he know?* Well, it so happened that after I told my Iranian friend he got one or two people (Iranians and Rob) together that very moment to start to pray for my father. And I was so blessed by that. I thought, well, we are used to praying for Iranians for their problems. And here was an Iranian brother who was taking on board my own family situation because he considers that I am his friend and I consider that he is my friend. We haven't reached the end of the story yet. Except to say that my father's brain scan has come through or the booking to have the brain scan has come through far quicker than the hospital said it would. Praise God! That's integration working successfully.

In terms of what else we can learn, I think there is a lot that the leadership of the church can learn and maybe still has to learn. One of the challenges that we face as leaders in Cornerstone is *Where is this work going? Where is the Iranian work going?* And one of the things that I have had to bring to the elders is *What is our vision for this ministry?* It is very easy to get used to the fact that at eleven o'clock the Farsi speaking people leave the main service. They go away and have their little meeting and we can get on with the significant Bible preaching to the main congregation. You know there are some difficulties there for those that are running the Farsi programme regularly. We can share it around. There are limitations with preaching through interpretation in terms of how much detail, how much depth we can go into. All the difficulties of translating words like *redemption, sanctification*. Things like that. But it can be a problem hidden away. If this work is going to continue and develop, we've reached the saturation point in terms of the existing expertise, that is to how we can handle this. And if we are going to see disciple for Christ, if we are going to see them reaching out and evangelising Iranians within Nottingham we have got to equip these people. And we are not equipped ourselves to do that because of these limitations in language and culture.

So the challenge has been to the elders *Have we got a vision for this work?* And they have responded to that challenge and I must give them credit to that and praise God for that. That is illustrated by the fact that we have currently employed a graduate from Elam College to work with us for a minimum of three months before he goes off and does something else. Although the influence that he is bringing is very much – perhaps could be regarded as a Pentecostal influence/it is different from Cornerstone – my judgment is that it is a style of worship that the majority of the Iranians are comfortable with and I believe that God is honouring that. It is actually bringing a bit of structure to the Farsi congregation that we've got. I think the next challenge is that we could easily see that going off and becoming an Iranian church. Whilst on the one hand we see people developing and growing on the other hand there is an issue here about *how does that affect integration?* My long-term vision/dream is for somebody like Nima who is bilingual, who we are investing in – if he could come back. He could actually help us develop people, but also aid a disintegration. I think it is a danger at the moment that you strengthen them in their own language and their little group begins to take on an identity which is different from Cornerstone. We don't normally have people praying out loud individually so you have this habarb, you don't have the worship leader walking backwards and forwards praying with real public fervour. But if that's what they are comfortable with and it is drawing them closer to God then who am I to say because the style is different that they shouldn't do that? But you can see an identity forming within their own group. One of the challenges *how do we deal with that in terms of integration?*

Rob: I agree with what Alan says. I took me back to when I became a Christian at the Navigators, which is like a para-church organisation. They too have discussions like this like *What are we for? What do people do when they leave the navigators/when they leave the university? And how would being in the Navigators equip people to belong to a local church?* And the answer was really that they hadn't because they had separate meetings. You did go to church, but you didn't get involved in the Bible study groups or the church families and it was a real difficulty. In some places the Navigators experimented with things like community groups/community ministries or non-church meetings. But they really kind of fizzled out because they just became more and more isolated from not just society, but Christian society. And I think most people's experiences – that was my own – found the Navigators very very

helpful, gave me a great grounding. But then I had to – it was kind of going up to the big school – I had to make the decision to join a local church and get involved in it. And it was a bit of a traumatic process because you don't realise how different the student ministry was from the real church, but it is almost like a stage of maturity that you have to through. So I think ultimately the Iranians will have to bite the bullet individually and transferring from a Farsi speaking Sunday service and Bible study and make the jump into an English Bible study group/house group. What will happen is, I think, that one or two people would do that and then the rest will probably follow. But I think at the moment, what is happening is as people's English improves they are not kind of getting involved in things in the church. They are still restricting themselves to the Farsi speaking group. As Alan said, they are forming this identity. And yes, although they have got English friends, it's like we are – if not on the periphery – but we are their English friends. There is a distinction. And really I'm not sure how you encourage this integration. Or is it a fact that just as like once I was very happy in the Navigators and couldn't see myself leading it, that you do reach a stage where you think – actually I have outgrown this and maybe God perhaps does lead people to become more involved with the church. I mean, we are all new to this and perhaps this is a bit speculative.

Thorsten: In some ways you are the guinea-pigs...

David: I think this issue needs a lot of sensitivity and wisdom and we should really communicate with people like Lazarus He has got a lot of experience; I think 20 years of church planting and ask his advice. I know he would love to come and give a seminar/ a presentation to the church elders and anybody else in the church who wants to listen. I personally think he should probably do something for the Iranians themselves as well. In terms of future ministry – how I think about it – is I don't know what time period, but I see it as the Sunday mornings going down to three a month or two a month, a gradual process and encouraging people to go to the English time. I think people will over time as their English gets better, as I see the value of Peter's ministry. I also think it is setting up/maintaining Iranian house groups. So people can have the house groups in their own language and really keep an Iranian identity in their language/in their worship communicating in their own language whereas Sundays they become more part of the church. That's how I have seen it in my own mind calling it Iranian house groups or whatever in the church notices when we have

all the house groups listed like Bramcote X and Chilwell West, you know like calling them Teheran house group or Persian so they can very much keep their own identity and community. But I don't know. That's just my own thinking.

Thorsten: So your vision would be a kind of congregation within the church, not a church, but a group with their own identity within Cornerstone?

David: Maybe not one group, but a group of house groups, of no more than 12 people. So they wouldn't be like an Iranian group, but there would be like Iranian house groups.

Alan: We haven't talked this through, so it is ideas. I actually think that the house group set up gives us possibilities of more integration than you have mentioned. I think you could have split house groups. I think we are a million miles away from the day when Iranians will be able to sit through a pretty intellectual presentation from Peter Lewis with the greatest of respect. I think we would need to give some serious thought to giving them some English sermons without translation, but much simpler.

Thorsten: But then in their own group like it is now?

Alan: Yes, maybe one a month we could actually have an English service for Iranians so that they feel they are getting a lot out of the service. It must be frustrating – I know when I'm listening to a Farsi preacher I quickly turn off and I'm thinking about what's for dinner and what's the football score and that sort of thing. But if we can for those whose English is improving have a service in English for once in a while. I think if we were to set up Persian house groups, purely Persian, we would lose the opportunity of building on things like hospitality scheme where they cooked for us. I find it so refreshing to worship with the Iranians and to pray with them. Some of them have got skills like fixing your car and we have got skills filling in forms for them. That sort of nuts and balls of daily life is so important and I think those things really really do build deep links and will help in the long-term integration.

I think another issue of relation into leadership – if I move this on a little– is that a refugee ministry of course in the church of the size of Cornerstone is always one ministry and whilst I may be the elder responsible with oversight for refugee ministry not all the elders will have the same enthusiasm or interest in the work. That's not to say they look down on it, but they may

have something that they think is the most important ministry. Then there is the youth pastor and he is pushing youth work. Within a leadership team there is always going to be sort of competing priorities for resources, for emphasis. This is sort of a frustration that anyone running refugee work has to live with, but I think it is a responsibility for leaders to remind each other of these challenges and to reflect back on the leadership from time to time just how things have moved and how things have changed. And people say *wow, yeah, I can remember when we just had a handful of people and now this has happened and God has blessed it.* And now we are beginning to see as we have gone through that process that the church is beginning to commit results to it and interesting enough the Iranians themselves are now giving to the fund of the local church. Quite substantially, we had almost a spontaneous collection for Christians in Bethlehem and nearly £ 100.00 was collected. That is just in one offering from people that had very little. I think, again, that is a really message to the rest of the church. We haven't publicised it yet, but when people begin to know that. Here are people, coming from a background, where the Mullah may pocket the money. They are actually having to learn that it is not about paying money to Cornerstone Church, but it is about giving to the Lord's work both here and abroad. That's a privilege, and I think the whole church will be encouraged and benefit and I think it is a sign of integration that the Iranians feel encouraged enough to give.

David: Alan touched on another point there when he mentioned about people's English not being good enough to go into the main service. This made me realise that the group itself has a very wide spread, demographic group the refugees themselves. So you've got people that have come from small villages in the mountains to University graduates in the capital. And so, you know, already we've got three people studying at University in our group. So within a year or so their English will be as good as an English University student. They might not sound English, they might not – they always fight foreign sound accents, they might not use the idioms right, but they'll have the vocabulary and be able to understand. Whereas the people from the villages, they don't speak Persian very well – you know, their English isn't going to be good. You've also got other people in the next few years who have studied at University in Iran and they want their English to be as good as their Persian so they are speaking University level Persian and they want their English to be that good – and that's what they are working

for. So in the group itself we are going to have people with very poor English and we are going to have people with English as good as ours.

Thorsten: Yes, I think that is a danger that you consider the refugees as a homogeneous group and they are not. They are as diverse as you find it in any English church with people from different backgrounds/different walks of life/different experience. We always speak of the refugees, but it's quite a heterogeneous group.

David: They have problems within their own group, just speaking their own language. When you talk to people, people will complain about how somebody's language is very bad, they can't speak Persian very well. At one point I had one guy, who is Azari, his native language is Azari. It is what he spoke at home. He had to learn Persian at school and his Persian is very bad. He couldn't communicate with the other Iranians. When he came to the UK he had to learn Persian. That's what he started before learning English.

Alan: There is another point that occurs to me. This is really how the process of integration works. My understanding is that it is not something we can do to them. It's got to come from within as well.

Thorsten: It is a mutual thing...

Alan: Yes, so David talking about these people that are studying at University. From within them, that group, I think we've got to try and grow leaders of their own group who can again provide this bilingual help that we need so that they can even help teach their friends English. How best can Iranians be reached for the gospel is through Iranians. We can be friends to them, but when somebody can speak to them in their own language and communicate – that's tremendous. But then, as their English improves we can begin to communicate with them in English and sharing our faith much more and worry less about translation. From that desire for integration, if we can spark that from within them and for them to see the benefits that it gives. I think that's going to be a key factor.

David: I don't know if Alan is aware of this, actually, but a few weeks ago I sat down with Spencer, our church manager, and looked at what opportunities we've got in the church calendar this year to push forward integration. I don't know how far it's gone yet, but Spencer

has made several notes in the yearly planner and says that he is going to push events to encourage integration, just encourage people mixing to getting to know each other and breaking down those initial fears, realising if somebody doesn't have an English accent, who doesn't speak perfect English can understand you very well and can express themselves quite well. Maybe not in the traditional way, but they can. And if they might not know one synonym, if you come out with another one then they might have learnt that one. And so it's things like church hospitality times or church meals. We haven't had the details yet, but the idea is to invite a foreign family. There is a lot of Chinese in the church as well. Invite somebody who is not English for this hospitality weekend.

Alan: I think also we have on two or three occasions at Christmas or Easter had the Iranians on stage singing a song, which we have an English translation to as well. And that's important to them. That makes them feel that they are part of Cornerstone. The other issue that we are beginning to get to grips with is the whole issue of membership. This is something I really had to challenge the elders on because we had a situation where we were happy to baptise people, we were happy to go to their houses and eat with them, we are happy for them to have their own service – everything in the church except join our membership roll. There were some inbuilt reservations about *what if an ethnic group formed a lobby group who then could speak together and vote together in the church meeting against the will of the majority* and things like that. There are probable deep seated fears in a lot of people. But as we carefully discussed these issues I think there was agreement that we need to take a few risks and we need to start with translating for example the constitution and a statement of faith. We need to spend some time taking people through this. Some of these people now have British passports. What's the big deal? They are part of the body of Christ. They are part of our church. We need to embrace them totally. It may mean that we have got to have more input into them so they understand what they are getting into and some of the traditions of evangelical Christians in Britain, but we have no right biblically to exclude these people from the local church membership and that's what they want to be part of and we were even happy for them to put money into the offering now. So to exclude them just doesn't make sense. And we've now got the go ahead in principle to take tentative steps to embrace some of them into the membership. And that's what we intend to do.

Thorsten: How did the Iranians or the other refugees feel about that – that they couldn't become members?

David: I personally never raised the issue with any of them.

Thorsten: Don't you think it was an issue for them?

David: No-one has ever spoken about it. I have avoided the issue, so I don't know.

Alan: I know that some people have asked and some people have felt excluded. I think we sort of hide behind the language difficulties and it is all very difficult. There has been reluctance to confront these issues and there will be difficulties because sometimes it may be a bit of sheep mentality. Some will become members and all the rest will want to follow because they don't want to be excluded. There is issues about understanding what it involves. I don't think there will be rushing into recruit large numbers onto the membership roll just so that we can say that we have these Iranian members. But we will need to do it in a measured way. I may be misjudging it. Maybe they are quite happy as things are, but I sometimes suspect that they would like to be fully part of Cornerstone.

Rob: As I look back it's not as if the process of integration has already started. To me it's been a series of the church being reacting to an issue and then kind of thinking about it and stepping outside it's comfort zone. Initially, I remember David going to see a previous church manager and saying *oh, six or more Iranians want to get baptised*. And the reaction was *they can't all be being baptised – it must be because of their case*. But then, when the eldership met the proposed candidates for baptism they were really impressed with the quality of their understanding and their commitment to Christ. It is about a series of events and situations where you kind of bring people together and once people experience the person rather than the prejudice, the idea, the fear then a lot of those things are resolved and people's attitudes towards people change. I think it is part of our English society and there is a lot of ill feeling about asylum seekers, about immigrants and there are people in the church who one minute seem quite of normal charitable people. But then they've really got strong views and strong reservations about this ministry. So there is a whole process of learning going on, different rates for different people. But really the only way of removing these prejudices is by bringing people together.

Alan: One other example of something we have done: Many of these Iranian people have not had a holiday since they left their country. And we wanted to do something specifically to address this. And so last summer we booked a place in the countryside and took about 50 or 60 away, just for the weekend. It was really an opportunity for English people to serve them and I think it was very successful with some of the feedback we've had. And I think we've booked it again for 2005. But it was interesting that some of the people had relatives over from Iran, Muslim people who came to that weekend and who were really touched by the way the Christian love between Christians that they had never seen or believed could have existed - from working in the kitchen with some of the Iranians for a whole weekend, hard work, but a real blessing and privilege. And I think for them to see that English people - just because you are a leader, because you have some status in the church you are not beyond getting your hands dirty washing the toilets. I think there is a lesson for the wider congregation here in Cornerstone that we can serve these people. We are not there to instruct them necessarily. We are here to serve them in the same way as our Lord washed the feet of his disciples.

David: A point has just come to my head thinking about the language issue, about communicating the gospel. I remember when the ministry first started and we got a lot of evangelistic literature in different languages because we were meeting a lot of refugees from different people groups and it was the Iranian literature that was disappearing. We ran out and had to get some more. And by coincidence - or plan of God - we got in touch with Elam, this Iranian Christian organisation and they ended up sending some students to Nottingham for a placement. They were able to do Bible studies and teaching and that's when people became Christians. But I remember them saying to me that it was the love of the English Christians that brought them to church. It was the fact it was Christians reaching out to them when all the other English people were ignoring them. They could see something different in our life. They thought we were full of love and compassion and comfort. And so the Iranian Bible college students said *you've done all the work. They were just ready to hear the words. And although you couldn't give them the language/the words, it was your ministry that converted them.* I don't think we should lose sight of that. Although we don't have the language, the Holy Spirit has worked powerfully through people. And it is through acts of service and love above words is the history of this ministry of how people came to faith. That's

still the same today. Although we've been saying a lot about language, I don't think we should be seeing the language as the biggest thing. The biggest thing is acts of love and service. And we can do that. We don't need language.

Thorsten: A final question: where do you see the Iranian fellowship and the refugee ministry at Cornerstone in 5 years time? – maybe just a quick statement from each of you.

David: In 5 years time – where do I see it? To be honest, in my own personal opinion I don't think it will be that much different from now. But I think when we are Christians, we sign up for life and the long term for this ministry – we are looking at twenty/thirty years and will our Iranian brothers and sisters still be believers in twenty/thirty years. Will they be rooted into a church? I think 5 years is a very short time. That's my opinion.

Alan: I think a lot depends on what happens with government policy. Whether we are still getting new Iranians coming. There is a general elections in the pipeline, so it's very hard. And many of our friends, perhaps in 5 years time may have been deported. Who knows? I would like to think the work of the Holy Spirit goes on. My dream, if I can dare to dream, is that we have in 5 years time – we either have a whole series of people coming – maybe as part of their University education, the Elam Bible College or something similar to do placements, to help us the same way as brother Wahik is doing at the moment. Or if God provides that we somebody in full-time ministry, bilingual, who can provide the basic discipleship in the Farsi language, but who can help this process of integration move forward.

Rob: I suppose, if I am allowed to dream, I think a lot of the Iranians would go back to Iran if the government situation changed. It doesn't seem to be coincidence that so many Iranians have left the country and so many of them have become Christians. It would be great if they could go back to their own country and spread the gospel to their own countrymen. But I agree with Alan, it depends a lot on government policy, how many we get. It depends a lot on what happens in Iran. So this may be a long-term ministry or it may be a short-term ministry. But I think the thing to do is to hold it in the palm of our hands, but seek to operate as the one body of Christ. So look towards integration – planning on the assumption that people do stay with us, but at the same time be willing to let them go with our blessing.

Thorsten: Thank you very much.

Interview No. A03

Refugee Focus Group

Members:

Name: Davoud
Marital Status: married, two children
Residence Status: refugee (recognised)
Name: Amir
Marital Status: married, two children
Residence Status: asylum seeker (rejected)
Name: Zarah
Marital Status: married, two children
Residence Status: asylum seeker (rejected)
Name: Mansour
Marital Status: single
Residence Status: asylum seeker
Name: Omid
Marital Status: single
Residence Status: asylum seeker (rejected)
Moderator: Thorsten Prill
Date: 7 April 2005
Duration: 1 hour 15 min

Thorsten: Can you tell me something about the Iranian group – how you became part of the Iranian group, how you joined the group? *Davoud translates into Farsi..*

Amir (in Farsi): ... *Davoud translates into English:* I had one friend in my home and he explained about Cornerstone Church to me. And I went to Cornerstone Church and in the Cornerstone Church I found a lot of Iranian people. I joined this group.

Thorsten: You said you joined that group. Were you a Christian at that time or did you become a Christian? *Davoud translates into Farsi.*

Amir (*in Farsi*): ... *Davoud translates into English*: I had some study about Bible, but I didn't have enough faith about Christianity. After I joined Cornerstone Church I believed Jesus.

Thorsten: You said you joined Cornerstone Church. You were part of the Iranian group. But do you also feel part of the church? *Davoud translates into Farsi*.

Amir (*in Farsi*): ... *Davoud translates into English*: I remember of the church and it doesn't make a difference if Iranian or English in the Cornerstone Church.

Thorsten: What is your background? What is your experience? Was it similar to his experience?

Davoud: I had enough faith in the Christianity and I came to England. And in one church it was a club. It was a coffee club for refugee people. I found a friend from America. His name is Andy. And Andy introduced me to Cornerstone Church and I went into Cornerstone Church. I joined to Cornerstone Church and I found a lot of Iranian group. Of course in that time it was not too much Iranian. Just we found about 5 or 6 Iranian. And after growing now there is about between 40 to 50 Iranian people in the Cornerstone Church. We are one group in Cornerstone Church: English people and Iranian people, both together and we joy together.

Thorsten: How do you see the future of the group? Are there things you would like to see changed? Where would you like to see the group go in the future?

Davoud: All hope in Jesus (laughs). And we pray for growing this group. And we want every Iranian people in the Nottingham be a member of the Cornerstone Church because this is a command of Jesus. And I think member of Cornerstone Church want to help this situation in Iranian group. We hope to future.

Thorsten: Amir, the same question to you. *Davoud translates into Farsi*.

Amir (*in Farsi*): ... *Davoud translates into English*: We are all children of God and doesn't make difference – English and Iranian. We want to growing very fast – English people and Iranian people, both together.

Thorsten: You mentioned English people. What is your relationship with English people at the church? *Davoud translates into Farsi*.

Amir (*in Farsi*): ... *Davoud translates into English*: They are all really lovely and we have good communication with them. And I think we are a big family and all of them is my family.

Thorsten: And what is your experience?

Davoud: My experience is a little bit different. The English people in Cornerstone is lovely. They love us. And they want to do everything for us, but Iranian people have a difficulty about this matter. It is about language. We cannot make good communication with English people because we cannot speak English very well. This makes it a little bit difficult for us.

Thorsten: So language is a problem. Communication is a problem sometimes. Is that true for all people in the Iranian group or are there differences?

Davoud: Some Iranian people doesn't make difference for them language and they can make communication very soon, but other Iranian people – I think Iranian people are sometimes shy and they cannot make good communication with English people.

Amir (*in Farsi*): ... *Davoud translates into English*: We can understand English people very well, but English people have patience about this matter and they try making communication between us and them.

Thorsten: Language is part of the culture. Everyone has a different culture and language is part of the culture. It is an expression of the culture. Do you think there are other differences in the culture between Iranians and English people that make it maybe more difficult to live together in one church, to work together?

Davoud translates into Farsi.

Amir (*in Farsi*): ... *Davoud translates into English*: We live in this country and it was our choice and we must accept some English culture. Maybe English culture is not good for us, but we live here and we must accept them.

Davoud: My idea is exactly like Amir and sometimes about this matter make difficulty for communication. Often for new Iranian people. But after I think 3 or 4 years they understand better about English culture and they can make communication.

Thorsten: That's exactly my experience. At the beginning it's difficult, but when you've lived here for a while then you get to know the English culture. But having said that - I notice that especially some of the small children – they speak English fluently and some people say they speak English even better than they speak Farsi. Is that true?

Davoud translates into Farsi.

Amir (in Farsi): ... *Davoud translates into English:* It is true. Because our children grow up here, because they go to a school and University and somewhere else. They know about English language. But we tried and they don't ??? about our culture, about our language.

Davoud: My idea is same. Because my daughter speak English very well and sometimes she cannot speak Farsi about some words. She ??? about some Iranian word. I try, I try she learn more and more, but she speak English very well, better than me (*laughs*).

Thorsten: So in the future your daughter would go to the English speaking service and not to an Iranian speaking service, because her English is better than her Farsi. Would that be a problem to you? Would you find that difficult? Would you be struggling with that? *Davoud translates into Farsi.*

Amir (in Farsi): ... *Davoud translates into English:* Doesn't make difference for us because English people and Iranian people is same in Jesus body.

Davoud: About my idea. I don't think so. It is not difficult. And you know my daughter understand about movie, the TV, about English language better than Farsi. Is not make difficulty for us because English people in the Cornerstone Church are really lovely people.

Rob: If they want to marry an English person. How do they feel about that?

Thorsten: That's a question from Rob. How would you feel if your children later on would decide marrying an English person, an English Christian?

Davoud: Doesn't make difference for me. She or he can choose. They choose, not us. It is their decision.

Thorsten: Is that the same for you?

Amir: Yes.

Thorsten: You said that Cornerstone and the people at Cornerstone have been very helpful. Are there any things that the church could do to help you even more? *Davoud translates into Farsi.*

Amir (in Farsi): ... *Davoud translates into English:* Cornerstone Church do everything for us. If they don't do something, they cannot because they don't have enough money or enough something else to help us more than this. They make a lot of party for us, a lot of travel meeting, something else for us and we think it's good enough. And they are in our meeting and they don't leave us alone.

Thorsten: You know that I also pastor of the German Church in Nottingham. The church was founded 50 years ago by German speaking people. What would you say to someone who wants to form an independent Iranian Church? *Davoud translates into Farsi.*

Amir (in Farsi): ... *Davoud translates into English:* We are not separate from Cornerstone Church and if they want to be with them, then we prefer be with them. It is better for us.

Davoud: My idea about this matter is the same. Because separate church is a plan from God. It is not a plan from us. And now there is not a good situation for Iranian people be separate. And in history, sure, every Iranian group that make a separate church – they fall down. And it was not very nice for Iranian group and we prefer be with Cornerstone Church.

Thorsten: Have you got anything to say about your experience or about what you've just heard? *Davoud translates into Farsi.*

Mansour (in Farsi): ... *Davoud translates into English:* They have a lot of patience about us. And we learn patience from them. And they make us hopeful about future. They are a good friend for us, for everything. I can't say too much thanks.

Thorsten: Omid, would you like to say anything? What do you think about the church and your experience at Cornerstone?

Omid: I think mixing with English people was really really good for me. Their testimony and their life – it was really helpful and I become Christian by English people. I really thanks God. I think when I become Christian I become brother and all of the English people they become brother for me, brother and sister. And the idea to having a separate church is not a good

thing for us and we need supporting each other – emotionally and with everything. Because when we come to cross we become brother and sister.

Thorsten: Sorry, this is not very English. Usually it is ladies first. (laughs) You've heard what we talked about – the church and how members of the Iranian group see the church. What is your view on that? What do you think? *Davoud translates into Farsi.*

Zara (in Farsi): ... *Davoud translates into English:* Thank God for this matter lead us to Cornerstone and we are ?? group in Cornerstone. They gave us hope about future. We have a lot of difficulty here, but they gave us hope for future to live in this country – and about our children as well. And they teach us. We accept them like a family because we have not a good family here. Our families live in our country and they are a good family for us here. I understand about love here from Cornerstone Church. Thanks for all people who live in the Cornerstone Church.

Thorsten: Rob, would you like to say anything?

Rob: One thing that worries me is that Cornerstone is quite a rich church and people mainly are professionals and often the experience of Iranian people is very different. I am wondering – is it really better for English people trying to talk about how to be a Christian or would it not be better for an Iranian person who understands their situation. Would they not learn more from someone like that?

Thorsten: What do you think about what Rob just said?

Davoud: I couldn't understand it.

Rob: Is it better to have an English person teaching you about how to live as a Christian even though their experience is not that of a refugee? Or is it better for an Iranian person to be able to tell you about how to live as a Christian?

Davoud: I think sometimes it's good, sometimes it's not good. Rob is right. Sometimes Iranians really need – not about living here, really for living here we need support of English people and it is very helpful for us. But teaching about Bible – sometimes it is better I think some Iranian people, expert Iranian people like Bishab or something else come here and teach

us about something else, about Bible and about Christianity. But really, English people try and they are really helpful about growing our faith.

Thorsten: So you are saying it would be good for you at least every now and again or for a certain period to have maybe an Iranian pastor or pastoral worker or something like that?

Davoud: I don't think so, because it is not a good time now. I don't know about future. We try for future. We have Bishab, we have a shepherd for our church - for Iranian group, not our church. Because our church is Cornerstone Church. But Cornerstone Church try about this matter. We don't have a good enough experience about this matter and for a short period we use them. Like a shepherd for short-term, about 2 or 3 months. They can give us some experience - this matter is good, this is not good. You can ask about this matter next year. (laughs)

Rob: Can you explain the question to Amir? *Davoud translates into Farsi.*

Amir (in Farsi): ... *Davoud translates into English:* It doesn't make difference for us - Iranian shepherd or English shepherd. We grow in the Cornerstone Church and we find faith in the Cornerstone Church. We accept the plan of the Cornerstone Church. There is a lot of tree in the Christianity, like Catholic, Protestant. If somebody be in the plan of Cornerstone Church it doesn't make difference for us - be it Iranian or English.

Thorsten: David, would you like to say anything at the end? Any ideas?

David: I'm just thinking practically - what practical things do we need to do to help the relationships get better between English people and Iranian people?

Thorsten: Yes, you can always improve things. Even if things are good you can always improve things. Have you got any ideas how we could improve the situation or improve relationships between Iranians at Cornerstone and English and any other people? *Davoud translates into Farsi.*

Amir (in Farsi): ... *Davoud translates into English:* English people with their behaviour and their communication make us happy. For example we have David here. David try learn Farsi. This is not for him because I think Farsi language is not very necessary for everybody in the world. Just he wants to really help Iranian group. I can say just thanks.

Thorsten: Ok, I think we stop here then. Thank you very much.

Interview No. A04

Interviewee: Richard Lewis

Marital Status: Married, two children

Occupation: Project Manager

Church: Cornerstone Church, Nottingham

Involvement: Church Elder

Interviewer: Thorsten Prill

Date: 22 May 2005

Duration: 50 min

Thorsten: Richard, please tell me something about the refugee ministry at Cornerstone. How did it all start? How do you remember the beginning of the refugee ministry at Cornerstone?

Richard: I think the way it happened was not in a planned way, but almost by accident from a church level. With the increase of asylum seekers in the UK and that coming into the media and so forth and a lot of the Iranians and people from the Middle East in particular into the UK and being consciously by the government spread around the main cities of the UK it meant that Nottingham got a number of these people. And also through the two universities there are also international students who were Iranian or whatever. And so over a period of a few years - over the last five years particularly - what was a small cluster of Iranians became a conscious group as it were in the mind of the church and were allowed to meet in a separate room in the school building where the church meets and have their worship service there. And it has kind of evolved from there.

Thorsten: So it is a result of a government policy at the end of the day. Refugees came here and you stumbled over them...

Richard: Yeah, not a result of government policy. One of the circumstances of increased asylum seekers was there was a lot of people trying to get into the UK and so it became a policy to spread them around the cities. That was one of the consequences. One of the consequences of them wanting to get involved in a Christian church I think was for several other reasons. One of those reasons is I think a way of trying to integrate into the society, become part of the society that will accept them. Because I think it is very difficult for them to feel accepted, to be outside of the British culture.

Thorsten: Are you now speaking of refugees who had been Christians when they came to Nottingham?

Richard: Non-Christians. And then I think over a period of time while they were in the church environment - in the Iranian church within a church - the Holy Spirit has moved and a number of them have become believers.

Thorsten: So you say the first motivation was to meet English people and to be integrated in society.

Richard: Some of them to receive help because I'm sure for some of these people - not all of them, but for some - if you can get the support of a church that's going to help your case in terms of assessment for remaining in Britain or being removed. And certainly the church has supported a number of such people in court cases and so forth. You know, written letters of recommendation to support their case to remain. If you were to be cynical you could think that that was the motive of some of them originally.

Thorsten: But you wouldn't say that that was the motive of all?

Richard: It may not have been the case with any of them, I don't know. What I'm saying is - I don't think any of these people were Christians and I don't think they came because they said *'I want to become a Christian'*. They came because of their circumstances. Some right, maybe some wrong. And within that context the church responded in a kind of unplanned way originally. Though it is now a very planned way. And in amongst all that the Holy Spirit saved some of them.

Thorsten: You said that at the beginning it wasn't planned by the church. But the church was confronted with it and dealt with it. But now you said it's a planned way. Could you describe that?

Richard: In a sense there has always been in Cornerstone - part of our ministries has been international work in terms of sending people into overseas mission fields. Various missionaries are supported by the church in finance and prayer and so forth and we gradually realised that actually there was an international mission field on our doorstep by the circumstances that have come around. And that maybe we should be addressing these people

to an extent. And that had already been going on for a long time with the Chinese Church, which is kind of affiliated to Cornerstone. And then this small group of Iranians sort of sprung up and gradually evolved. And a number of people in the church got personally involved with them as their personal ministry. But it wasn't initially formally recognised by the leadership of the church. But later it was discussed by the eldership, was recognised as valid and was realised as something more needed. So for at least for two or three years, to my knowledge this has been a deliberate thing within the church.

Thorsten: You mentioned immigration, that there was a desire from the refugees to be integrated for whatever reasons. But now the church wants to integrate them as well. Has the attitude of the leadership of the church changed?

Richard: I think what's happened is that we just started to become aware in a more conscious way that it raised all the issues of how to manage the situation in the best interest of the Iranians and of the main church. I wouldn't regard them as integrated. In my perception they are a church within a church. They are a parallel church, meeting alongside the main church. They happen to be in the same building. But in the last year particularly there has been much more conscious efforts to start and try to integrate them more fully into the church. And we've had to cross hurdles of - why would we not allow somebody who has professed Christ as an Iranian to become a member of Cornerstone. And what are the implications of that in terms of keeping the control of the church? If they have become a Christian, why would we not allow them to be baptised into the church? And actually we had a situation where we had a number of them wanting to be baptised. But we had no mechanism to kind of assess in a normal way like we would assess someone to be baptised, to decide if they could or couldn't be baptised because we hadn't really thought about it. And so up to 40 of them had become Christians and then it came to our attention. And we started to realise - wow - God is doing something here. And that's fine and they carry on and people from within the church and also pastors involved in the Iranian Christian work from outside came. But they are still very separated. But as I mentioned, in the last year we faced the question mark of - ok, how do we integrate them and if they want to get baptised why wouldn't we baptise them? What are the implications if we do? And why wouldn't we let them become a member and what are the implications if we do. A big problem comes in that we don't know them very well. And we are

dealing with another culture. We've got a huge language barrier. So they don't really understand us and we don't really understand them. We communicate by smiles.

Thorsten: But you said that a lot of effort has been made for the last 12 months. Things have changed already. Could you give a few examples of that?

Richard: Talking of the baptism side - we have actually had over the last 12 months our first baptisms in Cornerstone of Iranians. Quite a number of them was baptised in a particular baptism service. I don't know the exact number. But it must have been ten or more. And we have an elder summoned to work with them - Alan Bush - that's his main ministry. He reports back to the elders and then makes recommendations that we discuss and act upon. And we in a sense authorise Alan to go and include some of that stuff. And he tries to provide an eldership steered to the volunteer staff from the church congregation involved in the Iranian work. And we've had them up on the stage in a Cornerstone service. And we've had them singing Iranian hymns. And the getting the British congregation to sing parts of those hymns in Farsi. That was a really nice occasion. Because there was a sense of acceptance and warmth. And I think the Iranians felt they weren't stuck in a room somewhere else. They were in the main building and there were all the British smiling and communicating with them and singing in their language. And then it was a mix of English and Farsi. And a number of the people who had been interviewed at the front in the church services and then we had the baptism service and so forth. Gradually we have an increasing number of events where there has been contact. Over and above those people are directly involved in the ministry.

Thorsten: And you think these are good steps for further integration?

Richard: Yes, I think they are very good steps and I am aware we need to integrate a lot more.

Thorsten: So, what else could be done, then?

Richard: Difficult one, because we need to maintain incidences where they can be build into the service for an extent. But while a big language barrier persists as well as the cultural barrier then there are issues that create a certain separation.

Thorsten: Can you give a few examples of that?

Richard: Well, if it has not happened at a normal Cornerstone service then we might not know what we are talking about. And certainly if we go and sit in the Farsi service, we definitely don't know what they are talking about. It's as simple as that. It's the language. In terms of understanding - has someone got saved or not - from an eldership position - you are relying heavily on the recommendation of Alan or other established Cornerstone people who know them. To an extent that for anybody, an English person - when it is someone of another language and totally different culture that culture historically in terms of it's perceptions of truth and absolutism and so forth - which is different to our Judea Christian kind of culture. You know coming from a different framework. And so some things they do we might feel are different. And we are not comfortable with it. Some things they do as asylum seekers we may not be comfortable with - there is a black economy and so forth. But we recognise that there is a supernatural spiritual birth thing going on here. And the means like with any person from any culture - they get born, but they get not born in a convenient way. Some of their old life is there, some of their new life is there. The difference is we can't really probe very effectively whether they are re-born or whether they are faking it - to be blunt.

Thorsten: Faking it for the sake of their case?

Richard: Or because of their culture, where they are working in a different way as far as I understand their culture. And in some cultures - and I'm not talking in particular about the Iranian culture here - acquiescence is an endorsed thing. And therefore it is harder to differentiate and you can get that with some internationals that where they are from a culture where fitting in a culture is deemed good. Then people will try to fit in. And you can get it where there is misunderstanding because they think they understand what Christianity is, but they don't. And where we don't have the language skills, or a close enough contact with them to really understand whether they are saved or not. So those who have got baptised have really got baptised on the basis of a recommendation of the elder who is directly involved. And of the assistant pastor who has evangelistic involvement with them.

Thorsten: What does integration mean to you? How do you understand integration? What is the goal/aim of integration with regard to the Iranians?

Richard: To be honest - I'm not sure I have got a clear picture of what it should look like. I can see a model that works that people from another culture will find it through language barrier and culture barrier and social status - might find it hard to integrate directly into the church. And so there is an argument for creating something that is more convenient for them.

Thorsten: That would be a church within the church model.

Richard: The Iranian church meets at the same time as Cornerstone and it meets in the same building. And it has been endorsed by the leadership of Cornerstone. So members of Cornerstone are directly involved in the services of those people. But otherwise, essentially, it operates independently.

Thorsten: That's interesting. Because I've been observing them for a while now and I've seen that at least half of the people who go to the Farsi meeting come to the service in the morning and then leave. So there are more links, there are people who move between two congregations.

Richard: That may well be so. I mean I see people who look like Iranians but don't know them. A lot of people are international. And I am aware, you know, we've discussed in the eldership that Iranians do come into the service. We've talked about that. And from my point of view they are very welcome. That's fantastic. If they want to be in a Cornerstone service, they should come and should be made as welcome as possible. They've got to climb over a language barrier and to an extent a culture barrier.

Thorsten: I mean I personally know refugees - two or three - who prefer a Cornerstone service to a Farsi speaking service.

Richard: I've heard this. I've hear it from Alan Bush, the elder and from others. So probably, what you've really got at the moment in Cornerstone is a kind of mixed picture. But I think that kind of reflects the ad-hoc rather un-planned way in Cornerstone. Not that that's necessarily a bad thing. This is more of a supernatural thing that's going on. And we are responding as a church. Because we could never imagine that God would do what he has done. And yet he did. And it is wonderful that it hasn't been a planned thing in that sense.

Because it has a sense of God about it. And then that endorses that these are genuine conversions and not people manipulating the situation.

Thorsten: Can we come back to the membership issue that you mentioned before. I know that the eldership decided in general to offer refugees who became Christians membership at Cornerstone, if they want. And that was last year November/December time. So there must have been reservations before - reservations whether conversions were real... Were there other reservations?

Richard: I think that was the main reservation. And that's not because they are Iranians as we also have reservations about more British people becoming members. We have reservations about people who clearly are Christians, who come from another denomination sometimes.

Thorsten: So theological reasons...

Richard: Not even theological, but also church culture..., you know, a different government structure of the church, different expectations in the style or flavour of Cornerstone, I think there is a reasonable concern that accepting the way that Cornerstone is operating the way that God wants it to - that if you allow a large sub-group in a membership to form and it becomes a power base and operates in consortia as it were, then a relative small group can have a disproportional influence at a members meeting. And members meetings are where the governmental decisions are made in terms of the constitution of the church. So one thing we guard against - not against Iranians or asylum seekers, but about any group forming that is a counter power base within the church that might be trying to take the church in a different direction that is against the gospel or a direction that places a different focus of where we believe God has placed the ministries of Cornerstone and it is for fear of church splits occurring which sadly is a common situation.

Thorsten: Ok, you just mentioned Cornerstone ministries - how would you describe Cornerstone's mission in general?

Richard: The focus of Cornerstone tends to be on the preaching, the teaching of the Word of God, very much a preaching/a teaching church, and our outreach of the gospel both in the UK

and abroad. But with particular focus on international people whether that be in the UK or abroad. It has other ministries as well, but this is the main emphasis.

Thorsten: What role in your opinion do the refugees play in that mission of Cornerstone?

Richard: As we send out and finance and pray for missionaries from Cornerstone around the world they fit as internationals except that God has brought them to the UK. So they are on our doorstep. So a perfect fit for Cornerstone in a way we wouldn't have perhaps thought of.

Thorsten: Cornerstone puts emphasis on international work/mission work. Would you say that Cornerstone has changed over recent years. Has it become more international?

Richard: Compared with...?

Thorsten: I don't know - 10 or 20 years ago – with regard to people who come to the service, with regard to the membership.

Richard: I think there has been a strong element of international people in the service and outreach to internationals for maybe 15 years in Cornerstone. If you go back 20 years, to 1985 there was the beginnings of that - that was when I joined the church. And it wasn't a main focus. Cornerstone wasn't a big missionary sending church. It was a much smaller church, full stop. But we did send out missionaries, even in 1986 to overseas, to Africa, Nyankunde and so forth. So it wasn't present then. But it grew a lot, the vacuum in the 1980ies and throughout 1990ies into the new millennium. So I wouldn't say there is a big difference now in that focus from 2005 to say 1995, but maybe between now and 1985 there has been definitely a big change.

Thorsten: What I meant was more the number of internationals coming to Cornerstone, not the international work - people going out from Cornerstone.

Richard: I would say, because of being in a city with two universities and a big medical school and we've always had an outreach to students, which has been a focus certainly in 1985 and it still is now - but there has always been a reasonably high proportion of internationals in the church. But I would certainly agree that in the last five years and maybe the last ten years - I can't really define exactly when - the ratio of internationals has substantially increased.

Thorsten: You can that when you look at Cornerstone alone which has the world map as part of its logo - I think that tells you something about the changes you've just mentioned.

Richard: To be honest, I don't see it as a fundamental shift. I think I would see it more as a gradual evolution. I don't think it like we weren't and now we are. We always were. There was much more focus on international students before, which is still very strong. The asylum side of it - that seems to have raised within the last 5 years as yet another ministry outreach. But if you go back 20 odd years, 20 or 25 years, there were a lot of Vietnamese in the same situation as the Iranians, Iraqis and all the other. There was reaching out to them. So it is not that new a subject. But what is probably very new is that you've got an Iranian church within the wider Cornerstone context. And a bunch of them have become Christians - maybe up to 40. That is mind blowing.

Thorsten: Where do you see the work, let's say in 5 or 10 years time? Where do you see it going? Or where would you like to see it going? Where do you see the Iranian group in a few years time?

Richard: That would really depend on what model we choose to create or what model evolves. Because we haven't chosen one. We recently had in the elders meeting one of the team from Cornerstone who is involved with them. And it was an excellent presentation. What came really across to me was how unclear we are with so many things in Cornerstone. We lack policies about how much support we give or we don't give. Why we might support this person and not another person. A lot of it seems very ad hoc to me personally. I would like to think it was possible for the Iranians to integrate into the main Cornerstone Church. That would be wonderful. But the more they do that the less they'll be a separate Iranian church, they will lose their identity, their Iranian distinctiveness. That might be good or bad according to your perspective. But when there are new Iranians, they won't integrate well because of language and culture barriers, they will end up still with some sort of Iranian meeting. And I would tend to try and encourage that. But make sure that the gospel is really preached there. And that means Cornerstone leadership having a clear influence on what is going on there. And an input into who is leading it from the outside.

Thorsten: So what would that look like?

Richard: I think it is more of the same if I'm honest. Except that you might gradually have.., gradually individuals getting saved, getting baptised, maybe attending the morning service. If they start getting involved in house groups and stuff then they really would integrate. But for those individuals that's probably leading them to help integrating into British society as a whole. Maybe they can integrate at work and they'll become more part of the British community. Like anyone integrating into the British community will become more like us. And I think that's already happening to an extent. Some of the Iranians, the way they behave culturally. When an Iranian Christian teacher has come to help teach and lead them, they've been a bit shocked because they've come from outside of Britain at the approach of some of the Iranians are less willing to just support and aid themselves. They challenge the teacher more and that's more the influence of the indigenous culture here - for better or for worse.

Thorsten: The last question: What do you think can the Iranians contribute to the church. They are receiving a lot. They have received a lot of support, personal and financial support, spiritual support. Is there anything they could contribute to the church?

Richard: I mean, there is always a way of helping, get them to ...hm...it's all lined into integration really. If they contribute more it is steps towards them getting more involved in the main Cornerstone service, in church. And when you think about ways of doing that, of practical ways of serving, there is the various ministries such as setting up, do the tea/coffee or whatever, doing the various jobs that people do and attending some of the services, maybe getting involved in some of the small groups like house groups. And in that way they both serve and become part of us rather than being distinct to the body. But I don't think there is an expectation on Cornerstone that they owe us anything or that they ought to be doing more than they are. We are delighted that they want to be in church and that some have become saved and will be.

Thorsten: Thank you very much.

Richard: Pleasure.

Interview No. A05

Interviewee: Spencer Hampton
Marital Status: Married, two children
Occupation: Church Manager
Church: Cornerstone Church, Nottingham
Involvement: Church Manager
Interviewer: Thorsten Prill
Date: 1 June 2005
Duration: 50 min

Thorsten: Can you tell me something about the mission of Cornerstone?

Spencer: We do have a mission statement. I'm not sure if it is up to date. It hasn't been renewed for some time. Cornerstone's current mission seems to be – hm, we are bringing the Lord's word to the people of Nottingham specifically, and we are focussing on student areas. Most of our congregation comes from the student environment. So we are dealing with a lot of professional middle class families. They are coming to Cornerstone predominantly I would say because of the quality of the preaching and because of the family environment that we are presenting. I think that our current mission statement is probably too old and probably needs reviewing. Cornerstone has developed into what it is today by the demands that have been made on it. In the case of the Iranians or refugees there was no objective strategy to go and develop this ministry. This ministry is counter Cornerstone.

Thorsten: So it has evolved?

Spencer: It evolved, we were led to it and we made resources available. But we didn't sit down five years ago and say – looked there's a load of refugees we are going to strategically create a portion of our congregation. We have reacted to circumstances.

Thorsten: You mentioned the student ministry, the refugee ministry. But Cornerstone has always had a strong focus on international work. So that would fit into that picture as well.

Spencer: That's right. Of course we have Debbie Dickson and her work – again student related. And the nature of Nottingham is that it is bringing in a lot of international students, particularly over the last few years. And so again we responded to that. And this is now a major ministry that we have. We finance it significantly and of course we finance and give prayer support for our international workers, which is significant as well. We pray every Sunday for our international workers as well. It has a reasonably high profile in our church.

Thorsten: So the refugee ministry in some ways would be part of that international work with the difference that – as you said – the refugees came here and you were presented with the issue.

Spencer: That's right. The refugees are part of that sequence of prayer so that within our international prayer scheme they will come up on their particular rota so that the rest of the church is aware of them and pray for them. I'm not sure that we necessarily view the refugees as internationals now. I think they are an embodiment of the church. And although we may consider the international students international I'm not sure there is the feeling that the refugees necessarily come under that heading. That may be just my gut feeling.

Thorsten: Why do you think is that so? I mean, they are foreigners. Is it because they have started to integrate already? Or because they are supposed to be here permanently?

Spencer: They are now a permanent feature of the church whereas the international work has a certain transient nature I suspect. It is not to say that they are well integrated. The people are aware of the refugees. And also, we possibly view them slightly differently – although we might call them refugees. They are not a global group of refugees. They tend to be Iranians. The majority are Iranians, which is why they are referred to as 'Iranians' or the 'Farsi group', which is more accurate than refugees, which might imply South Americans, Africans and other people.

Thorsten: ...which are there as well, but they are in the minority. The biggest group are the Iranians.

Spencer: And they are the ones we have focussed on and we provide the resources for. The South Americans have a separate group and don't meet in Cornerstone. And you may want to

look at them separately. If a refugee, for instance, from another country turned up – we wouldn't necessarily have the resources to deal with their own specific needs.

Thorsten: So that's because the Iranians are by far the biggest group and they've got their strongest links with the church.

Spencer: And what's happened is that we made resources available to them because they are a big enough group. So they have their own room to worship in. They have their own chairs. They have their own microphones, speakers. They have some collection of resources that we have made available. They have their own budget for instance. And we have decided to spend that money for this group. So it is quite special.

Thorsten: There has been a lot of talk about integration of Iranians into the church. What is your view on that? How do you see that integration?

Spencer: Cornerstone has a sizeable church. It suffers a little bit from integrating anybody – a newcomer coming into the church can be really well welcomed or if their personality isn't particularly outgoing they can be ignored simply because we've got 500 people standing around all busily doing their own thing. So even if you lived locally and came in – integration of somebody is not straight forward. It can be, but it does depend. Integration of the Iranians is kind of likewise. They are their own group. They will talk amongst themselves. They understand one another. So integrating them into the church as a whole can be a challenge. Now, Cornerstone has put on events to try and help the process. We have Hospitality Sunday, which is not just Iranian based. It is for anybody to invite other people back to their homes and to encourage this invitation. We've got an Iranian lunch coming up to which we would expect to have about 100 people – non-Iranians come along, too, and be part of the Iranian meal. The Iranians are invited to other meals. The Iranians are welcomed onto the main stage occasionally in order to have a presence, and for people to be aware of them and pray for them. Despite all that I would say that they are not well integrated. There are some people who are very involved with the Iranian group. Other people, simply by the nature of their day, don't have the time to make a lot of new friends and put themselves out into this particular area. And that probably carries the majority of the people.

Thorsten: So what could be done to improve that? Do you see anything that could be done to improve that situation?

Spencer: If we are talking about total integration such that an Iranian would walk into the main body of the church and talk to other people in the same way that he would talk to his fellows – I think that might be a lot to expect. It could happen, but it might take a long, long time. There are cultural differences, experience differences – I suspect with any group of people, people would gravitate towards people of similar experience. And therefore to expect a professional middle class Nottingham person to automatically have a relationship with a refugee on a friendship basis is quite a lot to expect I would think. One chooses one's friends. And one chooses friends with equivalent interests and lifestyles and things like that. And there may be a difference there.

Thorsten: Though the Iranians are not a homogenous group. I mean, they've got people from different backgrounds.

Spencer: That's true and I think that the church is probably not aware of that. We group them all together. They are that group and therefore from the worst of perspectives they wouldn't (leave???) if they were gonna look the same and appear to behave the same. When I go to Hong Kong in China I can identify Westerners even if I don't know them. I would expect to have things in common with that Westerner, even if that Westerner were French. So one may to gravitate in that direction.

Thorsten: Having said that, in general what should be the aim of integration? How should integration look like from your point of view?

Spencer: Well, I don't think there is a concept of total integration - where one can't identify the differences - is necessarily desirable or helpful. Vive la difference. God made us all different and that's a wonderful thing. So I would be unconvinced to expect one group of people to exactly behave like another group of people. I'm not sure that's necessarily reasonable. But we would expect them to be welcomed into people's homes – on Sundays maybe. So maybe there are degrees of integration that one could describe. And I'm not sure it is reasonable to expect one group to assent. I'm not even sure it would be healthy.

Also what I don't know is whether we have reached the end of the refugees coming into the UK or not. Whether or not it was bubble and the political climate changes. So do we now have an established group of refugees who will never change and the same individuals will keep turning up on a Sunday or is it a more transient thing where some of these will move on and new faces will arrive. David or Alan Bush may have information on that. But it produces slightly different characters over the five years. If they are a static group they will integrate more and more as individuals as they discover people or as they become more climatized and do more Western things. If they are transient, then obviously – even if they are transient for a couple of years – it will be more difficult to integrate them. I'm not sure we know that and it is dependent upon politics in Iran in that case and politics in London. Cornerstone of course has to deal with the world as the Lord presents it to us. I suspect neither can we force integration on people. You can't oblige our own congregation to integrate and we can't force the Iranians to integrate either.

We have to encourage both sides. I like Hospitality Sunday. I think that's a great opportunity and I suspect that we haven't made the most of it from the Iranian perspective. I think we could do better. At the moment we are looking at two Hospitality Sundays over the year and that's probably enough. The lunches are a great success and that is a way of getting people involved.

We don't have lots of people with lots of time in our church. We don't have young retired people in our church who might be expected to have time to easily welcome people into their homes. We have few, but it is not the predominant nature of our church. And those that we do have are very welcoming. The majority of our church – I would say is professional middle class with two children. And they have their own demands on their Sundays and their weeks.

Thorsten: They have limited time to spend with other people.

Spencer: Absolutely, within their working week. That is not to say that they don't believe in integration or they are not hospitable. But the circumstances of their lives at the moment are such. Another effect of that is that Cornerstone of course is a relatively wealthy church and therefore has resources that other churches might not be able to spend on things like the Iranian group.

Thorsten: Coming back to the nature of integration – do you think there is anything that the church or people in the church can learn from the Iranians. At the moment it looks like the Iranians are at the receiving end. They have received a lot from the church, a lot of financial support, spiritual support. Is there anything the Iranians could give to the church as well?

Spencer: One of the great things about Cornerstone is the evangelising that is done here – Colin’s work, Debbie Dickson’s work and the Iranian work, because we see people coming to the Lord regularly. We just had a baptism of six people – that’s wonderful. With the Iranians we’ve seen a lot of them coming to the Lord, being baptised and coming into the Lord’s church in that way. I suspect that in a lot of churches – you know – they don’t do so much evangelism, they don’t see the work of the Lord in people’s lives in that way. And it can be very comfortable that you live in your own middle class Christian life untouched by evangelism and people coming to the Lord. You just go to church, you pray, you do this, but it can lose energy. One of the great things of that is that it is visible evangelism. It is the Lord’s work going on. It is people’s lives being changed. And the effect of that of course on our congregation is wonderful. When we print people’s testimonies it is very uplifting for everybody. So as a work on itself it brings everybody back to ‘*yes, we ought to be doing this*’ and here is part of the church that’s doing it and we are a part of that. So in that perspective that’s good for our church.

Culturally, we are a fairly international church as we said before. We have our own international workers, we have our own international student work and then we have our Iranian group. I would say Cornerstone is very sympathetic to international people. And this is another flavour of it. Perhaps a flavour that we wouldn’t find otherwise in our comfortable middle class lives. We don’t often experience what these people have experienced. The apostles, many of the great Christians got persecuted for their faith. We don’t get persecuted for our faith here in Nottingham. We don’t put ourselves out enough in any case to even be embarrassed by our faith. And what we experience in the case of these refugees, they are people who have really had a tough time. And I think that we could all learn from them. Some of us do when we talk to people about their experience – if they are open enough – to draw ourselves out of our comfortable middle class environment and wake us up. And say, look – the world isn’t just like Nottingham. So there is that aspect of it.

Thorsten: Now, let me ask you – do you have a vision for the Iranian group at Cornerstone? Where would you see the group in five years – we’ve already said that we cannot predict certain things because of politics – but where would you like to see the group in five years time?

Spencer: The hm, if we image that the...I think the..., hm, somehow, integrating it into the total church so that we no longer have the Farsi meeting strikes me as disappointment. I suspect it might be from the evangelistic point of view it would make it more difficult for people to, hm, for new refugees to join. I suspect that might be the case. But that will largely depend on to be honest how the Lord leads us. If the refugees decide that they don’t want to go to their own meeting because it makes them different, because they improved their language skills and they developed in their Christian walk and what they need is Peter Lewis’ teaching rather than what they get at the Farsi meeting it will move across almost it’s own accord.

Thorsten: What you are saying is that the Farsi speaking meeting serves a purpose. It can be a good first point of first contact for new Iranians, which would be more difficult without that group.

Spencer: I suspect so. It might not be. I may be that the individual Farsi speakers would recognise somebody coming into the church and welcome them in without a separate group. It could be the case.

Thorsten: But then you still have the language problems for newcomers, who don’t speak English well enough to follow a sermon by Peter or anybody else.

Spencer: Unfortunately, it comes down to a ??? game. Already we have people coming into the church who will say *what is available for my peculiar circumstances?* And if there is one person with one set of peculiar circumstances we really can’t provide for them. So if you get one Iranian it is very difficult to provide for them unless another Iranian picks them up, does Bible studies with them and things like that. If you have the group – to some extent we have to respond to the demand. Now it is possible of course that Iranians come to Nottingham because the group exists and other people know about it. It is a sizeable group in a way, which is well known at Elam and it is possible that people are coming towards Nottingham because

the group exists. I don't know. David might throw more light on it. In which case it would almost be a self-supporting thing. If the Iranians develop in their walk with the Lord then the teaching that they are getting should not be good enough for them. So one could imagine that they develop their language skills by working locally or whatever or living locally. And then discover that the message that they get on a Sunday morning is perhaps too simple for them. And that would be a wonderful thing.

Thorsten: For a short-term of three months we had an Iranian pastor, a trainee pastor with the group. What is your experience with that and what was the motivation in the first place to have him during this time?

Spencer: We have sought an Iranian minister for the group. That was recognised by the eldership. We had an option for one guy called Joseph and he was considered not to have the appropriate skills. Then we had the option of having Vahik for three months. And he was considered to be appropriate. It was a short-term thing. We knew he was going back. It cost us a little bit of money, not very much to pay him. It was a relatively low risk strategy on the basis of taking on a pastor that we have some knowledge of, but not intimate knowledge of. And of course, come the summer time we are having more skilled teachers coming to work with the Iranian group. So there is a need for pasturing the Iranian group. We can see that. And when the Lord has presented us with the resources, we have responded to those resources. Chris and Kes are coming in the summer. They are doing a month placement I think. None of this actually solves the problem of getting a permanent pastor, but we are learning from our experience. With Vahik there is a number of things that we learnt. I wasn't intimately involved with his teaching. So it would be second hand passed on information.

Thorsten: I've heard some things myself.

Spencer: Yeah, so we learnt from that experience. We will have Chris and Kes, who are not Farsi speakers, who are here for five weeks or something. We will learn from that experience as well.

Thorsten: So, to have a permanent Iranian pastor, is that be an option you are looking into or again, is it something you react to at the moment?

Spencer: The elders have discussed this point. It would be desirable to have a pastor for this group. I think there would be probably about 40 people arriving on a Sunday to take part of this community. That is a good size church. If you have 40 people turning up, they need pastoring. And the elders recognise that. How you will call a suitable pastor – that's the point. It is difficult. And we are perhaps learning about the nature of the person that we need by having thought about Joseph, having had Vahik work with us and now having Chris and Kes here. So we are learning about this. And we need to put that into place. How we acquire the right person is always a problem in any church to get the right pastor.

Thorsten: So in some ways you are guinea pigs. It is a new ministry and there is not much experience around you where you can refer to.

Spencer: We talk to Elam about our experiences. I don't necessarily have a problem with any of this. As far as I am concerned the Lord makes his people available to us. I don't necessarily see it as experimenting if you like.

Thorsten: It is the wrong term, but you know what I mean. In your situation you can't call on other people's experience, so you have to find your own way.

Spencer: I'm quite happy to be let by the Lord in all of these things.

Thorsten: Maybe a final point. We spoke about that before. It was the membership issue. You said that about 30 Iranians have been baptised in the last four, five years. And the eldership decided last year to open up membership to the Iranians, but that took a while to come to that decision. What is your view on that? Can you tell me something about the reasons for that? There must have been reservations or uncertainties...?

Spencer: It doesn't seem to me at all fair for somebody who has every right to be in this country and is a regular church attender and is a permanent resident of the country not to be eligible for membership. I can't see any formal justice, if you like, that would cause you to exclude them. I do understand the reservations that have been expressed and those reservation are that there is potential here of having a particular group, a sort of secondary group within the church that could acquire by virtual numbers voting in issues that the leadership of the church felt wasn't in the right direction. And there are people within the

church who have far more experience in this type of thing than I have, who have seen these things happen in other churches and churches can be divided. So the leadership clearly needs to protect the church, the direction it's going, it's teaching and we know that lots of churches can get divided by parts of the church and it can be very very destructive. And that's what they are trying to protect against. So that for instance if you have a group of Farsi speakers who could all turn up to vote at a meeting and then force a vote into a particular direction that could be considered divisive. I haven't got this experience. So we rely on our elder's experience to guide us. But it does seem to me, as I said earlier to be opposite to natural justice not to allow somebody in into membership. Of course, a number of the Iranians don't have permanent residency or their circumstances are in a process and we don't know how that will resolve itself. But somebody who has permanent residency, who we have baptised, it would be difficult for me to see why we shouldn't include them fully into the church.

Thorsten: So that's the policy at the moment. Someone who has residency, who has been baptised should be allowed to become a member.

Spencer: That's right. I'm not sure that at this moment it's being advertised, pushed to the Iranian group.

Thorsten: But that's the policy at the moment. Someone who has residency, who has been baptised should be eligible for membership.

Spencer: Yes. I'm comfortable with that. I don't know if there is a political outcome from it that might raise it's head in ten years time, which would be what those would experience. Cornerstone is really considered to be blessed with it's leadership and it's membership. We don't have a great deal of division, which can interfere with a lot of other churches and what they do. So we are really blessed and what we need to do is protect that.

Thorsten: That's it for the time being. Thank you very much. That was really helpful.

Interview No. A06

Interviewee: Peter Brown
Marital Status: Married
Occupation: Youth Minister
Church: Cornerstone Church, Nottingham
Involvement: Youth Minister
Interviewer: Thorsten Prill
Date: 1 June 2005
Duration: 30 min

Thorsten: What is your view about the mission of Cornerstone? How would you describe the mission of Cornerstone Church?

Pete: I guess the main mission of Cornerstone Church is to reach out with the gospel into people's lives. And I guess that whoever comes through the doors we have a commitment to reach out with the gospel. I guess that's meetings people's spiritual needs, meeting people's physical needs, emotional needs, medical needs etc. And also quite in a community where the church family can come together to worship God and to carry one another and to – I guess – bear one another up.

Thorsten: So you would say the mission is a holistic mission, with spiritual needs, physical needs. It's a holistic mission. How far are the refugees, the Iranians part of that? What role do they play in that mission?

Pete: Well, I think in so far it's a fact that over the last few years it's been an incredible fruitful area of that ministry. They play a key part in that. We have to recognise the nature of what's happening. And as we see refugees coming to Christ, we've had a large number been baptised, and they are now as much part of Cornerstone as any other member, I guess.

Thorsten: You were hesitating a little bit. Are they part of Cornerstone like any other member or are they still on their way to be part of Cornerstone than any other member?

Pete: I guess that's an interesting question. I think there is two ways of answering that question. There is an idealistic and a practical level. So, idealistically I see no reason why they can't be integrated fully into the church family, no reason at all. Practically, what is actually happening at Cornerstone I guess is sort of a miracle we can observe. I would say that integration is ongoing. I don't think we've arrived yet. There is still work to be done. That's quite clear. But at the same time I am aware that there are roots being built and links being established until they are becoming more integrated, certainly.

Thorsten: So you say integration is a process.

Pete: It takes time.

Thorsten: It takes time, ok. How would you describe your understanding of integration then? What would be the goal of that process?

Pete: I think that's a really interesting question, simply because there are obviously quite different cultural expectations, if you like, of church. So as a church we need to adapt to having our Iranian brothers and sisters within our congregation. In the future that integration, who knows, that might involve probably someone on the leadership team who has a background in that work. At the moment the Iranians have their own sort of service, half-way through they leave. I think there is an interesting issue with the fact that after this culture ... adults, age, their children are coming up much more integrated to western culture, they go to western schools, they speak English often better than their parents.

Thorsten: You can see that already?

Pete: Yes.

Thorsten: What age group is that you are talking about?

Pete: Certainly the teenagers. They can speak English better than a lot of their parents. That's not a, I guess that's quite..... and even younger, even some of the six and seven year olds speak English better than their parents. I guess that presents a language barrier to integration. I guess that depends how we define integration.

Thorsten: How would you define integration?

Pete: (laughs) I guess ideally it would be great to see Iranians and English and Chinese worshipping together as one family under one Lord and Saviour. I think that would be great. I don't know whether worldwide that is something which see happening. Also to an extent it happens. So that would be ideal if that happens. And that means adaptation from all sides. Certainly from us as we try to integrate

Thorsten: How would that look like, I mean the adaptation and adjustment from the side of the church? Would you say that integration is not only a one-sided process? It has more sides to it?

Pete: I think it is a complex issue. It is how to know how best to meet other people's needs. So with the refugees, they have the same spiritual need as anyone else. However, their physical needs, their needs within the legal system of our country are often completely different from a British person's needs. And I think that therefore we need to devote resources to insuring that all our church family's needs are met. I think I hope we are doing in part at least and there is more we can do. I'm sure.

Thorsten: What would you say at the moment are the main stumbling blocks, the main problems for such a development?

Pete: How do you mean?

Thorsten: I mean more or less you've just described your vision how you would like to see integration, how integration could work, the goal of integration. Are there any stumbling blocks at the moment at Cornerstone, ok, these are the areas where we need to change, this is a problem in general which might hinder this process of integration on every side?

Pete: I think from my perspective as a children/youth worker the integration of the Iranian children is something which is happening to a large extent. The children are often involved in Bible workshop classes. There are one or two exceptions and I think we are working on those together with Davoud and some of the other Iranians. So from the children's point of view that is happening, their English has improved dramatically. I guess language has to be a barrier to the process. I think it would be a transforming process if we were to have a service of multiple languages at any one time. I have never seen that happen in my own experience.

So I can't say whether it works, whether it doesn't. But certainly where it comes to I guess understanding Peter the level of English you need is very high. There is probably British people who would struggle so therefore you can understand that there might be issues there. But then again, I think what it means to be part of a family to better worship together and to praise God together is not just about understanding. There is more to it than that. It is a multi-faceted process. So there is part of it which is just come together and singing with people in one language or in many languages at the same time as we've tried it in Cornerstone before singing the same song in two languages. That has quite a unifying effect. It presents the fact that though perhaps we don't understand the same languages, we can sing the same songs and praise the same God.

So for the adult integration – it is not something which I feel particularly qualified to comment on as I work with children.

Thorsten: Yes, that's fine because that's your area. But still, may I ask you – what do you think is the relationship between refugees and British church members? Are there contacts from your observations, from your experience? Or are there friendships? What is the general attitude in the church?

Pete: I think that there certainly are friendships developing. I think that there is a warmth and fellowship being expressed through people having our Iranian brothers and sisters around for meals and at the Iranian parties and Iranian meals often many church members will go. And at the next one coming up I think we've been offered 120 spaces or something for people to give it a go and meet with Iranians. So I feel it is a two way process. They have plenty to offer us. Their food and stuff is quite different from what we can offer them. So that, and yet at the same time obviously we have so much more than they do, you know embarrassingly amounts more. And I guess as they are in the numerical minority then the emphasis is on sort of, I guess British or that's perhaps not the word, hm, the emphasis on the existing church members or other nationality are to accept those coming in – I think that's key. But at the same time that certainly can be reciprocated. And I think that's fantastic that they can offer to cook for so many people.

Thorsten: You said that they've got plenty to offer to us. Could you give me a few details of that? I mean besides food. That's an important thing, definitely, I think it is good coming together, eating together. It is a very important thing, but what else is there?

Pete: I think hearing how they live as a Christian with the pressures that they face with the apparent, well not even apparent, with the injustice that our legal system or how it comes across as it one can be accepted, one can be rejected though their cases are identical. And seeing and observing how they respond to that is testimony, I guess to their faith. And I personally have never been through half of what they have been through. Their testimonies, their stories, their life experiences in another country and in a very difficult country are something which perhaps we will never go through. So when we talk about being a Christian and persevering in spite of suffering and pressing on towards the goal and all those different sorts of things, I think that we can see in how they are living, how that works out in practice because we don't have that same level of – persecution is probably the wrong word. Hm, we don't have that level of difficulty. I don't think. We have different difficulties, obviously, but not the same. We don't have to worry from day to day of being evicted from our houses for example.

Thorsten: With the Iranians and with other people from different countries Cornerstone has got a very international feel. What do you think are the reasons for that? With the Iranians in some ways it is obvious. They left their country because of certain reasons, but what do you think are the reasons behind that that Cornerstone is such an international church nowadays?

Pete: I think there is probably lots of reasons to that. I look around at the church and you just have to think about the focus Cornerstone has on international mission to recognise that it is a huge part of where our finances go. It is a huge part of where our resources go in terms of prayer and supporting the missionaries. And obviously there is more we can do. But I am aware that even amongst our missionaries, we have people who have chosen Cornerstone as a sending church simply because it is recognised somewhere, which will support you in the mission field. And we have a large emphasis in every service on praying for international workers and we have Debbie, who is our international student worker. And that is another reason from the sort of very leadership level of the church where someone is championing the

course of international students, international student ministry in all its forms. So that's international students, their wives, children. So there is that. There is from the front, from the preaching and teaching there is a recognition that the gospel is for all nations. And that can only I guess give us a better understanding of what heaven is gonna be like, what is new heavens and new earth is gonna be like with people from all nations. God isn't just God of the British so I think it is from a preaching point of view, from a finance point of view, from having leaders on the leadership team of the church who are involved with the international work – I mean all of those are a reason why – I think just recognising that in Nottingham we are in a very privileged position. We don't have to go to China to get Chinese students. We don't have to go to Iran to reach out to our Iranian brothers and sisters. We have them arriving on our doorstep. Just virtually they are there and they have the same spiritual needs as any British citizen that means if we can welcome them into our church, then they want to be part of what Cornerstone is about then. That is fantastic as far as I am concerned.

Thorsten: I think that's it. You have answered most of my questions. Is there anything you can think of with regard to the refugees, especially the Iranians, that you would like to tell me now? You talked about your vision – where do you see the Iranian group in 5 years time, for example?

Pete: That's a huge question, simply because of the nature of the past few years. The world has just exploded. A few years ago there were virtually no Iranians, one or two perhaps who have been in our congregation. Suddenly there are loads. I mean we have contact with far far more. I wouldn't even want to have a guess of where we could be in 5 years time. And so I don't know.

Thorsten: Where would you like to see it? Let's say with regard to the youth work?

Pete: When it comes to the youth work, I want to see that the Iranian children and young people are accepted as fully part of the group. I want to make sure that they are getting the same level of care and attention as everyone else is getting. And that's a challenge because there are I guess different expectations of lots of our children at Cornerstone who have grown up through the church. They have been through every path and they are teenagers already. And they are going into a system which is well established. And that means that we need to

adapt for them. We need to make sure that we are not simply losing them with the language we use or the study that we do. We need to make sure that we are effectively reaching out to them as well. So I am really keen because this sort of second generation if you like are growing up as Westerners really. It is amazing how that is the case. I know that there is a Persian school for example so that the kids retain some of their language.

Thorsten: Because their English is better than their Farsi.

Pete: Yes. So, it is an interesting one where those children will be in 5 years time. Because then they will be – some of them will be adults, in their twenties. And I guess there will be fully integrated into the Western culture. So I don't know exactly how an impact that will have in 5 years time.

Thorsten: You've just mentioned the second generation issue, which would make it difficult to have a separate church.

Pete: I think that probably too. I think that historically we have seen that any foreign language church set up does well for the first generation and then struggles for the second and the third. So I can't see – I'm not saying it wouldn't work – but I can't see how in a long-term strategy that works, because the children and the children's children are going to be brought up in England as British. That is not to say that they lose their cultural identity. But eventually it will require initiatives like the Persian school for example.

Thorsten: So what Cornerstone has at the moment is more a less a congregation within a congregation model.

Pete: To an extent, certainly from the teaching point of view. Now, I know that the Iranians feel encouraged by Vahik, too. Not to mention that they do come and hear Peter's teaching from time to time. I mean, Vahik, that was really an important thing. But at the same time lots of their teaching goes on as a sort of separate congregation within a larger congregation. I guess the need is there. I hope that in 5 years time it will be being met. Even if in 5 years time the needs are different, then we have to adapt to these needs differently.

Thorsten: In some ways – it just comes to my mind – the children are like a bridge between the two congregations, aren't they? Because their parents go to the Farsi speaking meeting and then they go to the English speaking Bible class. So they are bridge builders.

Pete: They do and some of them don't. Lot's of them do and some of them don't. So therefore we actually look at them, how we can re-integrate them. And part of that – the problem, I guess that the teenagers are ... anyway. Some of them will reject the gospel.

Thorsten: Thank you very much for that.

Interview No. A07

Interviewee: Colin Webster

Marital Status: Married, two children

Occupation: Assistant Minister

Church: Cornerstone Church, Nottingham

Interviewer: Thorsten Prill

Date: 7th June 2005

Duration: 45 min

Thorsten: Now, Colin, please tell me something about the mission of Cornerstone Church in general? What is the mission of the church?

Colin: The mission of Cornerstone is – in a nutshell – to reach as many people for Christ as possible and to disciple them and bring them all into faith in the hope that they in turn will reach and teach others. And it has got a worldwide perspective trying to reach people from both overseas by sending people, but also to in-reach the out-reach by catering for the international students that come to us – and in the case of those from other countries who come as refugees, too.

Thorsten: Ok, that's where the refugees fit in – especially the Iranian group, who is the biggest refugee group at Cornerstone. Now, what are your experiences with the Iranian group at Cornerstone? Do you have any personal experience?

Colin: Yeah, I was involved from the early days, when they first started coming to Cornerstone. I was there to chat to Debbie and David who were starting to head up that ministry. We met up on a number of occasions in the church office. Direct involvement with the refugees was I suppose from someone who started coming to faith and sitting down and interviewing them to ascertain through interpreter as to whether they were actually converted. That's where I started to hear of the individual life stories.

Thorsten: That was for baptisms?

Colin: Yes, that was for baptisms. Then I started to speak at the Iranian meeting and we worked out that I would be there certainly for the Christmas message and probably an Easter one and one other throughout the year – so at least three or four times in the year I would actually be doing a talk at their meetings. And I have also done a house group meeting with them.

Thorsten: How has the Iranian group developed over the years from your view?

Colin: It has developed first of all in terms of size. It grew numerically. But I think it has grown more in depth in terms of solid commitment. Once we found out who was actually applying for baptism, not for any other reason than they had genuinely come to Christ. I think that has helped to settle the matter for us as to who is a genuine Christian. Because those who started to come to us, who were then baptised and then got asylum, but who remained with us, we could have a bedrock of people that were solid and saved for the right reasons. And they have been instrumental in helping to identify people that they themselves think might be bogus. I think the quality of the teaching has developed beyond the absolute basis of continually repeating pretty much the gospel to them, to try and to teach them practical Christian living and perhaps even in-depth doctrinal issues. Most of the issues that we are actually dealing with in the teaching is still based around life decisions, lordship of Christ issues.

Thorsten: Between the lines I could hear that there were reservations at the beginning. There was uncertainty about the motives – let's put it that way – of the Iranians for baptism, but that has changed.

Colin: I think this has changed not only because we have got people that are through the system, who have been accepted for asylum and who have been baptised and remained with us. But also because the Home Office themselves have tightened up their testing criteria. And no longer is ministers there held in such high regard. So that's actually a negative that has turned out to be a plus for us in terms of the Home Office tightening their grip around things. So, yeah, there was a genuine concern that people would come to Cornerstone for little reasons, but there has been a lot less of that because even in the last year and a half I have noticed a huge decline in the number of people that are wanting to be baptised and who are

trying to pull the Christian card as it were as part of their case, which is good for us because it saves us a lot of time as well.

Thorsten: From what I have heard and seen and from my conversations so far I have had the impressions that there were other reservations with regard to membership, inviting refugees into membership.

Colin: I think the reservations of membership were to do with cultural differences being one of the things. If we started to allow one in we would have to allow many more in. And because they are already a sizeable group of people to have – let's say 30 – suddenly come in to church membership could change some dynamics. Because there are still cultural adaptations that a number of them were having to come to terms with. So I think the reservations might have been still over the genuineness of some conversions. Because some people were still waiting for their asylum cases to be accepted.

Secondly, there are those who we believe are genuinely converted, but because they haven't gained yet asylum, they almost fall into a category, rather like students who you are unsure how long they might be around for.

And then thirdly, it is the dynamic of is it appropriate for us to suddenly change the dynamics of membership. When there might be huge cultural differences that haven't yet taken place within the Iranians themselves. I think that has been highlighted with Vahik himself coming in as an outsider from Elam ministries to teach and preach the Iranians. Because interestingly enough he came in with an Iranian culture to the Iranians that have been coming to us for a number of years. And they found a culture shock to have an Iranian suddenly addressing them and teaching them in an Iranian way the Christian message. They had already started to make some transitions in that there was more relaxed approaches than perhaps he was taking. And so there was almost a bit of a reversed culture shock. Vahik himself had to learn that they had become British in thinking in a number of areas. But perhaps not sufficient in some cases for them to naturally fall into membership. But certainly that is something we have discussed and have been in consideration and I think we are getting into a position where there are some that we have our eye on and we would feel more comfortable with coming into

membership. Because the reasons for not allowing them into membership are starting to not feature as high on the horizon.

So, the reasons would be that they are genuinely Christians, they gained asylum and they are not just going to be deported the next month. And also are they going to just simply fit in with life here? Or are they going to change our culture into their culture rather than getting into the culture that has already established by those in the UK.

Thorsten: Do you know what the Iranians think about this? Do you have any feedback from them about this issue?

Colin: The only thing they have fed back to us is just the request of some – and it wasn't just Iranians. It was Massi as well, from Ethiopia, asking could they apply for membership? And at the time they had asked we had given reasons that they had accepted. Again, that was about a year ago. So, we haven't had an update; as far as I am aware there haven't been any brought to my attention that had been saying *Why aren't we allowed into membership?* That's I think they had reasons back then. We have tried to include people like Davoud especially, giving him public profile on the platform as well as inviting him when we were considering Marcus Honeyset, who specifically wanted some of the Iranians there. And he was asked to come along as that representative. So I think we are taking a slightly different view now and it more of trying to work out the logistics of opening up the floodgate. Because I've just thought of another technical issue – is some of the life issues. Because some of the Iranians might not be perhaps, hm, there might be areas we are aware of such as maybe working in the black market...

Thorsten: Ethical issues...

Colin: That's right, ethical issues, which are a problem. And again it is part of membership which you don't have with somebody who is already in the UK. So there is a few difficulties with some on those grounds. But obviously it is the genuineness of conversion that was one of the big concerns to start with.

Thorsten: But it's been a quite a steep learning curve with the church as well because it was a unique situation.

Colin: Yeah, it is one that not so much kind of evolved gradually, because it was suddenly thrown upon us and then the issue was raised – I think it was about a year ago that it was actually raised them wanting to come into membership. And that's when we had to suddenly think *what are the pluses and the minuses?* It is not as simple as saying *right, you are a Christian, come in.* I think that there are other considerations that have taken place because part of your pastoral job in the ministry is to protect the flock that you've got. And even within the British people who apply for membership we want to find out *are they compatible with the ethos of the church or is there enough within the church that they would want to change?* And again, partly because the Iranians have their own meeting and a slightly different style, even within that they again would have to accept Cornerstone for what it is rather than for what it isn't. And that is the best basis of coming into membership. That is not to say that things might not change. But they are not going to change drastically beyond what they have been for years. I think in some ways that would be unfair for the, hm, an unfair expectation. Because ... suddenly what they haven't been.

Thorsten: You thought about minuses and pluses of Iranians becoming members. What would be the pluses? Can you think of any?

Colin: Yes, I think a plus would be to have somebody else from another people group, that's useful to understanding more of a culture. (*Interruption*) I would say the pluses to have a member there of another culture and another language that's always helpful for the evangelism. The potential for outreach into refugees and Iranians and the potential for people for going back to their own country as a missionary themselves being already trained and equipped – those would be some of the pluses. But they also do, I wouldn't even try to nail it down to that people group type, but rather just say as another human being who is a committed Christian there is all sorts of areas that they are currently serving in. They are doing some of the work that other people from the UK are doing. And that is encouraging.

Interruption

Thorsten: So you were saying the pluses are for outreach and evangelism.

Colin: Outreach and in-reach. They are the best of people that come to us and can speak that language. And it would be the same if there was somebody from Germany. I would actually

point them towards you. Because the question could be *what is the benefits specifically of having German people in our congregation?* Well, the answer is the same as having anybody in your congregation. It is just more people that can be involved in ministries. Obviously, language barriers will be an issue. There will be some areas that they can't be involved in because they haven't got enough grasp of the English language. But equally there are other areas where they are involved just like other British people. So it wouldn't be so much the Iranian-ness that is a factor that stops them doing something or be involved. There are areas where they can be involved in, but we can't such as reaching out to Farsi speakers.

Thorsten: Membership is only one thing. Let's say that's the entrance. But membership alone doesn't make integration. What has Cornerstone done so far and what would do you think Cornerstone can do to further integration? And what do you think can the Iranians do to integrate more?

Colin: Well, I suppose the integration – a lot of it is understanding culture. And I would say for them to actually see how we run church compared with perhaps some of the Iranian churches or Islamic Mullahs, they see church leaders who some of them sweep floors, are stacking chairs, which is a totally different concept of what they are used to. They are actually seeing leaders that are serving rather than just leaders that are there to lead and teach. That is one advantage that they see – the kind of way that we do worship for the first part and they actually appreciate that and then go off for their own group. That has been a part of a double integration there in that we had to put this on for them because we knew there was a language barrier and we needed them to be taught. So we had to create a service for them. Contacts where they could learn and that required some of our own British people go in and help with the logistics and dynamics of that work. So we've done some integration that way because we've got a particular heart for the Iranian ministry. And then things like the Iranian meals that we've had. They've always been able to come to our international lunches and church lunches. There is very few things on the food department that they are excluded from.

We have tried to encourage people to take Iranians out, have them round for housegroups. Some of those things have been mentioned in housegroup leadership meetings. Whether some housegroups take that on board or not – that's up to them whether they do it. But those

people who we've encouraged to take an Iranian out and have a conversation with them have actually found a real blessing. Alan Bush has actually even got involved in the whole ministry and fell in love with it. Because he was almost put in a corner and asked *why don't you come along to this?* And he has taken 180 degree turn on the whole thing. And that was only maybe 3 or 2 ½ years ago.

Thorsten: So it is direct involvement with the Iranians, building friendships, contacts.

Colin: Yeah, and I think that there is always going to be a slight fear factor for people thinking *I don't know if these people will understand me.* It's a little bit like if I can use the analogy of Steve Smith who is a British guy in a wheelchair who has cerebral palsy, whose English is difficult to understand, but the guy has got all of his faculties and you will still see that very few of the congregation will have actually sat down and spoke with that guy at the end of the service. And that's true with a lot of our folks. It is not that they don't have the heart for it. There is a fear factor there that says *I don't know if I will be able to understand this person. I know that Steve can understand me.* But you've got people saying *I don't want to approach the Iranians, because I don't know if they'll understand me and I'll understand them. And our small talk might be very limited.* So there is a fear factor there.

The Iranians themselves tend to congregate together because they've got the communality of language. And so it's perhaps a little bit of a two way thing, that there are things that we are doing that slowly – if you like – easing to open the doors so that there is a better understanding – perhaps going to the Iranian New Year celebration and them coming to ours and then this lunch that has been put on. So there is some small things. Maybe they haven't been as quick in forthcoming as they could have been. But I think bit by bit there are things that are happening to increase the traffic from them to us over to them. I don't really see it as a them and us.

Thorsten: So where do you see the future of the group at Cornerstone?

Colin: The future of it is – we discussed it at one point whether it should be that they end up being a church in their own right with their own pastor. And I think that that is not something from what we could gather that the Iranians want in the long run. But also having considered – when we talked about some other churches there with Iranian ministry, we

discovered that the problem with having an Iranian fellowship in it's own right, i.e. an Iranian church – that's only good for the generation that's there and not the generation of the kids, who learn the British culture and British language. For instance there is a seven year old girl who can speak better English now than Farsi and also than her parents. So how to be a parent that go to their Farsi church – it's a bit like your German Lutheran Church – there is almost a romance about saying *ok, we've chosen to uproot and move into a different country and we are choosing to settle down here and make it home. But there is just one area that we want to keep the same and that is church.* It's just not going to walk. You are not going to win the children of that generation that had made that decision. And so we feel the best compromise, and it is a compromise, is not – in fact they don't want their own church. We sort of got the indications of that from speaking with David and a few others that they actually enjoy being part of Cornerstone. Whether they are entirely satisfied with the situation as it stands I don't know, but I think they appreciate that we are trying to do things as we are learning where the needs are and – yes, they are having to go at our pace. But then we've got something that has been in existence for far longer to consider which could be destroyed by any kind of a hasty move. So you've got to in a pastoral setting consider preservation of what you do have, especially if it has been a good thing anyway before you suddenly jump on a band wagon and taking the church into a different direction altogether. So I think the Iranians appreciate the current link that they've got and I don't think they want to be a separate church and we don't want them to be a separate church.

Thorsten: Because of the second generation issue?

Colin: The second generation issue and also I think a number of Iranians themselves want to feel as if their English is starting to get to a good enough standard that they actually want to be a part of our fellowship. They don't want to be separated from us. And some of them are starting to think more UK than Iranian in a number of areas.

Thorsten: So you don't see a separate church, but the Iranians as part of Cornerstone in one way or the other.

Colin: I don't think they would want that and I don't think we would want them to be a separate church. And in fact the pastor of the Iranian fellowship – Elam – the assistant from the Elam college said that he doesn't think it's a good idea that they be segregated.

Thorsten: The Iranians are not the only group at Cornerstone. Cornerstone is – when you look at a Sunday morning service quite an international church. And the church census said that 20 % of the morning congregation are members of a minority ethnic group. So would you say that Cornerstone has changed over the years and become more international, with the Iranians, with international students?

Colin: I don't know what an international church is supposed to look like when you've got people from different cultures. – *interruption* -Yeah, Cornerstone Church is international. When you look at the congregation there is different types of people groups that you clearly could never cater to say 35 different people groups. Because the Chinese might want something that reminds them of – *interruption* -So you can't cater for absolute every different group that comes in to you. So I think it is a question of people of what you see is what you get. We say this to anybody who is even British that comes from another church into Cornerstone. And even different churches have got different flavours. A small church that is maybe traditional with old ladies and old hymns and they maybe say *That's what we like*. Well, if that's what they like they have come to the wrong church if that's what they are wanting. And so it's going to be natural for people to – the very fact that we've got people from 35 nationalities coming to Cornerstone on a regular basis says that there is something that they like as we currently stand. And first to change that drastically would be a huge mistake. I think to be aware of the Iranians and other people groups is important and that's why we tried to have – *interruption* -

So I think when we do things like Iranians giving their testimony, when we look for Iranians to give their testimony or the Chinese. – *interruption* – We have in the past tried to do, if we know that we have a lot of Iranians getting baptised, we specifically got that translated. We've got a Japanese service, which we used to have in the summer and we tried to get that translated and have things in Japanese. So if there are special things we do try and make something special of it. We do try and advertise and acknowledge the different people groups

that exist in Cornerstone. But obviously with 35 different nationalities being represented you can't possibly do it for every people group. And so it is more of the significant portions of people that we perhaps make some exceptions – hence Chinese and the Iranians that we tend to put this on.

Thorsten: Thank you very much, Colin.

(towards the end the interview was often interrupted by the two sons of Colin, which explains some rather confused sentences)

Interview No. A08

Interviewee: Jack Simpson
Marital Status: Married, two adult children
Occupation: Retired
Church: Cornerstone Church, Nottingham
Involvement: Church Elder
Interviewer: Thorsten Prill
Date: 10th June 2005
Duration: 1 hour

Thorsten: Jack, please tell me something about your experience with refugees at Cornerstone.

Jack: My first experience with Iranians was when I sat next to a chap the very first time he came – that was about 4 years ago. And I asked him why he came to church as he was a Muslim. And he turned to me and he said *In my country I am not allowed a choice. I was born a Muslim and as far as they are concerned I must die as a Muslim. But I think to myself that I wanted to look into other things and make a choice. So I came to this Christian church.* And that man became the first one to become a believer and subsequently was baptized. And he changed his name from his Muslim name into a Christian name.

Thorsten: Who was that?

Jack: Aryan. And then his wife became a believer as well. The second thing was that they got refugee status.

Thorsten: So they were accepted?

Jack: Yes, ...quite nicely since they've had a child in this country.

Thorsten: Do you know how they became Christians once they came to Cornerstone, him and his wife?

Jack: I don't know really. I suppose because of the preaching of the Word. That was how my first meeting was with this guy coming to church. And I sat with him and that was it.

Thorsten: Ok, did you have any more contact with Iranians over the years?

Jack: Oh, yes, I've had a lot of contacts, mainly through my work with another church, with the Arches, which is a ministry to people. We supply them with clothing, furniture, the basic necessities of food. I got to know quite a few. I worked on the van initially. I went to the houses to collect things that they have been allocated.

Thorsten: So you've seen how they live?

Jack: Yes, everything is very basic. The Council allocate them a flat or a maisonette or whatever. And it is empty, literally empty. So we would go in and put furniture and what we've got in. I've been in and put curtains up to try and make it a home.

Some of them who we have done it for have since disappeared off the scene. Some have gone away. They use the church as a starting point, they have taken what they could and then disappear and never come to church again. But others faithfully come week by week. And after many weeks they profess faith in Christ, are subsequently baptized and form their own group within our church situation. That has been terrific to see it.

One big thing to me is to see – when they come they are frightened, they are fearful. And then to see them when they accept the Lord, and to see they changed. Just to look in their face. Just to see how free they feel, how liberated they feel. They have become believers. And then I've got to know them. Ok, I can't speak their language. I've gone and said hello and tried to communicate. I know over the months and years they have learned more English. I can't say that I learned any Iranian (laughs). I've been taught bits and pieces, but to remember them...

Thorsten: So you think language is important, but it is not a hindrance. Would you say one can overcome it?

Jack: Yes, I think because we are all people, if we want to get on with each other, we can. Ok, language can be a barrier, but you can overcome that and make friends with folks, the usual thing, kindness to one another, just general friendship – and eventually you pick bits up and they take you on. And from their point of view they are expected to stay for a long time. So it is important to learn more than for me to learn their language.

It is nice to have a little. So it is nice to see them integrated into the church life. I personally would like to see that they become fully integrated as Cornerstone and not as a separate Iranian group. And I think the more they get better with their English the more this will happen, I think, eventually.

Thorsten: How would that look like being fully integrated? You say that they are integrated at the moment, but how would full integration look like?

Jack: That they become members of Cornerstone Church like any other member and be part of the family of the church. That they join in in everything and they won't have a separate group. That they are just part of the life of Cornerstone.

Thorsten: What are the reasons that they aren't members yet? Some of them have become Christians and have been baptized at Cornerstone, but they are not members of the church officially. What are the reasons for that?

Jack: Part of it is to do with understanding, with the amount of English. Some can understand. Some can sit through a sermon on a Sunday and others are not at that stage. And there is cultural differences between their society and ours. At the moment I don't think - a lot of them couldn't, some could integrate quite easily and become part of the church. But perhaps the majority can't. So at the moment they've got to have meetings in their own language, preachers who speak to them in Farsi or non-Iranian preachers who have to have an interpreter. But I think the ultimate aim is to integrate them into the church life. The first generation would be alright, but after that the church disappears. But if you are integrating, it lives on. And then they become part of the family, become British and part of the British way of life, part of the British church.

Thorsten: What could the church do to help them integrate and what could the Iranians do themselves? What would you expect from them? What could the church do to further the process?

Jack: Some of the things they are already doing, like they are having joint social times together. Like putting on Iranian meals, English sociable times, inviting each other to fellowship - and that's good because the more you know people on a one-to-one level the

more you get to know them, the more you trust them and the more they trust you and the more you want to be together. And I think basic friendship, just having them as a Christian friend, a personal one-to-one relationship. And that helps to integrate them into the church life. Like with the normal British who came along to church and join the housegroup, socialize and become friends.

Thorsten: Now, Cornerstone is a very academic, middle class church in some respect. Do you think that could pose a problem with a group of refugees? Although I think from my experience the refugee group is not homogenous. It is quite diverse in itself.

Jack: Yes, that's right. I certainly wouldn't have a personal problem. You said there is people within that group who are academics anyway. And I found – I am not an academic and I go to Cornerstone as well and I am not the only one. I don't see it as a barrier to be honest. The style of preaching can reach everybody. And if a person is genuine in his faith and in his love for the Lord they can fit in with Peter and they do. In fact, we get more and more people coming to Cornerstone who are not from an academic background. There is quite a group of people coming in from the area from other churches unfortunately because of the teaching of the church. We do have a big academic part in the church – the students. But that's not the only part of the church. If it wasn't for the non-academics, the founders of the church who supported Peter's ministry from the beginning we would just be a more English church.

Thorsten: But you have a focus on students.

Jack: We have a focus on teaching, on building on students, to send them out worldwide. And that has been our focus for nearly twenty years now. We felt that the Lord has showed us to do that.

Thorsten: So you would say that international mission is part of Cornerstone's identity?

Jack: Oh, yes, definitely. It wasn't when I first came to the church. We had no missionaries whatsoever. They just didn't appear on the scene. From my own personal example I come from a church where mission sending was an important and vital role of the church life. So I've been brought up with it. When I first came to Cornerstone there was nothing whatsoever. But once the Lord had showed us and we had our first missionaries it just snowballed and we

began to look at the wider mission. We are not just here for ourselves, a social group. There is a work out there, which is the Lord's work and we can have our input into it. And we all run with that.

Thorsten: When you look at the morning congregations – and that's my observation – it seems to be quite an international, diverse, multi-cultural, multi-ethnic group and we had the census a few weeks ago where over 20 % of the people present belonged to an ethnic minority. Does that have an influence on the church, this huge group of people from different countries, from different cultures? Or does it have an influence on you personally?

Jack: Yes, I think it does have a big influence on the church. And on me – because being British we tend to be rather racist. So within the church situation you meet people from every continent, from different countries around the world and you find that they are the same as you. They have the same aspirations, they want to have jobs, they want to be with their families. They are no different. And on top of that they want to become Christians and they want us to assist them. And this is fantastic. I enjoy it, the diversity of people and befriending people. And I've seen it in my own personal life, which was being British, being in the Forces and seeing hatred towards other races. It was destructive and not positive.

Thorsten: So you would say that it is an enrichment for the church?

Jack: Yes, definitely, and for the individuals as well. I've got many friends of different races and different colours. And I would be lost without them. It has made me the person I am.

Thorsten: In what way could the Iranians be an enrichment to the church? Are they an enrichment to the church?

Jack: They are. I mean, to me the biggest joy is to see the freedom which they have now. And they are just released and that's terrific.

Thorsten: So it is a constant reminder of what Christianity is about?

Jack: Yeah, I have lived in Muslim societies and it is a very different society. They are very repressed and held down. There is a hierarchy in that sense. Those in charge can say what you have to do whereas here people can think for themselves and can express what they feel. And

that must be truly freedom and release to be able to do that without fear of punishment or even worse.

Thorsten: Where would you like to see the Iranian group in 5 years time? How should it look like in 5 years time?

Jack: In 5 years time I would like to see the Iranian group fully integrated into the church life of Cornerstone with no separate Iranian meetings, that they are just part of the whole church. It depends, if we get a lot of new Iranians, like if we say they have got another group of 20 or 30 people who have got very little English then they have got to speak in their own language to start with. So that would happen again. But if we just keep to this group and it doesn't expand a lot more than it is then they could be brought into the church. But ok there are differences and they don't understand everything to begin with, our British way and our Christian way. And there might be some tensions and difficulties with leadership and authority. But I'm sure with good sensible teaching, Christian care and love we can overcome that.

Thorsten: So you have different views on leadership? How would you describe that? In what way is it different from British or European understanding on leadership?

Jack: If Peter was a Muslim, he would be a formal authority whereas if he is our minister at the same time we would be allowed our own thoughts and we don't want to follow or agree with what he says we can choose for ourselves. In their society, if the Mullah says 'Do it' you have to do it without questioning it. And that might be difficult for them. But I think Peter will come alongside them, be normal and be one of them and they found that very very different because they wouldn't expect that in their society. So some of their mindsets, which they have been brought up with from little children have got to change. And that is a liberation when it happens. The ladies as well – the situation with their ladies – what a treatment! And I know they have expressed to me that they want Western marriages and they like the way we treat our wives. And they want the same.

Thorsten: You mentioned that it depends in 5 years time on whether new Iranians will come to the church and to Nottingham. And I think that's true because the Iranian group can be helpful to reach out to their own country folks.

Jack: Oh yeah, they do. They do it already and new people come all the time. They befriend them and bring them into the church situation. So it is a good means of evangelism. So you are being renewed all the time. It is not static. We get new members all the time. And as they come in at one end some go out at the other end like all churches. So, yes, quite valuable.

Thorsten: But as I said that depends on a lot of things – government policy.

Jack: Yes, government policy and the countries they come from. If things change for the better, then I would imagine they won't have any reasons to leave the UK or any other country for that. Again, our government might change their policies on immigration and make it more difficult for them to settle down. Yeah, there are different factors.

Thorsten: I mean, over recent years we have seen a huge growth of worldwide immigration anyway, forced migration of refugees, but also economic migration, people moving to other countries to study or to work. So there might be an indication that more people will continue to come to this country and maybe to Nottingham as well.

Jack: Yeah, but perhaps not from the same countries. It depends on the change in their country situation, either for the worse or the better. And so Iranians as well as us have got to learn how to integrate other people. I mean I know people from many other countries, they come along – so we've got to get on together.

Thorsten: Ok, a final question which has something to do with the Iranian ministry, but it goes wider. Where do you see the mission of the church, of Cornerstone, in the future, in the coming years? How would you describe that?

Jack: I think we ought to keep what we are doing as long as Peter is the minister. And hopefully when he has finished we get somebody who is similar to Peter. And while we have young people coming who are attracted to Nottingham and the church, and I think the teaching ministry is vital to build up youngsters in that. We've got to build for the next generation and the next generation after that. This is what I feel that we are called to do. So I see the church very much as it is, we are just expanding.

Thorsten: So no great changes in the direction on the different levels...

Jack: No, I don't think so. I think that's our ministry and if we fulfill that then we will be blessed as we have been blessed over 25 years since I've been in the church. It is a different church now ...

Thorsten: In what way? The size?

Jack: The size and the church itself. From my own personal point of view – I joined the church because I heard Peter preach and I realized that this was an exceptional man. And the Lord impressed on me to join this church and get behind this fellow to support him and that's what I have done. And the church has blossomed. As I said before to start with we had no missionaries and now we are a missionary sending church.

Thorsten: How many missionaries do you send out? Do you know that?

Jack: At least eight, if not more. Over the years we've had lots of missionaries and people have come to us at short notice and wanted to go out and be missionaries. And we got behind them and supported them for three or four years and then come back. Now we have very little to do with them anymore. We are not upset by it. It is parts of the Lord's plan. He has given us the financial situation to be able to do that. So we've done that as part of His great work. So people have gone out four or five years to this country or that and after that when the Lord has told them to come back they have perhaps gone to a different part of the country and done their own thing. But that was not wasted on our time or on our finances. We were part of the Lord's great scheme of things. And we see it like that. That's what we are like.

Interview No. A09

Interviewee: Joff Gribbin
Marital Status: Married, three children
Occupation: Public Healthy Manager
Church: Cornerstone Church, Nottingham
Involvement: Church Elder
Interviewer: Thorsten Prill
Date: 18 July 2005
Duration: 1 hour 15min

Thorsten: Please tell me something about Cornerstone church. How would you describe the church?

Joff: O.k. if I would describing it to you I'd describe it as a church with strong reformed evangelical roots in terms of its teaching. I would describe it also as fairly open culturally. Fairly relaxed in its style - in a number of respects. I'd describe it by UK standards fairly large. A good mix of ages. I would say again relative to some churches it is fairly outward looking. So that feeds through into a number of things by like its approach to mission in a wider sense.

Thorsten: You said culturally open. Can you specify that?

Joff: Yeah, it's probably easiest to describe by contrasting with the opposite. Some churches which have a distinctive reformed evangelical ethos in terms of their teaching I feel quite prescriptive about the fine detail of peoples' lives including, you know headdress and other behaviours. I think many non-Christians would probably come in and feel that there's a certain amount of prescription in Cornerstone. But certainly relative to a lot of other church I think it is...I think generally members are trusted with a high degree of autonomy to make up their own minds about many more issues than perhaps is the case in some other evangelical churches. So openness, I see that characterised by different groups doing things in slightly different ways, or least feeling that they have the liberty to do things in different ways.

Thorsten: Earlier on you mentioned mission. What would you say is the mission of the church?

Joff: O.K. I'd describe the mission of Cornerstone in the same way I'd describe the mission of any church. I don't think it is different, although it might be particular in some ways. And that's about making known to those around us and as far a field as we can the good news about Jesus, and through the way we live, our service for others and by proclamation. Making that good news known, and visible and understandable.

Thorsten: How does the refugee ministry fit into that then?

Joff: Well, I suppose as I reflect on it, I'm reflecting on what I have seen and understand of it which is arm's length, so it's not been a close personal involvement on the whole. I think like a number of other good Spirit-led things that have happened at Cornerstone it's not been something directed by the church although it certainly involved the initiative and hard work and vision of certain individuals in setting about starting something. But it's not been something which particularly has been directed as a strategy or as a policy by the leadership. It is something which as I perceive it has kind of grown out. It's not something I think that someone or couple of people on the leadership could sort of point at and say: Well, that was our bright idea. I think in a sense if there is a role of the leadership, there is a role of the leadership in this area, I think it is more about equipping and encouraging people to use their gifts in ways that God is calling them and in the surroundings that they find themselves in. It's more about I think with God's help to create the right conditions for people to take initiatives and steps of faith rather than coming up with a big plan that everybody must align themselves with.

Thorsten: So the church leadership didn't say 'That's the thing we want to do', people got involved, church members and it has grown.

Joff: That's right. I'm sure there are a multiple people involved, but it's easy to identify Debbie coming back from Austria and with I think the input and consultation of other people within International Teams determining that she wanted to be based in Nottingham. I think at that time she envisaged a role in ministry alongside something that focused on refugees in Nottingham.

So my perception is that as she got involved in that way and got stuck in with some encouragement from the Church generally she started to see numbers of refugees and then I think other people started to get involved as they saw the need and the opportunity. The opportunities to talk with people very freely about Jesus and to share with them truths which they were kind of open to considerate, more open probably than many of our indigenous friends.

Thorsten: That was the beginning. How do you see the ministry now, at the moment?

Joff: Well having moved forward a few years and I'm thinking primarily about the Iranians there are a relatively large number of Iranian folks including a sizeable core of people, still mainly men, but involving some couples and as I understand it one or two women as well, though the character of the group to me as I perceive is being still relatively male. It sounds like it's a group that experienced lots of difficulties. But I think you experience whenever people who have little or no Christian background and who probably led relatively chaotic or difficult lives get thrown together and get interested in Christianity or even commit themselves to the Lord Jesus, so there are all sort of issues as I understand in terms of lifestyles and behaviours, as well as tremendous opportunities for witness to their friends. I also see tremendous growth particularly in some individuals, in terms of the way that they are now living out their faith. Yeah, the commitment that they are showing, yeah the signs of their faith kind of being lived out. And as the group has grown and as at least some the folks have been around in Nottingham for some years, particular over the last couple of years there have been more and more occasions, when either other people have brought to our attention that we should be thinking about integration or it's just obvious that we need to be thinking about these things. So I see it as something tremendously positive and something that God has brought about but having said that I don't see it all as wonderful rosy. There are issues.

Thorsten: What are these issues?

Joff: I was reflecting on my feelings about and I think generally feelings in the church towards this group of people up having grown up and many of them have become Christians is generally positive. I'm appreciating that at ground level, because we are all sinners saved by grace but there are issues in terms of behaviours and lifestyles and cultural differences, some

of which require challenge and addressing on individual basis with folks. Other issues which arise more for the group as a whole in terms of how they relate to for example might be women in the church or it might just be anybody in the church. Yeah, although we feel kind of positive, and that it's a good thing doesn't mean that there are no things to think about difficulties here and there.

Thorsten: So, what can the church, the church leadership do to tackle these things?

Joff: Well, having made plain of how little the church leadership initially sort of plotted out a strategy in this, I think I want to bounce that up now by saying that there are some things where it's responsible of the leadership to provide some directions or at least some suggestions of directions, some options. For example around the issue of towards what kind of church should we encourage the group of Iranian Cornerstone Christians. Should we encourage them towards something where they have an increasing autonomy or independence from the rest of the church, possibly to a point where they become an independent fellowship, or should we be looking to encourage them towards something where they continue to run something that is distinct but very much under the umbrella of Cornerstone, or should we actually be expecting them to cease to have that distinction and become completely as far as that is possible completely kind of mixed up with the rest of Cornerstone.

So I think it's important that on the leadership we have some thoughts and ideas about the directions we should head. But I think it would be unwise for the leadership to jump to conclusion. Well, I think it is important to remember that actually at the end of the day it must be these Iranian men and women who decide what it is that they are going to do and again we can provide to a certain extent, we can provide some of the right kinds of conditions to encourage them in their decision-making and their own growth. And there might we some things which we would wish as a leadership team to rule out or discourage, but actually these men and women are going to decide.

Thorsten: What are your feelings about the direction?

Joff: O.K let me waffle around. In the short terms there are a whole lot of uncertainties facing some of these people. We don't know and they don't know whether they are going to end up in Nottingham, another city in the UK, another country or Iran. So there's a whole lot of

uncertainty there, which may mean that what we do in the short term just has to bear that in mind and allow for that. So I guess what I want to do is to fast forward a few years, and I'm starting from a point where I'm gonna assume that there are going to be a large number of Iranian men and women, some of them married to other Iranians, some of them falling in love with other folks from the community in Nottingham and marry, and settling here and bring up their families here and expecting themselves to be here for decades if not for the rest of their lives. So I'm assuming all of that. And that would be a good outcome in my mind just in terms of their existence here in Nottingham. If that is to be the case I think it has some implications for the kind of church that hope to see these people a part of. In the foreseeable future, and I suppose that's five or ten years I find it really hard to imagine many of these people wanting or being able to lose so much of their Iranian-ness that they become, that they just take on everything, everything that's Cornerstone – whatever Cornerstone is, 'cause it is a bit of a mix. And that wouldn't seem very satisfactory if they did lose all of that side. I still see in terms of their identity that is good and proper that they continue with much of their cultural identity. In terms of kind of governance and structures I'm not convinced that encouraging them towards independence at this stage is necessarily likely to help them or their children reach out in ten, twenty years time. I suppose partly reflecting on the Chinese Church and my impressions I would like to see an Iranian church or an Iranian fellowship which is very fuzzy at the edges in the future, and which actually finds itself able to draw in people from other non-Persian-speaking backgrounds. And I think that that kind of fellowship could exist happily under a Cornerstone umbrella. If I had to put my money on an option for the future that's where I think I would want to encourage it.

Thorsten: A church within the church, a congregation within the congregation?

Joff: Well it may not even be a congregation, but certainly there would be a group of people who I would think... just within the church I tend to knock around with people not all of them but many of whom actually are of a similar kind of background to me. If they come from other countries our life experience is similar. I fully expect many Iranians much of the time to knock around with other British Iranians, not exclusively with British Iranians. That doesn't necessarily mean that they are a distinct congregation but that would be a kind of distinctive network I would think within the church in the future. To help, to support these folks where

they are right now I would like to find our way God willing to bring someone on board who can minister to them specifically. And I'm full of questions about what kind of person that might be. Actually, I could imagine one good outcome would be someone who - it would have to be someone who could kind of share the medium, long term view where the Iranian fellowship should be heading. But it probably wouldn't be some who'd be Persian-speaking, whose first language is Farsi, but maybe someone who's lived or worked in the culture, and understands enough of it to be able to deal with individuals - sensitively, sympathetically and assertively on some of the issues where cross-cultural understanding is needed. So in the kind of short/medium term I feel there's a need for someone to be able to minister to them on a more full-time basis.

Thorsten: If I understood you right you said that the way you would like to see integration is in the long term Iranians becoming part of the congregation but you don't see that realistically, you don't see that in the next ten or twenty years.

Joff: That wasn't quite what I was - yeah it's difficult - the same word can mean different things. Let me try and give you a different example. In the past in Cornerstone, and it's probably still the case now there'd been quite a few fourth or fifth year medics and recently qualified doctors who are dispersed around the church in different house groups doing different things but they are a group of people who've had a similar life experience, involved in a similar career and have a certain level of commitment and interest in one another. So they maybe involved in different house groups, very different ministries, one might help in the crèche another might help somewhere else. But at different times they might well come together, informally, not necessarily as a congregation or as a group. And other people if in the past you talked about the cornerstone medics they might had said 'Oh yeah I think I what you mean, you mean son and so.' And I think what I was trying to describe was a situation five, ten years down the line, where there is a large number of members of Cornerstone with an Iranian background who might well count themselves part of a house group which is mixed in make up, there might be British Iranians there but there'll be English and all sorts of nationalities...involved in different kinds of ministries around the church. But probably from time to time because of their background and their whole life experience and their culture, the Iranian bit of their, they want to come together, at least informally. And that might just be for

dinner with a few friends or families, or it might be if there is a New Year celebration, that there is a whole event, which is distinctively Iranian or even Farsi-speaking. And I think to get from where we are now to that point I could imagine something looking like a separate fellowship, I don't call it congregation, a separate fellowship existing for a while yet. Perhaps even pastors, by someone who is very much focused on them. But I think with the eventual intention of them becoming more integrated. But I don't think integration means in my mind integration doesn't mean that they can't do Iranian things, that they can't get together as an Iranian bunch, and that they can't sit together. I'm not about breaking - I don't want to dissolve all the things which are precious to them and should remain precious. Just in the same way I don't want to dissolve the friendships that might exist between a group of medical students who rained roughly at the same time and have a loyalty to one another and an intimacy.

Thorsten: You mentioned Iranian becoming members. What are your views on the membership issue.

Joff: Please remind me what the issue is?

Thorsten: Some of members of the refugee ministry team were of the opinion that Iranians should have the right to become church members. And so the church leadership sat together and talked about this last year. And from I understood they decide to welcome Iranian refugees into membership under certain conditions.

Joff: I think that's probably correct. Just to share a perception on my part. Prior to that time I'm not sure whether any of us individually or collectively had said explicitly or implicitly that refugees Iranian or any other background could not become members. But it's clear that that impression was certainly created. So whether it was said or not I – so it was necessary that we had that discussion. And it was good that we were actually able to as we talked it through from what I can recall anyway to open up some of the issues and the questions. I, I can't imagine how we could carry on without making it clear that Iranians who are expecting to be in Nottingham for some time and who are Christians and show their commitment to Cornerstone I can't image how we could carry out without making clear to them that we welcome them applying. And I don't think any of the leadership team wanted to have a

situation where that was the case where there were people who were Christians and wanting to be committed to Cornerstone and expecting to be around in Nottingham for a while but not able to become members.

Thorsten: But from what I have been told there were some reservation in the beginning.

Joff: I honestly can't remember what they were!

I can't remember. I think there were -actually you' right. Yes, there were. Yes, we did have a couple - in fact there maybe more than one discussion about it actually as I think about it. I think there were questions raised about, in fact, yeah we did have a couple of good discussions about this. One issue was about whether these young Christians would be around in Nottingham. How long they would be around in Nottingham and whether we would have or at least some people in the church would have any opportunity to get to know them and I think that's fairly easily dealt with 'cause although there haven't been that many people who count as close friends to the Iranians, nevertheless there is a good number. The other issue was how many of them would were actually likely to be around for more than just a few months because of the question marks over the dispersal policy and all of that. Then there were questions as well around.... As there would be for anybody- a question over 'Is this person converted?'. I don't think this was particularly raised as an objection but there were interesting things to do with 'where is?' I suspect if you are a friend of some these, certainly of some of these men, if you are a close friend pretty soon you gonna find that because of the kind of life they have to lead as refugees they're doing some things that we would count not acceptable of other people.

Thorsten: Lifestyle issues?

Joff: Yea, and so it raises some, I think it raises some interesting questions about the degree to which we insist that they would conform to certain things which I would expect and would require of most other Cornerstone members. And that's interesting. I think. So, for example, around work and earning. Working in the black market and whether or not they declare themselves. Or actually even as their status changes - most people at Cornerstone are either well of or have some very clear financial safety net in terms of social security or family to help them out or other means. We don't have many people, there aren't that many people in the

church who are don't have those kinds of safety nets. But there are probably quite a few Iranians who don't have much in the way of a safety net and whether it is reasonable to expect exactly the same standards from them. I don't think is reasonable.

Thorsten: You mean with regard to supporting the church financially?

Joff: No, no with regard to declaring their earnings or working on the black market. At the point where they are starting to be able afford flashy consumer goods and cars and the rest of it, o.k. there is line that has to be town. But I think often life is being so difficult and needs are so basic I think I would actually want to turn a blind eye to some of these issues which if I found a recent Nottingham graduate behaving in that way I would probably look for an opportunity to explore it with them if not challenge them.

Thorsten: Coming to the end of the interview is there anything that you would like to add.

Joff: In terms of the questions over integration I think, I think I waffled a bit about the direction that I would, if it was down to me, I would choose to steer things. I haven't given much thought to actually the things that we can do now in 2005 to bring that about. And there are all sorts of things, actually there are some things that need to happen regardless of which direction we are going in the future.

So, you know, for lots of us in the church our friendships with Iranians are very superficial. It's not necessarily that we were doing anything to exclude them but realistically if you look at the quality and the depths of them they are relatively superficial. As with all sorts of groups in the church we need continue to do things to, you know, foster the circumstances so that those friendships can grow and develop.

Thorsten: Things like the Iranian meals?

Joff: I think so, yeah. Yeah, and absolutely I think it's really good what has been happening the last couple of years - to be entertained by the Iranians. They have an opportunity to be affirmed in their gifts, their culture and in the specialness of their hospitality towards us. So there's clear opportunities for service both ways. Yeah, that's certainly true. Lot's of social events and I think that's where it needs to happen.

Thorsten: Any other thoughts about integration?

Joff: Yeah lots of my thinking that I've done around it is partly informed by thinking around church growth. I suspect that's twenty or thirty years old. I'm not a missiologist by training but certainly when I was in Pakistan and in preparation for that was reading some stuff around church growth. In particular models of ministry to people from Muslim backgrounds. And I think quite a lot about rested on some assumptions about what a church of Muslim background believers would look like and that it would in many contexts necessarily be homogenous ethnically. And I suppose I saw some of that in Pakistan; the missionary group that we were working with and others were focused on particular people groups. And there was a very clear logic incensed to that because when you looked at society in Karachi it was very stratified and divided up. And so in many ways it was difficult to imagine three men from massively different ethnic, linguistic, and educational backgrounds coming together to actually be a church or the start of a church. At the same at time we left I think we were starting to see the limitations of a very of ideologically prescriptive view of homogeneity. Because when you look at communities although yes they are very stratified and clearly defined in some senses at the edges you find for example that a village of Balochi people actually has intermarried with the indigenous Sindhi people and so there are Beluge men with Sindhi wives; and any other number of permutations. There maybe a homogeneity, but it's not necessarily around simple ethnic lines or linguistic lines as perceived by outsiders. It may actually be prescribed by geography and locality, or educational backgrounds and employment and things like that. So I think I steer a very woolly middle of the course line. On the one hand I'm now a little bit suspicious of a kind of crude homogeneity, or a very simplistic, or very over simplistic homogeneity, on the other hand I am a little bit suspicious as well of people who want to find a New Testament model that is heterogenous and tell me that the church we must have in Nottingham in 2005 must reflect the full span of Nottingham communities. We do need to be open and inclusive and inviting, and that does mean that at all sorts of points we have to make what might feel to us as individuals like compromise on different cultural points in order to include and welcome and draw in others but I don't actually believe that I, that Cornerstone or any other fellowship particularly can on its own reflect – I mean that's making caricature of the opposite view. So I think I take a kind of a

middle line which is rather pragmatic and I think would feel a little bit woolly to people who are more ideologically driven on either side. But there we are, that's where I am.

Thorsten: Thank you very much.

Interview No. A10

Interviewee: Emanuel
Marital Status: Single
Occupation: Student
Church: Cornerstone Church, Nottingham
Residence Status: Refugee (recognised)
Interviewer: Thorsten Prill
Date: 24 July 2005
Duration: 30 min

Thorsten: Emanuel, please tell me something about yourself, how you became a Christian.

Emanuel:

I started to go to church in 2001. And that was in Iran, in Esfaran.

That's my city. There are around 100.000 Armenian people who are Christian. There are 14 churches in my city.

Thorsten: Do you have an Armenian background?

Emanuel: No, no I'm from Muslim background. It was through my uncle that I started going to church. It was a Farsi service in Esfahan. Most of the services are in the Armenian language. It was like an underground service, because the church door was closed all the time. You had to knock on the door and the opened the door for us.

Thorsten: So it was all very secret.

Emanuel: Yes, that's right. I attended that church a few times and I bought a bible from that church. And I borrowed some books from the library from the church, and I started to read the bible and other books about Christianity, and I enjoyed reading about Christianity. Because when I was at school and university we had to study about Islam. That was the subject. And most of the time I found it very helpful for my heart. I started to read the

Matthew's Gospel, which was very useful for me. And I bought a book, the first book. It was 'What's Christianity?'. That was very helpful for me as well.

Thorsten: So, you became a Christian in Iran.

Emanuel: Yes.

Thorsten: So, when did you come over to England?

Emanuel: In 2002. I came to London first and then to Nottingham.

Thorsten: How did you learn about the Iranian group here at Cornerstone?

Emanuel: When I went to London I find an Iranian church. And I went to the Iranian church in London for four weeks, I think.

When I found out that I would come to Nottingham, they said 'O we've got some friend in Nottingham.' And they introduced me to David Howard. And he invited me to come to Cornerstone.

Thorsten: So, for how long have you been here now.

Emanuel: In Cornerstone two years and a half.

Thorsten: How would you describe your time so far here in Cornerstone and the Iranian group?

Emanuel: Very good. We started as a small group, upstairs, with a couple of songs, with 20 or 25 people. It was in the middle of the service. It was not a service. It was more like a bible study. David or someone else taught us about the bible, and they would give us a leaflet. There was no song or Iranian preaching. Then we had a very small cassette player with Iranian songs.

Thorsten: But that has changed.

Emanuel: Yes, it grew and sometimes we have Iranian preaching. That's a very nice service. We can call it service now.

Thorsten: What do you think about the things that Peter Lewis said today?

Emanuel: It was very good. Very nice. Because he is the top of the church. And he's looking forward to seeing us in the main service. I think that's very good for us. Because they are part of the church, not a separate church.

Thorsten: So, you would consider yourself part of Cornerstone?

Emanuel: Yes, that's right!

Thorsten: A lot of people who come to Cornerstone are official members of Cornerstone. They have joined the church. But there aren't any refugees who are members. Is that a problem for you?

Emanuel: For myself no, it's not so important to become a member of the church.

Thorsten: Can you explain why it isn't that important to you?

Emanuel: It has to do with my Iranian background. It has to do with respect. One of the older people like Amir or Davoud should become a member first. In my culture we respect the older people.

Thorsten: So, because Amir and Davoud are not members you don't want to become a member. But if they became members you it would be easier for you to become a member, because they are older and people you respect as your leaders..

Emanuel: Yes, that's right.

Thorsten: O.k. that's very interesting. But generally is it important for you to become a member?

Emanuel: No, it's not so important.

Thorsten: So what is more important for you then?

Emanuel: The idea that we have that headphone is very nice. It shows to Iranian in Nottingham: we are important, we belong to a big church in Nottingham. That's very important to us. If someone came to the church for the first time, he would see that they invested time and money for the Iranians, and respected the culture and language.

Thorsten: Do you think that the step to have the Iranian in the main service once a month is a good thing?

Emanuel: Yes.

Thorsten: What else could the church do to help Iranians to become integrated into the church?

Emanuel:

Thorsten: Where do you see the future of the Iranian group, as part of Cornerstone or as a separate church?

Emanuel: I think as part of Cornerstone. At the beginning there were some Iranians who wanted to separate from Cornerstone. But now most people want to be part of Cornerstone.

Thorsten: What were the motives of those who said that they wanted to separate from Cornerstone?

Emanuel: I don't know. Can't remember.

Thorsten: What do you think the Iranians could do to be more integrated?

Emanuel: One of the things they could do is to help with the set up of the services. And they could join parties, socials.

Thorsten: Serving in the church and being together with other people from Cornerstone?

Emanuel: Yes.

Thorsten: Do you have any non Iranian friends in the church?

Emanuel: Yes, I met all my non-Iranian friends in the church.

You can't find friends outside the church.

Thorsten: The Iranians who come to Cornerstone are very different I so far as they have English friends?

Emanuel: That's right.

Thorsten: Is there anything you want to add?

Emanuel: About the leaflet. There is nothing in the leaflet about the Iranian bible studies. There are the bible studies during the week, but they didn't say it in the sheet. The church

knows we have bible studies. And the teachers for the bible studies come from the church.
And the church and the leaders from the church, they know we have a bible study.

Thorsten: You'd like to have them mentioned in the church notice sheet.

Emanuel: Yes.

Thorsten: Thank you very much.

Interview No. A11

Interviewee: Richard Taylor
Marital Status: Married, one child
Occupation: Accountant
Church: Cornerstone Church, Nottingham
Involvement: Refugee Ministry Team
Interviewer: Thorsten Prill
Date: 21st August 2005
Duration: 45 min

Thorsten: Richard, can you please tell me a little bit about your involvement with the refugee ministry here at Cornerstone?

Richard: I'm not as much involved now as I used to be. But the thing I started off with probably a couple of years ago, there was a kind of notice at church from the front saying that there was a men's group meeting at Mansfield Road Baptist church every Tuesday evening. And refugees, Iranians met there. It was really a social thing. To meet up, have a chat, drink coffee and stuff. And they were short of men from Cornerstone to go along. So, I felt that is was something I could do, and had the time to do, I would enjoy. So I started doing that. I think it was August 2 years ago. I went every week. I picked up Rob Gordon who didn't have a car. And that was every Tuesday. And I met a lot of Iranians. At that time there were kinds of groups. There were some who came to church as well. And then some that didn't. And part of the idea was to get friendly with, so that they felt comfortable coming to church. Which I think worked to a certain extent. The group kept going on to Christmas I think, maybe a bit longer than that. The Iranians you may know in terms of time keeping aren't quite as reliable as the English. In terms of ...they don't like committing themselves to things unless they have to be somewhere. So some weeks you get only two or three people, some weeks you get thirty, and it's very, very difficult to sustain. And after a few weeks where hardly anyone turned up David Howard kind of re-assessed it. It kind of came to a close and we decided that certain people that helped with Iranians would actually visit Iranians in their homes. Myself and Rob

Gordon started visiting a house in Dunkirk, which had Big Amir and few others living there as well. And we visited there every Tuesday. The purpose was very mixed in what we were trying to achieve. Partly talking through the Bible, talking about Christianity because they had a lot of questions. Amir and a few others who lived in that house were coming to church at that time. It was very new. So sometimes we worked through the same things over and over again, just repeating the same things, very basic understanding. So that was part of what we were doing. Secular parts of what we were doing was just giving them practice of basic English. So chatting about the weather, what day it was, the English calendar, the Iranian calendar, all these differences. That was a big part of it and a little bit of them teaching us a little bit of Farsi, though I can't really remember much of it. That was a part of it. Third part of it was very much practical help. There was in those times a lot of form-filling.

At this stage the people we were involved with their cases were still on-going. Rob actually helped in court with quite a few cases giving testimony. I remember taking my laptop to two or three evenings and helping writing down people's testimonies. So we had someone giving his testimony in Farsi, someone translating that into English, and I was writing that into good English. That happened a few times. A for the case but B also for the ones that got baptised at Cornerstone. So that was what we did. Yes, the practical help, furniture, trying to arrange moving houses, if someone needed lifts, and all these kinds of things. And then Amir moved out because his family arrived, two kids and his wife. And we ended up going to visit their family every Tuesday. And Rob kind of had very good chats with Amir on spiritual things, Iranian issues, social things. I had a kind of good relationship with the kids. We just about what they were doing at school, help with the homework a couple of times, talking about football - whatever. So I felt good there. And then they came to our house quite a lot of times as well. Jane helped to cook. I feel as if my role has very much been more on a practical friendship side, because they to have bible studies, two separate bible studies in the week. And my role has very much been a friendly face, so that they don't feel like refugees. The big thing for the Iranians is that they love inviting people into their houses, and to have someone English coming to your house very week just makes you feel being part of it, it makes you feel at home. And then we are inviting them back, I mean it's bizarre actually. Unlike us they prefer having you to their house. And they feel much more comfortable then if you invite

them to your house. When we go to their house we are there till 11 o'clock at night. When they at our house they feel that they have to leave at ten.

I feel I played a very small part. But the part I have played is making them feel as though they are not strangers, and they are welcome and that as well.

Thorsten: What has it meant to you personally to be involved in that ministry?

Richard: O.K. To me the very big feeling early on was a feeling of gratitude I suppose for what I have and the things I have taken for granted. These people had to escape their country and they've come here with absolutely nothing. And yet on the Sunday morning would still be upstairs praising God for being gracious to them. And here we are in our comfortable homes, with comfortable jobs, everything, our family around us and we sometimes aren't as gracious. And that was a real blessing to me. Yea, it really struck home, and spiritually it spoke to me that if you got Jesus and nothing else that's enough. These who came to know Jesus had all they needed, without all these other things. God will provide you with everything you need not actually with what you want. And over time as they have houses, places to live he has done that. But that was a big thing for me. And also not having travelled to a lot of these countries, I spent most of my time in this country, it just reminds me that God is not a God of the Western God, he's not an English God, he's a God of the whole world. Iran is somewhere, that in this country no one knows about really. So it's great to know that he's just as relevant to Iranians of Muslim background. Yes for me personally those are the two main things in terms of learning how blessed I've been and to appreciate God in a new way. It just opened my eyes to different cultures, different people. And you kind of realize how we have our own ways as well.

Thorsten: So, it's a ministry that you would recommend to others?

Richard: Yes, it is. I think the thing that I struggled with if I'm honest was the time commitment. I was more than happy for doing Tuesday evenings. When it came to ten o'clock I was ready to come back to see my wife, my child, - job to go to the next morning. The reason why people like David Howard or Rob Gordon have been so involved I feel is that they are single men. They've got the time. If they have to stay to midnight there is no one going to - they are kind of independent in that sense. I'd say it is a great ministry and you get a

lot back. But that's what I struggled with, with the new bay. Because we had Beth. Yes I started doing it in the August, it's actually three years ago, three years ago, started doing it in the August, had Beth in the October, yes that balance was quite tricky for me. Because Iranians stay really late, they eat really late. And you have to enjoy the food as well. If you are going to their houses because it is kind of bit seen as rude not to have a meal. I love my food anyway but even I was struggling at some stage. It's great.

Thorsten: Changing the subject, Richard. There is a lot of talk about integration, integrating the refugees into the church. What are your views on that?

Richard: Yea, I think, I mean obviously the way it currently is at Cornerstone is that the Iranians tend to meet in their own groups. Primarily for practical reasons, originally because of the language. And their style of worship is also slightly different, the songs they like to sing and the way they like to be. So think for practical necessity that's been great in that their meetings there is enough for them to feel they as though have their own life entity. I mean Jane was saying to me about this but I think now after two or three years it's probably time to reconsider that. It's at a kind of crossroads. Their English is now at a level that some of them probably could join normal house groups and I think that's the only way - ignoring refugees, Iranians any internationals, the only way to get to know everybody in church, a group in church I feel is actually through house group. I think that's something that the eldership should probably think about. I don't know what the answer is. But in terms - through house groups, get Iranians to actually join house groups, just to know more people so they do feel more integrated.

I think in the Sunday service I think a forty-five minute sermon maybe hard with language they don't really understand. They wouldn't get as much as from as in their own meetings. So maybe that's kind of secondary. But I certainly feel that house groups thing, even if they have their own meetings. I think Cornerstone has made a great big effort into integrating them and they are always like Easter or in the Christmas service on the stage, and everyone feels that they are part of the church. They cooked the meals for everyone a couple of times as a thank you. I don't think it's a problem. But there are probably loads of people in the church that

have never spoken to an Iranian. They maybe some people who kind feel that they would be uncomfortable with them.

Thorsten: Why do you think is that?

Richard: It's the unknown. They feel the unknown. I think in a church that's less a risk than outside. So obviously where the Iranians live in their streets in the Meadows or wherever I'm sure their next door neighbours probably don't speak to them or like the fact that they live next door to them. In the church we hope that everyone would be very welcoming. I think that would be the case if people met them, but I think without having that chance to meet them in the house group context they maybe a bit weary to introduce themselves.

Thorsten: So what you are saying that church in some ways is a safe place for them.

Richard: O, yes definitely, definitely. Lots of Iranians come to church that aren't even Christians and probably never will be. They just love coming to church, 'cause they feel the community atmosphere and it's safe. And they are with people who speak their own language for a few hours. I certainly know that it was the case with quite a few people that hadn't necessarily become Christians.

It's a great thing for us, because Week on week it's kind of soaking in that these people are welcoming, loving people, they are being preached the gospel week in, week out. Yea, that's going to be a great thing.

Thorsten: Where would you like to see the ministry in five years time?

Richard: It's an interesting one, because it could go one of two ways, I guess. There has been talk amongst the Iranians of kind of setting up an Iranian church in Nottingham. That's one way to go. And the second way would be for the Iranians that have been here for a certain time within Cornerstone to be just as part of everyday life of the church as everyone else. Which way is it? I personally feel - not having thought about it a great deal - I personally feel the second route being part of Cornerstone would be better. Not having discussed it with anybody. Off the top of my head I guess the Iranians would probably like the first thing because I know certainly amongst the men in the Iranian group that they'd like to have the feel as if they got a bit control and power. I know a couple of them certainly they would feel

like that, and would probably if there was a church would want to be part of the leadership. So they might feel that way. Is that really integrating into this church? The more they are in Cornerstone, in this church the more they are gonna to improve their language, learn more about how we do things. But I'm not kind of eight / twenty. I'm kind of fifty-one/ forty-nine. There maybe a third way, I don't know. I might think in 5 years time that it wasn't necessarily the fact that the Iranians were going away to their own service, maybe new Iranian just like new Christians. But I'd like to think that their English – that they feel comfortable enough to be part of the church. Because international students whose English may not be fantastic, they get the message. It's a kind of a transition phase.

Thorsten: Would you like to add anything that comes to your mind?

Richard: General things about the Iranian ministry. I've always felt that there is a very big moral dilemma sometimes in handling it, because as a Christian you are to think that you are generous and understanding and loving, you also feel as though you should be law abiding, and there have been certain situations where become aware of certain things like some of them shouldn't be working and you know that some of them are. I've never really worked out what my reaction should be. Same if they passed their driving test and drive a car without insurance or this kind of thing. As a Christian should we be saying 'No, that's wrong. Don't do that' or should we be saying 'Well, the government's not been fair to them. In love, give them a chance.' And if I'm honest, I'm kind of put my head in sand a bit. That's something I struggled with a bit.

Other things? I think there is separate thing. It's something that Jane brought up. Probably more so in the Iranian culture than in the English culture: The role of men and women. The ministry at Cornerstone is very much weighted in terms of numbers towards men. I often feel that there is a risk of the women kind of being left out a bit. I know there is a bit of a women's ministry. But I don't know much about it, how successful that is. That's something Jane raised. Because quite often they will sit at home in the day. Are their needs being served? And obviously as time goes on you get children coming through as well. Do they go to bible workshop, GAP and all this kind of stuff? I think they do, certainly Amir's kids do. - The kids get complete English in terms of their behaviour, their language and they kind of teaching

their parents. So that's good. Yea, I think it's a successful ministry. I think Cornerstone has played it pretty well. I know there have been one or two issues. But the fact that so many of them have become Christians and are still coming, this got to be a good sign. I just wish the whole processing of their cases would be a bit clearer, because as far as I'm aware pretty much all of them have been rejected. But we don't know where they stand, and I think that's very frustrating. It's frustrating for them to being in a position where they don't know where they stand. Tricky one. But hopefully their impression of the church and the Christians is much a lot better than their impression of our government.

Thorsten: Thank you very much!

Interview No. A12

Interviewee: Peter Lewis

Marital Status: Married, two adult children

Occupation: Senior Pastor

Church: Cornerstone Church, Nottingham

Interviewer: Thorsten Prill

Date: 9 September 2005

Duration: 1 hour

Thorsten: Can you please tell me something about the Iranian group, how it came into being and its development at Cornerstone?

Peter: I tell you a bit about my first experience with it. Others can tell you a bit more about the beginning of it. It had begun when I went to visit it because of the vision of certain people and their involvement. The papers and the news were full of the subject of refugees, increasing numbers coming to some of our cities back then and Christians were asking *What can we do about this situation? How can we help? How can we welcome these people or help these people in times of extremity? And inevitably how can we share the good news of Jesus Christ with them while at the same time not pressuring them or abusing their trust.*

Some Christians came to help and permission of a large Baptist Church – a smallish church that had a large church building – Mansfield Road Baptist Church, which had excellent facilities at the bottom, having a kind of underground, for having a kind of social evening, coffee evening etc. for the refugees from different countries. When I went along it was up and running and I was very impressed. There was a coffee bar. There were games like billiard or snooker, table tennis. There was a lounge and there was a class for speaking English. And I visited all these. I began to talk to the refugees and get to know them a little bit. I was impressed with the quality of what was being done – an able team of people who were thinking clearly, carefully and widely. I didn't worry about it too much. I knew that it had its own inner strength and the right leadership. I knew that I could be a fairly outside influence

encouraging, supporting and welcoming. That has been one of my characteristics throughout my ministry. I know my limitations. I know where I need to marshal my strengths, direct my energies and what my real calling is. I know the other things to be done, but they don't all need to be done by me. They need to be done by the people God brings and who grow in the work. Some of these were already able and experienced, one had a couple of theology degrees, another and his American/Japanese wife had cross-cultural experience and others had been doing this kind of thing with other people in the past. So that's where it began.

And then gradually they showed an interest in coming to our church to see what it was like. They weren't particularly strict as Muslims though some of them came from very strict families. And I think some of them might have at different times in their lives been strict as I recall. But they were willing as part of their cross cultural openness, part of their new developing open mindedness due to the situation they were in and the trouble some of them had been through. They wanted to evaluate for themselves what Christians were and what Christianity was all about. That's why they started to come. And of course they were immensely impressed by the fact that there were large numbers of people, roughly of their age who were full of joyful worship on a Sunday morning, who had a relationship with God which is immediate and joyful and secure and confident. And they gradually began to understand the uniqueness of Jesus Christ as more than a prophet. And strangely, as they came to understand this, so they were gripped by it. They were gripped by the Trinitarian nature of God. They put more emphasis on the trinity than any converts I have ever known. They saw how it affected the gospel, what God had done, God the Son coming into our world as He did, God the Spirit being with him. And when numbers of them were eventually baptized – but we were very very careful about that – when they were baptized they asked for a very specific Trinitarian formulae and so forth...

Thorsten: ...which you wouldn't normally have for a baptism?

Peter: Not really, but they wanted something in Persian that expanded that. I can't explain that, they just wanted to make the point. We were very cautious when they started to come, when they started to meet our people for Bible studies in the week; when they started to form groups apparently keen on this and even professing to be Christians – we were very cautious

that we were being taken for a ride, that we were being used to get something good on the CV to help in their appeals. And we understood one or two facts of the culture and the use of half-truths and even deceit to an extent. So we were cautious and we asked people from the Elam Bible College to come up and meet these people, to talk to them, to discover whether their conversions were genuine. And we found the people who came from Elam were very reassuring, more confident than we were. They said *look, they are genuine, it's ok, you can go ahead. Deal with these people as they want to be dealt with.*

And what followed on from that after teaching were baptisms, some of which were very moving. Actually the first few groups, there was one woman who read for three days and three nights – I think she read the whole Bible without stopping, in an amazingly short time. She was so excited and so affected. And there were mostly men, there were many men who became very keen and were very moving in their testimonies. There was one of them who wrote his testimony in poetry because Persians are poetic people. And I remember one line which said something like *I was a sheep lost in the wilderness. Then I heard the sound of Jesus like the music of a flute.* Something like that, and people were thrilled. And that's really how it all began.

Thorsten: So what has changed since then?

Peter: Well, anybody reading the New Testament knows that human beings being what they are, life being what it is and sin being what it is, then that's not the end. It is just the beginning. It was thought best, because their English was limited, to have meetings in Farsi. But the big question that came to the eldership was *Do we go for total assimilation and identification or do we go for separate development where they become an Iranian church or do we look for something in between these two things that is true to the situation and to the Spirit of Christ.* That was the point. We agreed straight away that the trouble with simply establishing them as an Iranian church would be that that would make sense for so many years. But their children would become westernized, anglicized in their language etc. and would find their kind of church difficult and sometimes boring if the language is a problem and so forth. And some of the expectation and attitudes between two different generations. And we thought we don't want to produce something which in years to come is a ghetto or an enclave. And we thought

of one or two including the German Lutheran Church which had become that sort of enclave. But with the question of total identification and assimilation we wanted to be true to the realities.

First of all there isn't the level of English to understand all the sermons and so forth. Secondly, there isn't or there wasn't an understanding of Baptist church life where the congregation have to make decisions about the future of the church and lots of issues. We didn't want to end up with a kind of Iranian block vote. This was me talking, not the elders, as typical Baptist ministers and their insecurities. (laughs) That is very understandable. I was concerned about that and so, as a rule of thumb I said – *Well, look, when their appeals are heard and they are going to be permanent and their English is reasonable, that would be a very good time to encourage them into membership.*

And I started off with Massi who has been there one of the longest, perhaps four or five years, and who is Ethiopian, not Iranian, and who is a remarkable person, a fine figure, doing evangelism, bringing friends, working terribly hard under her circumstances. But her appeal has dragged on and on and on. And in a way I was stuck with my little decision. Not that there has been any pressure. Massi has been in Sheffield for some time and hopes to come back. When she does - the appeal has just been heard and finally she is here for good – I want to encourage her to come into membership. I would love to see other permanent people coming into membership. The difficulty is that that would relate to some, but not all. And it is liable, I think, to create resentment on people who are on the edge or distance between those that are and aren't, feeling that the church favours some. It is quite difficult and I still don't know a satisfactory way to resolve it.

Partly because the meeting itself is fluid. It rises and falls, it grows and shrinks by the week at different times. For instance, I think some people are missing quite a lot. There were some who fell away or disappeared from our sight in the first two years and there are one or two who I don't see that often. Secondly, quite a few come very late and go straight to the Farsi meeting missing the church's first meeting. Our way of assimilating as it were the Iranian group is to have them in the morning meeting from 10.30am to 11.15am. And then in the second half our Persian friends can go to the Farsi meeting, but there are a number who don't

bother to come to that – or maybe who are tired having worked late on a Saturday or just aren't good timekeepers. We don't know all together the reasons.

Thorsten: There might be different reasons...

Peter: But we value that because it shows them that they belong to us, that this is where they belong and that this is their future. So, I think over the last few years different things have happened. They started to grow. They had a man called Vahik who taught them and it was a mixed blessing. He was a mature student from Elam, but he dispensed with any English, which left the half a dozen regular English folk, who go to the Farsi meeting to befriend and to help/guide – hm, left them high and dry; tended not to be expository, but did his own thing, tended to be very long so that there was no time for anything much and I think that they had mixed feelings about it. Because some of them say – and I must be careful because they are famous gossips and they can criticize one another and complain (who can't?), but it was said *he didn't care for us enough, he did his own thing, but he didn't get to know us*. Chris Pain, who came up this summer has been well received as far as I know and he did make an effort to get to know them in their homes. And they said *you are making an effort to get to know us where we are and Vahik didn't*.

I have to say that they could say the same thing about me. But then I don't bear the same relation to them as someone who is there every week as a teacher. And it is a matter of hoping that they will realize that I am doing what I'm doing consciously and conscientiously and that for me it is a way of survival. Anyway, Nima, one of the earliest of them is a very young man. He wanted to go to a Bible College. I thought he ought to do a proper job first – for a few years – just to evaluate his dependence, character, his self discipline, stickability, his reliability and other things. Because we knew that he loved the Lord and he was a deeply moved and moving person. He ended up going to Elam anyway and I've got a feeling that he is one of the star pupils down there. I think they have a high regard for him. We are developing a very high regard for him and one or two of us treasure the secret hope, which we never wanted to get out – unless the Lord has a more strategic ministry for him in Iran or elsewhere – and that is possible – he could end up here.

Certainly, this summer he was in town doing evangelizing and all sorts. And the meeting grew week by week. He was bringing in new people all the time. And the elders, certainly, look favourably on the thought that if he had someone that good we would even try to pull out the stops to make it a full-time post of which we have so many – I don't know where the money is coming from really for half of it. So that brings us up to now. And I think there are several positive and negative strains present there. I think some of them wondered if the church is that keen on them. Some are really concerned because we smile or whatever, but don't do much. I welcome them. I try to relate to them a little bit. But I could well imagine if someone said *oh yeah, but he doesn't really do very much*. I occasionally teach at the meeting, but I would understand if that might receive a degree of ascept. That may be my conscience speaking or my sensitivity or my professionalism, I suppose, or a mixture of all three, which I think must be right.

So that's where we are. We are worried about their children. I wished their children would go to the English classes groups, I urged them to do so, over and over and over. I said *look, you are at school, you speak the language, we want you with our groups*. But if they have one bad experience or feel a little bit on side of a peer group, they will hold it against them, I think, and just separate. And I think there was something of that. I think I heard a whisper that they certainly had trouble at school, some of them, quite bad trouble. And one at least got into some bad company as a result and I wondered whether they were as welcomed in the group by our youngsters as they should have been. But teenagers are very sensitive and sometimes you can't win anyway.

So, this year I have talked to Danny Crowther who has come from Indonesia for one year, a very competent lecturer at the Bible College, a trainer of pastors, a very relational man, who for five years or more was our international student worker, much loved by people of all cultures because he was so relational. And I have asked him to consider a major project for the year to get to know our Persians, to come to at least two Farsi meetings a month, perhaps largely with the view of teaching and to meet some of them in their homes and to make it his main project for the year. Through the year OMF want him to be on the committee, on the thinktank, to promote OFM's work among Muslims, to seek for Britains who will become part

of that work, who will feel the call to go and evangelize Muslim peoples. And he has got to do a lot of that around the country. But this would make a very considerable number, too.

I have had a talk with David Howard who I was speaking to this week. And Danny is going to come with his wife on Sunday and he is going to sit in on the Farsi meeting. At the right time and in the right way, after he has talked to Alan Bush, the elder in charge of Farsi work, after and subject to approval he will do some teaching. And that's roughly where we are now.

Thorsten: A few weeks ago you announced that you would like the Iranians to come to the main service once a month and that there would be interpretation of your sermons into Farsi. Can you tell me a little bit more about that and the idea behind it, how it should work...

Peter: The principal of Elam Bible College is Samuel Yegnesar. He has a brother called Lazarus Yegnesar who has a lot to do with the general Elam organization and who is a very respected missionary, teacher and leader. He came up and stayed with us here. He addressed them the next day having seen my books. And he said *Look, this is ridiculous. You have one of the best known Bible teachers in the country here and you are not hearing any of it. It is time for you to go at least once a month so that you are with the church for the whole of the time. You want to be accepted, so you have to do something, too.* He was strong as they often are. And that set me thinking, because I know that many of them have poor English. Some of them have excellent English, others have English so that they can get by and some of them have poor English, especially more recent ones. And more recent ones keep coming and that's an important factor. It is a growing thing. And at first I thought – as we have a similar difficulty with Mandarin speaking Chinese that we would have translation booths with wireless headsets and a continuous translation in Mandarin in one and Farsi in another. But this has received considerable emendation. It is thought that with the Mandarin it would be much better to have the sermon printed out in Chinese characters, which we are going ahead with Kim Chee Tat. He is very cute, he is the husband of Janice, the new administrator after Naomi. And he is doing a doctorate here. He is very understanding of spiritual categories because he and his wife have worked in churches for years and years. Nima is very keen to do the same thing. And he would like me to send the script down to him so that with one of his professors he can

turn it into Persian script. I have to send it today, actually, that is for the first of the John sermons, John 1, verses 1 and 2.

Thorsten: So, you've given up the idea of using headphones?

Peter: No, it is not given up. We discovered that it is quite complicated because we don't have a fixed point. So it would have to be wireless. It would cost about £ 400.00 per person, the quote we had, which is too much. I was thinking that we could do it for £ 100.00 or £ 200.00. I was quite amazed at that and the thing is that lots of the people who come, they do want to hear English and learn English. Lots of the Chinese are keen to hear and learn English. So they don't really want to hear it in their own language. This method will enable them to do both things. I think the same would be true to an extent of the Farsi people who are all literate and educated, obviously. I am very incompetent in a lot of things and I run a loose management style so that a lot of people can fill up my incompetence. But the one advantage I've got is that I can change very quickly, abandon one idea for the better, if the right people bring them and I know what they say is my guidance. And I must follow them, and I do, I must listen to their wisdom.

Thorsten: What would you say are the biggest challenges for the church with regard to that ministry?

Peter: Domestic integration probably, sharing at a personal level, hard to do when they live miles away and they have their own groups and own friends. We started a thing called, hm, oh dear I've forgotten the name now. It happens a couple of times a year, fellowship Sundays or something like that? I can't remember what they call it – where people are asked to invite people that they don't know or very little. And so far that has been very helpful as have some other occasions, parties, socials... We have international lunches at the church. But that needs to be consolidated and increased, really. It is not easy. When I look at the West Indians, who have in the church for 36 years, one or two, and some for 20 years or more I realized that outside of church, domestic integration as it were, relationships are not terribly developed. Sometimes there are geographical reasons, sometimes cultural reasons, sometimes family reasons. And the trouble is that the keenest people in church are already trying to do two or three jobs and keep several friendships going, trying to keep in touch with several missionaries

or helping people in need or counseling. So it does demand a degree of give and take and a determination not to take offense, not to give up, to try to look at what we do do, not at what we don't do; what people have given rather than what they have not given, the people who have done a lot for them rather than the people who haven't.

And this is especially true because in Christ's name the people who have done a lot for them are Cornerstone. When people have been sick and they say *I haven't been looked after* then I say *Look, X has done all this for you. – But X, ah, they are wonderful...* but X is Cornerstone. And then there is Y and Z, and they have done this and the housegroup has done that. But that housegroup is Cornerstone. This is how we operate. You can't have a church of 7 or 800 people and operate like the little Bethel they knew when they were ten or something and that their mother knew when she was ten. And I suppose to a degree we have to say to our Farsi friends, our Iranians friends or their leaders have to say *Look at what they do and not what they don't do and see Cornerstone as the people that help you and not the people who don't*. So it is a matter of love, you know. Love hopes all things, believes all things, bears all things and forbearance as well as being a New Testament word was a very important New Testament necessity in the dynamic of church life. Especially in those first century Mediterranean churches where tempers could flare, people could misunderstand, a culture of shame or reputation could easily be bruised. Forbearance was important and it still is, especially where cultures meet.

Thorsten: My final question, where do you see the Iranians, the group or where would you like to see it, if you could dream?

Peter: If I could dream I'd like to see many of them whom I know and honour, and I could name them, succeed in staying here permanently. And they are the spiritual natural leaders, people like older Davoud and big Amir and there are younger leaders coming up. If I could dream, I'd love to see Nima coming back, us being able to support him in the work, the meeting growing into a large meeting, with an understanding of how to stop it being just a large separated church so that second generation Iranians, their children, would come easily into Cornerstone, so that as they became permanent and solid Christians their people could come into membership at Cornerstone. So that people who weren't Christians or are new

Christians or whose language wasn't wonderful or whose circumstances were very uncertain could come into that church and feel *Here I have Farsi speech, I understand them in the way they do things, it is my church for now or this is church to me* even though there is a traffic as it were back and forth to Cornerstone. So it is a dynamic and I don't know how realistic it is because it isn't borne of the kind of deep study you have done. But it does mean that a church like that, they won't just rely on Nema or somebody. They won't rely on the second generation staying out of loyalty to the first generation. They will rely on God helping them to mission on new converts, new people coming in, some of whom will go on one day to cross the bridge into Cornerstone, others will be part of the bridge into Cornerstone and others will be firmly built into that church as ministers of different kinds, but at the same time will have membership in Cornerstone. So in all sorts of ways there is a stability.

Thorsten: That sounds a bit like a congregation within a congregation, which is fluid on the edges, which is moving all the time, a kind of group within the wider church group.

Peter: Yes, it is dynamic and to an extent maybe it is easier for some cultures to live with that. I should think they could. It is just a thought.

Thorsten: Is there anything you would like to add at the end to give you the chance to say anything that you haven't mentioned.

Peter: No, because generally I learn from Mrs Thatcher. When you are interviewed, say what you want to say and I just wanted to tell you my thoughts of the beginning of it and what we've done. I'll end with my appreciation and my thoughts on where we go in the future. Speaking personally, are you thinking purely of the Iranians or of the whole of the refugee problem generally? You are, aren't you? Because I should remind you that we now have a growing Ethiopian/Eritrean/Somali congregation, group rather of which I know very little, surprisingly little. Because, well, there are reasons, but I look forward to finding out what is going on there. And there is a South American group.

My own feeling is that I am thrilled. I have Paul's feeling as he looked at the Thessalonians. They were the promise of the last days, well, they were in the last days. They were the promise of the worldwide reach of the gospel. They were the first fruits of the Gentile harvest. He read into the situation future church history as it were. I am thrilled to hear Farsi and Mandarin

and many other things on the platform. It gives me a real joy, in baptismal formulae or in testimonies or songs or anything like that. With Iran I think God only knows what he is going to do if the tyranny is lifted there because only 20 % of Iranians are that religious. 80 % of them aren't that religious and an increasing number of that 80 % are disgusted with militant Islam and open to Christianity, which is interesting. These were certainly open and they did – to talk about spiritual things was as natural to them as for us to talk about cricket and football. The earliest thing I noticed was we weren't feeding them in the wrong sense. We weren't targeting and pressurizing. We were dealing with people who were open minded and enquiring, who had moved out of a repressive situation.

Thorsten: ...which is similar to the Chinese...

Peter: And it is very similar to the Chinese mainland all the time. So it is thrilling to me to see from China and all around the world Cornerstone being an international church. I mean I call it Cornerstone International sometimes. There are about 25 or 30 nations represented there. I said 25, but I am told it is more. But there you go. But – it has got to be stable. It's got to know its doctrine and it's got to be clear in its practice both in terms of the ethics of life and in terms of church government and church behaviour. And so the vast majority of people in the church are Western, they are British. And that is not an embarrassment. It's true to the realities, historically, obviously. I think if the church was top heavy with people from other nations, refugees, there would be a difficulty. If it was top heavy like some churches in the country since the refugee influx there could be trouble. There was a church, for instance in King's Lynn, where the pastor had realized that he had hundreds of Portuguese, hundreds and hundreds and hundreds. That was a bomb, and he virtually ran his church and ministry for them and soon people started to leave because they said *we can't take it anymore. There is no teaching for us. It is not the right way to do things.* So, one doesn't destabilize a church. One must be true to the different situations and think strategically.

Thorsten: Ok, thank you very much, Peter.

Interview No. A13

Interviewee: Valerie Lewis
Marital Status: Married, two adult children
Occupation: Pastoral Assistant
Church: Cornerstone Church, Nottingham
Interviewer: Thorsten Prill
Date: 9 September 2005
Duration: 35min

Thorsten: Can you please tell me a little bit about your experience with the Iranians at Cornerstone.

Valerie: Yes, I am always interested in everything new that is happening in the church. I am trying to remember what happened first. I think, probably, I went along to the women's refugee meeting at Mansfield Road Baptist Church, which was not connected with the Iranian group, but the connection was in as much as the men's group also happened at Mansfield Road Baptist Church as an evening café and consequently I would ask how it was going. And there was a problem with the women's group. I can't remember whether I went because of the problem or whether I was going beforehand in that one lady, who was a member of another church apparently was seeking to take over the leadership of the Cornerstone Iranian group. Debbie Abbott came to me and asked me to intervene. So I was either already going to the group or started attending the group because of that and tried to understand the situation. So that was quite early in the group, really.

Thorsten: How would you describe the development of the group over the years?

Valerie: Oh, I need to think about that. Initially, my recollection is that the group was run as a short teaching session with then the group breaking up for discussion and the discussion topics would be given out on pieces of paper to everyone. There was also a breakdown of the group into those who have heard the first principles of Christian faith and another group would often be a seekers group. The other interesting thing was the cultural difference of the

group that weren't seekers. They were often dividing up into men's groups and women's groups separately. This was one of the main areas of difference between Debbie Abbott and this lady. Debbie saw the groups as needing to be culturally sensitive so that men would study together and women would study together. The other lady being British born was seeking to mix everybody up. Her aim was to get one of the refugee ladies who had excellent English and who was a sound Christian to take over the leadership of the group. So, my recollection was sort of the division between men and women and people discussing in their second language, which seemed very hard to me. The leaders were English, consequently the question were English. And the discussion of the Bible passage would then be in English, which – although good for the refugee's English would not have been very good for their spiritual understanding. It is very difficult to express spiritual experience in a second language. So that didn't seem to be ideal.

The evening Bible studies I have never attended, but I got the impression from David Howard in particular. And probably I would also have talked with Rob Gordon and with Aled, who is now working in Wales and sometimes with Andy Balsan. So I would have heard from different people. But the evening groups were very lengthy. They sometimes went on until the hours of the early morning. But the men who came to those Bible study groups were very hungry for spiritual answers and for Christian teaching and the English speaking guys – not all of them were English like Andy Balsan – they were very glad to give up their time because there was this deep spiritual interest.

Thorsten: Today we have a Farsi speaking meeting...

Valerie: Yes, on a Sunday, yes that really has developed from this Sunday morning meeting where you had some teaching, then the groups breaking up for discussion, then coming back together for a prayer at the end. That gradually developed into a more formal meeting where there would be a talk given in English and then translated into Farsi. After a while the venue of the meetings changed, which in many ways appeared to me for the good, because it started off in two classrooms, then moved into what I think was an art studio, but was quite a reasonable room and then has settled in the Drama studio, which is carpeted and has blinds on the windows. So it is quite a pleasant room. It seems again to be settling into a degree of formality

now. People arrive early, put out a table with a lectern on it, cloths to cover the table... I encouraged live music. Now I am not quite sure how that sometimes happens, sometimes it seems to, sometimes it doesn't. But some of the Cornerstone musicians will come and play for the Farsi group. So there are one or two pianists like Roxy and Song-ah and Ben will come and play his guitar with Song-ah. But then other weeks there is no musician and it goes back to being a taped played and everyone is singing to the tape. I don't think it makes a huge deal of difference to the singing. Well, maybe once or twice it has been quite weak.

Recently, when Vahik was around, there was a small group singing, like a little choir. But I haven't seen that lately. I only saw it once or twice.

Thorsten: I saw it lately.

Valerie: That was a few weeks ago?

Thorsten: Yes.

Valerie: That was Saeed and Bitar and ...

Thorsten: Laia, Davoud's wife.

Valerie: And somebody else – was Davoud singing?

Thorsten: Yes, I think so.

Valerie: So there seems to be a degree of formality now. When Vahik came – one change that I noticed, mainly because it affected me and probably would not have affected the Iranians so it is slightly irrelevant to the point – the meetings became entirely Farsi and so for any English speaking or non-Farsi speaking people it was a bit difficult to kind of hang in there with the meeting, when songs, notices, prayers and talks given in Farsi and for the first time the talk was not translated at all into English. I mentioned this to Vahik and suggested that a brief translation could be a good thing. But his reasoning was that there was only a short length of time to give teaching and if one translated one lost one's teaching time. But unfortunately, during the time that Vahik stayed and taught and led the Iranian group one lost some of the English speaking people who presumably couldn't stay interested if they didn't understand anything. So at that point I have noticed that although the men from Cornerstone who are committed to the Iranian group have stayed in the main, the women who were coming fairly

regularly have virtually all dropped off. There are very few English speaking women coming now.

While Chris and Kes came this summer 2005 to do their cross cultural project the Iranians have said that what they valued about Chris and Kes' ministry with them was the fact that they cared for them as people and compared them with Vahik who I think they felt was more like an Iranian leader whereas this young couple loved them as people. So that was a comment, but that could have been just a few people. It is just something I've heard, so they are obviously judging leadership.

Thorsten: Do you think, from what I've heard that Vahik had a hidden agenda? Some people said to me that he would like to see a separate church.

Valerie: That's interesting.

Thorsten: I don't know whether this is something you perceived...

Valerie: Certainly, a couple of times I approached him about having a degree of English translation during the Farsi meeting. He was quite unbending. Because my hope is always with any part of the church that there will be integration and people working alongside each other. I am not sure whether Vahik wanted to have seen a separate church. I suppose because I have a little bit of knowledge about the German Lutheran Church from many years ago and of the Chinese Church and the Korean Church in Nottingham. I tend to see integration as being very important for the second generation. I can see the first generation longing for their roots and having a great sense of homesickness. But I suppose I would link it in with the one study I have read on the Asian population in Britain, which Huan Gu(???) has done ??... and chips – he has had a longer period to analyse it and he speaks of the first generation as having a great need to go back to their homeland; the second generation go occasionally for extended visits to see their roots and the third generation finding it almost immaterial to go back to where their ancestors came from.

I haven't really thought it out how it goes for the Christian witness as to whether it would be a good thing to have a separate church, two separate people groups. I suppose it is good for evangelism, but I think one has got to integrate them into the country.

Thorsten: What can the church do to foster this integration or what is the church doing?

Valerie: Well, I hear little bits from David Howard. He has mentioned to me that two of the refugee ladies with small babies go to the mum's fellowship. I am not quite sure whether they get picked up and whether that would be once a week or once a fortnight. Cornerstone has encouraged things like the Iranian New Year party and has helped to fund it by renting the venue or venues and helping in any way that they asked. Also, Cornerstone members have come along to these meetings. The refugees themselves, or the Iranians – I seem to hear every week that they want to be called something different – last time I heard it was the Persian group. Yes, so, the Persian group definitely seem to like social events so that for instance we had church lunch three weeks ago, I think it was just a picnic lunch and it was not hugely attended. But half of those who stayed were the refugees. So that is quite interesting and perhaps quite a good thing that it was a small group. I don't have a huge amount of time to go to the various things like the Elam conferences. But what I have tended to do is host sort of larger gatherings of Iranians. So once or twice I would have an evening party around here to say good bye to somebody. Or we had Hospitality Sunday where people were to invite others. So I invited all the Iranians. But looking back I am not sure if that was wise. They all came and it was lovely, but other people in the church were seeking to invite Iranian families and came to me and I said *They were all here*.

I kind of wonder how we could crack it with the Prayer and Praise. I know that there is already an Iranian Bible study on that evening. But Prayer and Praise is only once a month. I wonder whether we could have the Iranians and ask them if they felt like it, perhaps either to sit at a table together so that they could help each other understand some of the talks or to assure them that we were very happy for them in Farsi, that they wouldn't feel that they would have to pray in broken English. I feel that that would be very very good. And of course we are looking at this idea of Farsi translation once a month of the sermon during the morning service, which seems to be progressing a little bit. What else are we doing? I thought this week, gosh, have we really encouraged them to come to the church weekend? I don't know, so I don't know whether they feel very much part of that.

Thorsten: It was announced by Davoud a few times.

Valerie: Was it? Oh, good.

Thorsten: Yes, at the beginning. I think you came later. They talked about it for a few minutes and yesterday I went to the Iranian Bible study group and some people said that they would definitely come.

Valerie: That's really nice. I am glad about that. I am still trying to think about the integration. I think one of our difficulties on that has been that when it has come up in elders meetings Peter has always been anxious about any imbalances as it were in the church membership, that if one had a large group of Iranians becoming members, whether because they are quite a close knit group whether they would kind of vote on block for whatever they wanted or didn't want. I felt that was a risk worth taking because I see integration as a good thing and on the eldership Alan Bush is the one who attends all the meetings and knows what's happening. So he usually speaks to any refugee issues and because I go to the Sunday morning meetings I tend to speak a little bit about them and also on the occasional Sunday evening planning meetings I go along and have an input because I have a feel how things are planning out.

Thorsten: Where would you like to see the Iranians in a few years time? I asked Peter the same question. If you could dream...

Valerie: How exciting...well, I'd like to see it have grown. When I think of the group I think of the three or four couples who usually seem to be at the centre and a variety of young men, who seem very often to be there. I think of the two girls from Cornerstone who are going out with, well, Cathy is engaged to one of the Iranians. And I look at that and think that would be very interesting to see cross cultural marriages of local British girls and Iranians, whose main link is that they are Christians. I'd like to see the children growing up with a strong Christian faith and bringing their school friends, so that they are not necessarily bringing their Iranian friends with them, but they might be bringing children of other nationalities with them, because Nottingham is very cosmopolitan. I'd like to see us having got our children's teaching and classes such that the Iranian children were eager to go to them. Because at the moment the Iranian teenage lads seemed to have walked out of things. Now, the ideal thing seem to be for them to play football. Maybe their parents don't share their faith that much at home. I

don't know. That's something I've never really thought about as to whether the Iranian parents teach their children scriptures at home or pray with them.

But certainly there is a lot in the culture that one would not want to lose. When I'm thinking about this I am thinking very much the Sunday morning service and I am wondering whether I'm thinking in ten years it would be lovely if most of the Iranians in that meeting had good English and were joining in the Sunday morning service. Or would it be good, if they were still running a Farsi meeting, because that's a good evangelistic tool. I think the language is very important. So, if they keep their language – particularly something like the Saturday morning class, which Harian, Omid and Marjan are very involved with. And that seems to be another good way of reaching out in that the Iranian people who are not Christians are bringing their children to that class. My dreams are not really big, are they? I'd like to see it grow, though. I'd like to see the children fit into a British church, but still with everybody using this tool for evangelism with their language in their cultural group.

Thorsten: Do you think that is realistic to happen? Or what do you think are the main challenges or problems on the way to integration as you described it?

Valerie: I think Cornerstone church members have got to come out of their comfort zone in order to achieve it because it is always more difficult talking with somebody in a second language and British people are not good at knowing other languages. So I think David Howard is one of the few who for the sake of the gospel has sought to learn Iranian the way Debbie Dickson, who really for the sake of her work in the gospel has been learning Mandarin. And there is this whole thing of leadership, whether as the Iranians develop as Christians, whether one would invite them to lead various organisations, they were being owned by the church for their gifting, because I've noticed within the Iranian group there has been a sort of just link position and leadership there has been discussion on whether people should have or have been offering themselves for leadership. I think this is always a danger within the Christian church. It is a kind of fine line between seeking God very hard and some are seeking power – the old struggles. There is something out there, isn't there and I don't know what it is. I can't picture it exactly. Yeah, I think it is going towards integration, definitely.

Thorsten: Is there anything else you would like to add, anything that is important that you think we should have talked about?

Valerie: I think where we fall down as church is that we respond to needs. So the Iranian became Christians, I think, mainly through the work of David Howard and other young men in the Bible study groups. They then came to morning services and perhaps one thing we haven't done is to try and understand their feelings, their feelings of being displaced peoples, their feelings of being in another country without status or very much finance and so on. And I think perhaps it would have been helpful if we had thought into that more. Because by now they have settled and it is just one or two at a time. It is also difficult because one can't rush in and ask somebody for their story. One has to wait for them to tell it. We don't really have an understanding of their grief. So, yes, I think that's something we have missed out on.

Thorsten: Ok, thank you very much for that.

Interview No. A14

Interviewee: Jane Taylor

Marital Status: Married, one child

Occupation: Pharmacist

Church: Cornerstone Church, Nottingham

Interviewer: Thorsten Prill

Date: 9 September 2005

Duration: 30 min

Thorsten: Jane, please tell me something about your experience with refugees at Cornerstone.

Jane: O.k. my experience with refugees has happened in a couple of different ways. Initially, it was really through Richard when he started to visit the Iranian families. And then basically I had the opportunity to offer them hospitality and have them over for meal here and they always invited me around for meals there. Having Beth it's often difficult to go all the time but I certainly felt that they were more keen to have me over than receive hospitality in some ways which is quite really surprising I think that they're so keen to have you in their home and to feed you. It's a nice trait. So usually when they come over to us it's just been a very nice experience with Amir and his family. Who I'd say I know the most and generally it's been then when I've seen Amir and his wife and his two kids who've come over to our house. It's been lovely because initially only Amir would come over with his friends, mostly men. But then when his family joined him it was really lovely to see them get used to be in this country I think. And it amazing that the boys speak English so well now and really understand the culture a lot more. I think I've been really struck by a lot of cultural differences. It's funny, whenever you to their house for a meal you have to take more and more and more things onto your plate. But over here I would cook all this meals with loads of things. And often times they didn't even eat much at all. Probably my cooking.

Thorsten: So you had Amir and his family around a few times and you went to their place.

Jane: Yes.

Thorsten: People talk a lot about integration, integrating refugees. What are your thoughts on that?

Jane: Yes I have. I've spoken to Richard about it and I also talked to Amir's wife when she came over for a meal to talk about their bible studies and to find out what they were currently doing, and it just really struck me that they were having often two bible studies a week and family bible studies. And I asked whether it was men and women and it was. It just really struck me that some of them they were really young in their faith, and it's a very exciting time for them, and I find it's really great to be inspired by young Christians and baby Christians who are just discovering what it is to be a Christian. And I felt that as a church I think we are missing out of being more integrated with the Iranians actually and having them in our house groups or bible studies, even it wasn't on a weekly basis. Just like house groups that have started to meet in clusters perhaps it would be nice to organise events where a house group meets an Iranian bible study, or something like that. And also I've always been struck by the kind of passion and whenever they contribute during the service or particularly the Christmas things I've often been deeply moved by the depth of their faith really, and as young Christians almost the kind of, I don't mean to say 'childlike' in a disrespectful way but in an open way, just the fact that they just so open to wear their hearts and sleeves. And whenever I've been to a baptism where there were Iranians, who have ...they'd written down their testimonies, just realizing that's not a kind of superficial faith but it's definitely been big things that have happened in their lives and it's been just a complete contrast to what they experienced back home. And I find that fascinating.

And I also found that when I led one of the Iranian groups on a Sunday morning on the covenant and the ten commandments that was a really interesting experience for me, learning to kind of project things in a simpler way and to have a translation going on as well but also to feel part of their service and sing their songs, hear their language. And I think here we have in our church different cultures not just Iranians but all different cultures, and I'm really glad to see there's been Iranian meals and things like that, where they have been able to serve. And I think they enjoy serving and contributing. Perhaps there'll be more opportunities for them to integrate with us outside the church. Hopefully, they will be coming to the church weekend this weekend.

Thorsten: It was announced in the Iranian service last Sunday. So would you say that you have personally profited from your contacts with the Iranians at Cornerstone?

Jane: Yes, definitely. I think I just feel a bit guilty that I haven't had more time for them. I feel sometimes we are the only kind of contact, positive contact. People outside the church and people in kind of general live that they meet in Nottingham might not always be as warm and friendly. And I'm sure that there are perhaps pastoral issues that aren't being dealt with. And things that they are coming across that in some ways I think we are a counter balance to some of the negative experiences that they might have.

I do think it would be great to kind of rally the troops a bit, to see if there are more people in Cornerstone who are off work during the week and do have a little time to contribute and visit, particularly the women, who I do think feel probably more isolated just because of the culture and the way things are. I think when Amir's wife first came over she really struggled I think with perhaps the isolation and coming to terms with a whole different culture, and a lot of things. And having been apart for so long. And their lads experienced bullying at school. I think things have settled a bit down more now that they got used to the language more and the culture more. I think that was very difficult for a time and upsetting for the family. I know that other children from other families have found similar things, which is a shame. I think it does kind of enlighten you a little bit about how people can be in the community, but it makes you more determined to say 'Well look, not everyone's like that'.

But I do definitely think that it's a privilege and there's much more we can learn from them than they can learn from us.

Thorsten: What do you think is it that we learn from them?

Jane: Well on a spiritual level, I just think often we take for granted things like freedom of religion and freedom of speech. And folks have come from countries where they actually have undergone a lot of opposition and that's some of the reasons why they are here now, because they were persecuted. And I think we can learn a lot from them, their courage and the fact they got through a lot of difficult circumstances. I always find I learn a lot from new Christians because it brings me back to basics. It makes me stop taking God for

granted, because I think 'Yeah, isn't it great to be a Christian.', when you just see what a difference it has made to their lives. I think it teaches me that over here we have so much they often have so little and continue to have so little. It teaches me a lot about humility, because they are so humble and also have come across with so many talents that they are not even allowed to use, because that's the way the government system works. Folks might have degrees or – I think it's a challenge to me to appreciate that, because sometimes when you are coming into contact with folks using English in the first language it's easy just to assume things, backgrounds or things that they bring a long with them. But if it was me going to another country I wanted to go 'But I'm a pharmacist. I can do this and I can do that. I'm a valuable person.' And we as Christians should know that they are a valuable people and that they are loved by God and that they are not just refugees. And I really hope that Cornerstone and myself learn not to treat them as refugees but just as people in their own right. It's good to celebrate the fact that they are Iranian or they are this nationality or that nationality but they also have friends, our equals and that they are better in some sense,....the hospitality they have shown us. I think I learned a lot about hospitality. I think both with the refugees and the international folks as well they seem to out give you a return. I think that's what I learned as well. It's very humbling just to see that for everything that you do for them you get twice as much back. I mean when I kind of spend time and energy getting the meal together even despite my best efforts and say 'Please don't bring anything!' and I think how little sometimes they have financially they always bring at least two or three chocolates, they are always wanting to give. And that means a lot to me, when they don't have very much. They are generous beyond belief.

Thorsten: Yes, I can subscribe to that. So what can the church do to foster integration?

Jane: Well, do we have an official person who is the voice of the refugees? Do we?

Thorsten: From among the refugees, you mean...?

Jane: Both.

Thorsten: Alan Bush is responsible for the refugee work.

Jane: O, I didn't really know that. Does anybody else know that?

Yes, to have someone who is perhaps - I think a few more representatives from the refugee community who have been here a long time some of them that they just could have a bit more of an input somehow, some kind of channel. Perhaps more kind of meetings and discussions to ask them actually what they want, hopefully that's going on. But it would be nice to think that perhaps the elders or Peter sat down with perhaps some of the once that are spokespeople for each of the groups. Because I'm sure that amongst the groups there are one or two who could be nominated to keep us up to date. Not just the things in the church bulletin, other things that we are not aware of or could be praying for. Do they have pastoral issues? To ask for help. Different cultures feel very differently about asking for help. Definitely, I think we should be doing something with regards their bibles study groups and our house groups. Perhaps having something like visit a house group week, or for house groups to think more when they are having a social 'Why not invite people as we've done it with international students, like the barbecue we had?' Maybe we should open it up. Or perhaps house groups be linked to a number of folks. Make sure that the British kids are aware and looking out for their refugee brothers and sisters. I'd like to think that in a church you are making up perhaps for the imbalances that are out there in the community and just because that what we should be bounced, looking after everybody. It's so easy to go with the flow, every Sunday and just seek out the folks you know. I bravo the Iranian meals even though I myself haven't been yet. I think it's a great idea. And it's great to see them up on the front, and it's great to see - I'm more excited when I see a baptism, and it is a baptismal service and it is Iranians because I know this could be really good fun. Because we British people are so reserved and it's just nice to see people so excited and so buoyant about Jesus. I've just been moved to tears so many times by really just by - it's just great, when I think about it now it's just incredible.

Thorsten: So you would say that your contact with Iranians has inspired your faith?

Jane: O yes, it has. Reading their testimonies.

Thorsten: So integration is not a one way thing. We can learn from something them as well.

Jane: O, yes definitely. I think that's why it's important to integrate. I think there's probably still quite a bit of ignorance and I'm sure I was the same. You just don't know, and it takes kind of getting to know people. I'm sure I still make assumptions and things like that. And I

think as well initially there were issues where you did kind of - it was nice to see the baptisms and to see the real the fact you knew that God had touched and you knew that Jesus had saved them. It's not something you can manufacture or whatever, the things that I saw at baptismal services. And I think sometimes I did feel cynical when folks were desperate to stay in this country. I'm sure there are cases where you are not sure about where people stand Christianwise, but even more reason for us to get alongside folks, to see where they're at. I think the church has handled things really well. I don't know what their stance is on giving references and things like that. But I think they have to do...I think it's been really good to see the more mature Christians amongst the refugees really, really keen to tell other people. And actually I think they've been bolder with Muslim friends from what I've heard than I probably would be with my friends, which is amazing.

Thorsten: Maybe a final question. Where would like to see the work, the Iranian group in the future?

Jane: This is where there is a dilemma, because I think when you go along to the Iranian bible study group, on its own it's fabulous.

And although integration is great you don't want to lose that, the difference. So just don't know how it works. In fact if the numbers swell they will need to continue to have their own service where they can share Jesus in their own language, on their own level in terms of - because there are differences in approach to worship and things like that. And yet I'm very super keen on them being more involved. I want them to have the chance to retain their Christian identity because they come from a very different background. And yet I want them to be in there. I don't know what the answer is. I don't know what the answer is.

I think Cornerstone's approached it really well that they are in for the main part of the service and then they go out for their bit. Rather than 10.30 they fall off in one direction and we fall off in another direction. I think it maybe be really good if more people went along to the Iranian group in the morning. It should be on everybody's little checklist 'As a member of Cornerstone this is what I should do. I should go along and experience an Iranian service.'

And think that really important.

Thorsten: is there anything else that you would like to add?

Jane: I don't think. I'm just glad to see, it's been a gradual process, I'm glad to Peter and the elders being more keen to get them up on the front. Because I did sense that there was an initial hesitation. But every time they been up there people have been moved people have really benefited from that. And it's not been in a kind of patronising 'O let's get the foreign folks up to the front.' It's been great.

Thorsten: O.k. thank you very much.

Interview No. A15

Interviewee: Hoshang
Marital Status: Single
Residence Status: Asylum Seeker
Interviewer: Thorsten Prill
Interpreter: Omid
Date: 11 September 2005
Duration: 45 min

Thorsten: To kick off, can you please tell me how you became a Christian, Hoshang.

Hoshang: Back home in Iran I had a lot of Christian friends. I was looking for God. It was in my heart, I felt that there was a God. I was seeking God and I wanted to worship God but not the same God that the people in Iran worshipped. I was looking for truth but I didn't find that in Islam. I prayed to God and I asked him to show me the truth. And I felt alone in a population of seventy million. Life was bad for me and so I travelled from Iran to England. After a year I came to Nottingham and some people introduced Christianity to me. There was the feeling inside me that told me to seek God. And after three months of praying and looking into the Christian faith I became a Christian.

Thorsten: When you became a Christian did you have any contact with people from Cornerstone?

Hoshang: Yes, I came to church. I went to the services and to bible studies two times a week. I was reading the bible very, very carefully. Jerry and Andy, Andy Balsan led a bible study in our house and I asked them a lot of questions. And when I believed a hundred per cent I became a Christian. I found the truth, I found the truth in Jesus Christ.

Thorsten: Hoshang, the other day we talked about integration and the future of the Iranian group. Where do you see the future of the group? What are your thoughts?

Hoshang: All Christians together form the family of God. We are all the same. Race and language do not really separate us. It's not a good thing to have a have separate church. We should all be together in one church. I believe that we Iranians should be integrated into Cornerstone. There shouldn't be an Iranian church, a German church or an English church. We are all one in Christ. We all have the same aim. Our aim is Jesus.

Thorsten: But at the moment we have a separate Iranian service. What do you think are the reasons for that?

Hoshang: I think because we are new believers Cornerstone wants to have a separate congregation for us. A separate meeting helps us to learn more about the basics of Christianity. The leaders of Cornerstone want to bring us up, they want us to grow so that we later can join the main church.

Thorsten: Would you agree that language is a problem for some Iranians at the moment?

Hoshang: Yes, I think so.

Thorsten: To change the subject. Do you think that Iranian Christians from your group can reach out to other Iranians more effectively than English people? What would you say from your own experience? I mean, earlier on you mentioned Jerry and Andy who both had helped you to become a Christian?

Hoshang: I think here in England English people can help more than Iranian people. We are new believers. We don't have the experience and the knowledge that English Christians have. They know far more about the Christian faith than we do, and so they can help Iranians to become Christians more than we can do. Yes, English Christians who are trusted by Iranians can be more effective.

Thorsten: Maybe we can talk something else. For many English Christians becoming an official member of a church is an important thing. They go to the member's meeting and take part in making decisions for the church. Is that something that is important to you too?

Hoshang: I believe if somebody is a Christian he should be a member of a church.

Omid: In my opinion this is really, really important for Iranian people, because they need to know what's going on in church. And they can ask questions and they don't feel separated.

When they become members they feel the church is their home, they feel they are serving God. In the Iranian group they don't know a lot about the English church. They support each other and go out to evangelise other Iranians, but they don't serve the church. They want to help, it's part of our Iranian nature.

Thorsten: So at the moment Iranians are not members of Cornerstone, official members. Do you think Iranians would like to become members?

Omid: I think I would like to go on board.

Hoshang: I would like to become a member as well. But nobody has asked us. Nobody has asked us to become a member or to come to the member's meetings.

Thorsten: But if the church asked you you would do that?

Hoshang: Yes!

Thorsten: Do you have any idea why the church hasn't asked you yet?

Hoshang: No, I don't know.

Thorsten: Where would you like to see the Iranian group let's say in five years time?

Hoshang: I would like to see the Iranians with the English Christians, in the English service.

Thorsten: What needs to happen so this can become reality?

Hoshang: We must learn more about English culture, English customs, and of course the English language.

Thorsten: A few weeks ago Peter announced that the leadership would like to have the Iranians in the main service and have a translation of the sermon, a translation in Farsi. What do you think about that?

Hoshang: I think it's a really great idea, but once a month is not good enough. It should be more than once a month.

Thorsten: When other people are talking about an Iranian pastor for the group what is your reaction to that?

Hoshang: If Peter Lewis decides to bring in an Iranian pastor I will accept that. I belong to this church and everything the leadership decides I will accept.

Thorsten: So you think it would be a good idea to have an Iranian pastor for some time?

Hoshang: No, I don't agree with having an Iranian pastor. It's not necessary to have an Iranian pastor. A pastor for the Iranian group could be English or of any nationality.

Thorsten: What do you think about that Omid?

Omid: I think I agree with Hoshang. A pastor doesn't have to be Iranian. Sometimes Iranians make more problems than other people. Iranians who come here want to know more about English culture. In my opinion a pastor for the Iranian group should be an English person. He can help them. And they respect English more than other Iranian.

Thorsten: O.k, why do Iranians sometimes cause more problems?

Omid: Because we are such a close community, we know everything about each other. And sometimes somebody says something and upsets other people. Iranian people are a little bit gossipy. When I first came here we had a lot of problems with that. But now people have grown in their Christian faith and we have less problems with gossiping. If English people hadn't come to us and involved with us it would have caused more problems. Iranian people couldn't sort that out. They helped us a lot.

Thorsten: In terms of your faith or in terms of organising things?

Omid: Yea, English people know a lot of things about the rules and everything. They helped us a lot. Most of the English people who involve with us they are really humble. And Iranian people respect them.

Thorsten: Is there anything you would like to add?

Hoshang: If we had an Iranian pastor he would transform the Iranian group at Cornerstone into a separate church. I don't want us. An Iranian pastor will separate us from Cornerstone. I want to be integrated. If I was in Iran I would like to have an Iranian pastor, because Iran we've got only Iranian people. But here we have different nationalities.

Thorsten: Let's finish with the word integration. What can Cornerstone do to make it easier for the Iranians to be integrated?

Hoshang: We try to integrate and they have to help us. They need to show interest in us, speak to us or mix with us. I think there are some people here at Cornerstone who are racists. But I try not to think about them. But there are lots of good people in the church as well.

Thorsten: Why do you think they're racists?

Hoshang: Because they don't come to us, they are not warm, they are not friendly to us.

Omid: I think the English are not racists. They are reserved, they are not racists. That's my opinion. They look at us, and we look different. They are scared of us sometimes. And we are scared of them. We have to break down this wall.

Hoshang: No, I think some people are racists. Some people are racists. For some of them the colour of your skin is very important. They don't speak to some Iranians because they can't speak English well and they look different, their face is really dark.

We should look at people's hearts and what they look like. But at Cornerstone it's only a small problem, it's not that important.

Thorsten: Do you want to add anything, Omid?

Omid: I think it is really, really good to integrate with English people. They have to help us. If they don't help we are not gonna do that. Everything that most people know about Iranians they get from TV. They think all Iranians are Muslims, they are different, they are suicide bombers. But when they get to know us they really like us, they feel for us.

Thorsten: Someone from Cornerstone made a very interesting suggestion the other day. She said: I would like every Cornerstone member to go to the Farsi meeting at least once. I think that's an interesting idea.

Hoshang: The members of the church have to think about integration. We don't know anything about that, we don't have any experience with that.

Thorsten: O.k, thank you very much, That was very helpful.

Hoshang: You're welcome.

Interview No. A16

Interviewee: Nima

Marital Status: Single

Occupation: Student

Interviewer: Thorsten Prill

Date: 2nd October 2005

Duration: 45 min

Thorsten: Nima, can you please tell how you became a Christian?

Nima: The way I became a Christian was I came to church once, Cornerstone Church. The first time I came to Cornerstone they were playing a song, 'My Jesus my Saviour'. That made me kind of I wanted to cry. But I kind of ignored that. But then the second time a came people were clapping and they were happy. I didn't you what was wrong with me. And on that day there an international student day and I stayed. After the service a guy called Jerry came to me and said 'If you read the gospel of John you'll find out about Christianity. And he wants to meet up with me.' And also Andy Balsan. I don't know happened but to be honest God spoke to my heart. And it was something like he was pushing me or pulling me to himself. And he was saying 'You have no choice, I'm your God and your saviour. I could hear your voice'. And I gave my heart to Jesus. But of course I didn't have the full knowledge. I had bible studies in my house for one or two years with Andy and Jerry. That was a real blessing. And through their ministry - and of course I was seeking as well finding out more about Christ, so I had the right milk and I grew. I think so. Yes, I think that was all about it.

Thorsten: What was the reason why you came to church the first time?

Nima: Because I had a few friends, asylum seekers who couldn't speak English. They needed a translator. They wanted to be baptised. And they were saying 'These guys don't believe we are Christians. Come and translate for us!' At that time the number of Iranians in Cornerstone was five people. There were people coming and going. But there was a core group of five.

Thorsten: You would say that your meetings with Andy and Jerry very helpful for you to become a Christian.

Nima: Yes of course. I mean, you know many people give their heart to Jesus, but I guess it's not only giving your heart to Jesus.

How much of your heart and how you give. And when you say 'I gave my heart to Jesus what do you mean? In Christianity there are many cults, many heresies. They claim they gave their heart to Jesus. But their understanding of Jesus was different. To be honest after two weeks I prayed to Jesus I said 'I'm yours.' And I felt a change in my life but I didn't have a good knowledge. If you were coming to me and you were telling me Jesus and God the Father were one, I would believe you because I didn't have knowledge. But the good discipleship from Jerry and Andy gave me a better understanding of the basis of Christianity and the truth.

Thorsten: You have become a member of Cornerstone a while ago. How important is membership for you? Why did you take that step?

Nima: Of course membership of a church is different from membership of a bingo club or a political party that you support. I became a member of Cornerstone because I find myself if am away from Cornerstone, where I was very involved, my life is involved, is the church I was born, and can I can the Cornerstone as the church of Christ, I can see it's his body. All the Cornerstone teaching, the doctrine. To me it's biblical. I believe in that. It's important to be a member of a church. To know the truth and to know what they follow. So I found out and I found my brothers and sisters, and I found that I can be part of this body. And of course as the church pray for me and want to pray for the church. But when you are a member you are more committed. When you are a member is like as well as you got God's authority in your life you got the church authority. People who can lead you. People who can advise you when you need it. To be a member of a church means not to be a member of the Bluecoat School but of the body of Christ. But in a special way. Of course if you are not member of a church it doesn't mean that you are not part of the body of Christ. But it's like important for you to know where you are standing in this body.

Thorsten: When you look at the refugees and asylum seekers at Cornerstone they are not members of the church. Do you think that membership would be important for them too?

Nima: To be honest, most of the Iranians have been in faith for a number of years, four years, seven years. The thing is when you tell people something about membership, for example when you say 'O.K people you want to become members they can fill in this application form and then they need one of the elders to sponsor them.' That is not good enough. They should have a teaching about the church, about the body of Christ. Maybe if I wouldn't go to bible college, if I didn't have the knowledge I didn't care. There are many English people in the church who are not members. There are 280 members but how many people are in the services. So you should have good knowledge. 'What do you mean by being a member?' Is it member of Cornerstone Evangelical Church, member of an organisation, a Christian club? Or do you want to have a special position, a knowing position in the body of Christ. I'm sure if you explain that, if somebody would come and teach and preach on the body of Christ and the church they would follow. More people would come. They should have the application form in Persian as well. So they can read and understand it. You know, it would be good to have someone from the same culture, a guest preacher from London. They can relate the church to the people better because they know the culture.

Thorsten: I've got the impression that the Iranians at the church consider themselves part of Cornerstone, though they are not officially members, because they come here, they got their friends here. Is that a typical Iranian attitude?

Nima: Of course Iranians when they go somewhere they think is their home. But the thing is many of them don't know what's membership. Some of them don't have a concept of membership. I guess if you told them in Persian they would have a better understanding of this concept.

Thorsten: I'd like to change the subject. Let's talk about integration, the integration of Iranians at Cornerstone. I know that some Iranians mentioned in the past that they would like to have a separate church other Iranians said 'No we would like to be with Cornerstone.' What is your view on that?

Nima: My opinion is people are different. There are some who want a Charismatic Church and there are some who want to go to a Baptist church. This is the mentality people got.

Thorsten: You mean in the Iranian group?

Nima: No in general! Not all people in Nottingham they want to come to Cornerstone. One of the reason is finding the identity. As an Iranian coming to Cornerstone, whether old-comer or newcomer you have to find your identity in that church. Doesn't matter if it's a German church, British church, Scottish Church. If you find your identity and you know where you are. One of the great things is to bring somebody to explain them what it means to be part of a church, to be a member of the church; and to explain the kingdom of God. If you explain that very well and clearly they will have a better understanding and you will have more people who are willing to be part of Cornerstone. And position is another thing. People who are in the minority want to know what their position is, where they are standing. For example if you look at different countries like Iraq. Kurdish people were fighting against Arabs for many years, they were looking for identity. Because when they were at the parliament there were no Kurdish members. When they were looking at the president, the prime minister, they were all Arabs. They were all Arabs. But now they don't want to be independent any more, because they president of Iraq is a Kurdish guy. Because they are as well as part of the body, they are part of the leadership. People who want to have a separated church they think they couldn't find their identity. They say: 'They are nice to us, but we don't really belong to the church, because if we belonged to the church they would involve us more.' That's the human mentality. For example, why did the black churches start in the USA? Because all the pastors and elders they were white. And they blacks were coming as slaves. That was one of the reasons they wanted to separate, why they wanted a black church. That was a mistake, because all sides didn't have a good understanding of each other.

Thorsten: So what you are saying is that it would be helpful for integration if Cornerstone would involve the Iranians more?

Nima: Involve them more. You know Iranians don't ask you they want to be asked. It's a very different culture. It's not like asking people 'Who wants to help with tea and coffee?' It's like 'Reza, you have to help the church. You have to come and do the coffee!' Not of course in pushy way, but in a wise way. Because you know you have to have a good understanding of the culture. If you go to an Iranian church it doesn't matter if you serve coffee or preach as long as you do that. When you go back to an Iranian church, the pastor might come and say 'You got a nice voice. We want to ask you to join the worship group.' And if you then say 'I'm

not sure if my voice is really that good' he will say 'No, we want to train you, because we think you would be useful.'

Thorsten: So that means they need to be asked and they need to be offered training if necessary.

Nima: And another thing: little Iranian bits in the church. If they had something in Persian about the Iranian group in the notice sheet. A few sentences. They have to find, to see themselves. It says 'Iranian group in the drama group' but it's in English.

Another thing. In the Newcastle church they had eight people. They started to have one Persian song in the main service, one Persian song. The church had 250 people. After ten months 120 Iranians came. The church grew from eight to 120. Is that not fabulous.

And English people were singing with them, they did not understand the songs but they were singing the songs. The sad news is when the number grew they separated them completely. They said: 'You can your own church now. We don't want you.'

Thorsten: Why do you think did they do that?

Nima: In that church it became crowded. The English people said that they didn't have enough time and that they wanted to have more English songs. There were 250 English people and 120 Iranians. 120 Iranians in how many months? Eight months. But 250 was the work of 25 years. And they said if it grows like that there will be 600 Iranians and we have to change everything from English to Persian. So they separated. Now they have 40 people. Now we have two Iranian churches and one that is part of that English church. But 80 people left, because they couldn't find their identity in that church any more. I spoke to the leaders of that church and they said 'We made a mistake.' It's very true. Some people who stick to Islam because they find their identity in Islam. They can relate to Islam. They have to have Persian songs. They used to translate the English songs, but the music is not Persian. And some people can't their identity.

Thorsten: So it's not good enough to translate English songs into Persian, they have to be Persian songs. O.k. where do you see the group here in the future? Where do you see it going?

Nima: I'm sure they will have an Iranian group. I'm encouraging Cornerstone because Cornerstone is the best church for Iranians in Nottingham. But I guess it's time to move on one more step. If an English person would come to church for five or six years and he had for example opened his house for bible study and he has helped in the church as well as growing in his own life he'd have to integrate more. Yesterday was a good sign of integration (*Referring to the Elam conference*) for Iranians who want to help in Cornerstone. But they had some English people who came to help, some of them were office staff. They were very helpful but how much do English people want to integrate? This is very important. There are some people like David or Ken. Some people are think when Ken is coming 'He's a nice old pastor. He wants to be nice to refugees.' Few young English people want to have Iranian friends. You need that more. Pastoral care is very important. Peter Lewis has to come more in Iranian service. Not only to have Iranians in the main service. He has to make an effort, same with Colin. They love these guys. They are the leaders. But they shouldn't feel like second class citizens. They should feel the closeness. I mean I know it's a matter of time and of organisation. I mean it was good if Colin or Peter or someone was on the stage for a few minute and said: Hello, guys, we invited you. I'm here because I'm your leader. Where was the shepherd yesterday, where was the Iranian shepherd. David, yes. David is a nice guy. But if you asked Iranians 'Who is the pastor of the church? Who are the pastors?'

I'm very honest if you go to school all the children are sitting there and it's a father's day, and all the fathers are coming, then 'Where is my father?' Where is my shepherd, where is my pastor? Pastoral care is very important. How much do we spend with international students? What are the fruits? And how much time do we spend with the Iranians as the pastors? Pastors and elders have a huge responsibility for pastoral care. Cornerstone's teaching is fantastic, but fatherly an old guy like Peter – at least if I'm busy and I can't come I'd say 'I'm sorry I can't do that.' I talked to an American chap. He said: 'When I came to the church I tried to visit all the members. And when the numbers grew I asked the elders to go and visit them and help them.' But pastoral care is so important.

Thorsten: Would it be of any help if Cornerstone had a pastor specially for the Iranians? What do you think?

Nima: If the pastor for the Iranian church is one of the elders of Cornerstone that's good, but if you want to bring a pastor who has just to deal with the Iranians that's not good. He would be separated from the whole of Cornerstone. You would have nothing to do with Cornerstone. And you think: 'I'm separate. Why should I have the church here. I could have it in the city centre.' An Iranian pastor should be an elder of Cornerstone.

Thorsten: Or someone who has other responsibilities, other ministries in Cornerstone?

Nima: Yeah, could be anyone. But that person should be involved with Cornerstone. He should be recognised as one of the leaders of Cornerstone, but not only as the leader of the Iranian group.

Thorsten: Yes, I think that's very helpful. Thank you very much, Nima.

Interview No. B01

Interviewee: Angela Chong
Marital Status: Single
Occupation: Finance Manager
Church: Nottingham Chinese Christian Church
Involvement: Worship Leader, House Group Leader, Sunday School Teacher, formerly Church Council Member
Interviewer: Thorsten Prill
Date: 11 May 2005
Duration: 1 hour

Thorsten: Can you tell me something about your involvement with the Chinese Church in Nottingham.

Angela: Yes. Presently I am 31 years old and I've been a Christian and heavily involved in church for quite a while. I was lucky enough to be born into a Christian family and a part of the church as a fellowship. Most recently I am heavily involved in the English speaking ministry service, which started in September 04, predominantly helping out in organisation, leading the worship. I'm a musician and also heavily involved in the fellowship, which is like a house group, called Barnabas fellowship, which has been running for a number of years. And also, I teach the Sunday school as well. That's reaching mostly – I teach the 5 to 7 year olds children.

Thorsten: When did the English speaking service start?

Angela: It started in September 04, but the idea has been there for a number of years. David Wells, the church adviser, has really been the visionary as well as the council even in the days when I was in the council a number of years ago. But the church wasn't ready for it. It needed that because basically the church had a bilingual service, which really wasn't ticking all the criteria boxes, which you need when you've got a mixed congregation of people in their fifties and sixties speaking Cantonese and also myself, British Born Chinese speaking English. So the services in the old days were very stilted and either too traditional for us, the young ones, or

too liberal for the older ones. And trying to listen to a sermon when it's broken up in two different languages was very distracting and you didn't get the full message. You didn't really feel it, which, you know, isn't fair on the sermon speaker. Plus I think most pastors and speakers get used to speaking for x number of minutes on a roll and the bilingual service were stunted because they could only have twenty minutes, but the sermon would last for forty or fifty minutes depending on the translation. So, not very good, really. At the time we did the best we could, but it wasn't fulfilling all the needs of all the congregation.

Thorsten: ... of both, the elderly Cantonese speaking and the younger English speaking people...

Angela: Yes, it wasn't fulfilling the needs at all. It was all very hit and miss. Sometimes you would get the odd speaker who really inspired and it didn't even matter the translation. You would get the message and you would really enjoy it. But then more often than that the speaker would, hm, you would not get the full message. I remember coming out of many a service thinking '*I really did not enjoy that. What were they saying*' you know, thinking that I kind of wasted my time, wishing I was in an English service instead, with English people and listen to it in one go. Because then at least I would fit in to a certain extent. Because at the end of the day I've been brought up in the English environment.

Thorsten: So it was a practical reason why you introduced the English speaking service?

Angela: Yes, it was mostly practical so that then by doing what we've done we as the young generation, the second generation now get all our needs fulfilled. Because we need a very much mixture. There is still the Chinese side of it. You know, we are all Chinese and we've got that culture. But then we can implement anything *we* want – a little bit more of a lively service, we can listen to the service in one go. And I've been told as well – I've heard, my parents who go to the Cantonese speaking service that it's really good there now. It's just shorter and sweeter and it's better. It's much, much improved now for both sides. Saying that, both services are very different now because of the fact that you've split, you segregated what was a forcibly amalgamated situation.

Thorsten: So what kind of people would come to the English speaking service now?

Angela: People like myself who have been born in Britain, Chinese background but first language is English who want something a little bit more upbeat. We also have a lot of Chinese students as well as those who speak reasonably good English or want to learn. We've got some of the young teenagers now coming up from the Sunday School. And even some English people. We've got a few brothers and sisters who are dating someone who is Italian or English or what have you. They are coming now to find out what's going on. So a real mix, really. But predominantly people in their teens, twenties and thirties, around that age group. Not many people are older than that.

Thorsten: Ok, language is an issue, but why would people come to the English speaking service and not go to an English church? Why do they come to an English speaking service at the Chinese church if English is their first language, they were born here.

Angela: Because at the end of the day, even speaking from personal experience – for example when I'm teaching occasionally when we have our one week in the month a combined service it clashes with my Sunday School teaching duties and I go to an English church and I very much enjoy it. There is one in Hucknall. But at the end of the day, even if it is my language, if it is catered for English people, it's different. It feels different. When I'm in the English speaking service at the Chinese Church, I'm with people like myself who know what it is like to be Chinese, but happen to speak English. If you are going to an English church it's just so English. You do feel like you are set apart, you are different. Because at the end of the day you can't get past the fact that if you are with a group of Chinese people, but who all speak English, we are the same and you can all focus on the one thing that matters, which is God. If you go to an English church there is a cultural difference and if you are very quick and you can amalgamate yourself into it, then that's fine. But at the end of the day people see you as Chinese and it's different. You have to get past that racial barrier still, even amongst Christians sometimes. So you don't feel completely at home. And I think for a lot of people – non-Christians, it is hard enough to approach a church, let alone get past the racial barrier.

Thorsten: So, you think that there is a racial problem in the church in general?

Angela: In people's perception, not necessarily church. But in a way that first instinct of someone who sees me, they see a Chinese person. As they get to know me they see me as

Angela who happens to be Chinese. And I have asked people that and that's a difference. Now, for a lot of people who don't have a problem with ethnic minorities and other nationalities, that's great. But predominantly, Britain as a whole is very closed in. We are an island and it is not as open to other nationalities as other countries are. For example I've been to other countries like France and Germany and Italy. And I've spoken to people who lived in France for a year and I have lived in Germany for a year. And I know for a fact that England is less tolerant - though improving slowly - of other nationalities. If you look different, speak different, they just think you are different. And they treat you differently and that's predominantly the way it is. If you are in a Christian environment, it helps. But at the end of the day, how can you override years and years of generations of, oh, they are just white, they stick with their own. (laughs) Sorry, what was the question?

Thorsten: Is this a shared experience of other people in the Chinese church?

Angela: Yes, my brother would be able to share this and my best friend Wei Yee. One thing about being in church, not necessarily in your building, but being in your group is that, I think the most important thing is that you feel at home and open to sharing about anything. And if you are in an environment where you know that people have had the same upbringing as you, who did the same things you did when you grew up, all the racial discriminations and attacks, it means that you've already got something in common, a kindred spirit. And it means that when the students come over they know that you understand to a certain extent what they are going through as you've been through it. And you share the love of the Chinese food, you share the love of the Chinese culture, the Chinese New Year and what have you and all these things that remind them of home. And then with the language not being a problem now as it's no longer a bilingual service we can focus on the message at hand, which is the important thing.

In the English church it's very English. The language is fine, but then they'll talk about the things that they do, Lent etc. They don't talk about Chinese New Year. They won't have that same common link. Yes the link is there to a point, but then there is a point where it's different. For example at the Chinese Church we don't have Christenings and things like that. But in an English church they would. So that's a bit foreign. In the Chinese church we do have

people who do sing together, but we don't have a choir like the Anglican Church. And in our church we don't have the denominations, we are just Christian. But English churches all have different denominations, different labels, different doctrines. That gets further confusing that makes you feel *urgh, that's a bit weird/strange* So, that's the reason why the first choice would be to be in the Chinese Church, but just happens to be slightly younger culture, English speaking.

Thorsten: So, what I can hear from that is that a lot of young Chinese speak English as their first language. But culturally there are still links with the Chinese background.

Angela: Yes, because you were brought up in it from day one. And if you have close links with your family and friends, you still live it every day. We are just an amalgamation of the two. But at the end of the day we are Chinese and we have the love of the Chinese.

Thorsten: So you speak English like an English person, but you feel Chinese.

Angela: Yeah, especially as a lot of the Chinese first generations still don't speak much English. They rely on their children. I am lucky that I don't have to. But most of my friends are still translating for their parents so that keeps the link very strong. It means that you have to understand your parents and the Chinese culture is very much *respect your parents* . For example, that's another divide. You know the English, maybe not so much the Christian side, but they don't look at their parents the same way, with the respect. They don't have that link, that culture. I grew up knowing that I respect my parents and this is regardless of you being a Christian – you respect, love and honour them and obey. When I grew up telling my friends that's how I'm brought up, it is very foreign to them. To them it's more like when they hit 16, they leave the house and that's it. They get on with their own life. They wouldn't even consider starting to give their parents money. But that is the Chinese upbringing. You don't excel anything you do. Because otherwise it's failure. And with the English it's completely different. I have friends, when they passed their exams they get money. For me, I just got a *not bad*. So, that's very different, you see.

Thorsten: I find that interesting what you are saying, because usually people think when you are born in the country and you speak the language you become part of the culture. But what

you are saying is a lot of BBC's that are born in this country, second generation, they speak the language, but they are still very much part of their parents' culture.

Angela: Yes, very much so. Anyone who has a good relationship with their parents and if you are a Christian as well, you do. You are very closely linked to your roots. I know many people who have travelled to Hong Kong and China to discover their background. In fact I am going to Hong Kong this November to see my grandma. The only people I know who don't fit that category and don't fit the English category either are people who have completely rebelled against the Chinese upbringing, but then they are not completely English either. They try and throw themselves – like I know a couple who have gone to London and immerse themselves in that kind of way - even smoke, drink a lot and stuff, they probably swear and have gone completely crazy and mad. But at the end of the day they are not seen as completely English by the English. So you can't do that. You never, never get away from who you are. At the end of the day your roots and your background is part of you.

Thorsten: Do you think that's true for the next generation, the third generation as well or would it be different?

Angela: I think, I know it's different. Because I see the youngsters that I teach. They are more westernised. There are still some of the roots there. But less so. You are relying on – say my generation – if I get married and have children how much of my upbringing am I going to transfer on to them? You are relying on that and I think that's more hit and miss. With my parents' generation there is no way of getting away from this because they are Chinese brought up in Hong Kong. I am gonna absorb what they pass to me. With me it's hit and miss because I'm a mix. So it's gonna filter down further along the line. The third generation will be more westernised, more English, more Americanised because there is a lot of that influence, less Chinese. Possibly, the third generation will fit into an English church more.

Thorsten: And it's also a question of whether people marry English people or not. Does that happen or is it still the exception?

Angela: Personally speaking, my parents would prefer I marry someone Chinese, but given the choice they'd rather I marry someone who is a Christian regardless of whether he is English or what have you and I agree with that. Statistically, when I went to the COCM

Summer School a few years back they were teaching that there are less Chinese Christian brothers out there than Chinese Christian sisters. So if I'm hoping to marry a Christian person he may very well be English rather than Chinese.

Thorsten: ok, and that would be accepted in the church?

Angela: That would be accepted. It wouldn't be frowned upon, but I know that some of the elders would niggle and say *oh, you marry an English person* you know they can't help themselves. My parents wouldn't have a problem with that.

Thorsten: You introduced the English speaking service on practical reasons, which is understandable. Were there any other reasons as well? Because when you want to attract people, English speaking, from your generation – did that play a role?

Angela: Yes, if someone say like myself who is a reasonably mature Christian, at least for my age, early thirties, wasn't enjoying the service. I knew I was going backwards rather than forwards. You know I was going more for duty than anything rather than enjoying it and learning more. Can you imagine what it would be like for when you are trying to reach someone and persuade them to come to one service what it would be like. It would be so hard. At least, the way the service is now, is that we stand more of a chance of reaching people because we are aiming for them now at that age and at that level and can adapt more as well. For instance, before we would only use the songbook and it would be like really traditional. Whereas now, we've actually got the OHP and we use like more multi-media stuff. It's more things, that Ok, you don't necessarily have to have, but it is more up to date and more attractive. And for the age group we are looking at – students and working people – that's the kind of thing they are gonna expect. If they went to – even just a presentation – they expect it to be a bit more high tech. They would expect that and would think *oh, they are not all fuddy duddy people*. They associate the church to be all fuddy duddy. We can show them that *no, we are just like you, this is what we believe*.

Thorsten: So, what will you say is the mission of your church? What is the vision of your church?

Angela: Right, the mission of the church is to reach all the different Chinese that are in Nottingham at the moment. That is a big tall order. We are talking about the Mandarin Chinese who are mainland, the Cantonese speaking as well, people from Hong Kong coming over, students. And then we are talking about BBCs and students who speak English and we need to have something in place for the youngsters of today, because they are coming up and they are speaking English. And at the moment we are losing them at the age where there used to be the gap on teenage hood to adulthood. And what – suddenly ask them to go to a bilingual Cantonese speaking service? That's just weird, you know. You go off to college and uni and there's enough distractions there. And if there's nothing in place that will be awful. And then we are losing them. So we are trying to grow inwardly at the moment. But really, I know the council has got this as a view to grow outwardly, to minister to others as well. But we need those services and house groups in place. If you are going to go out and speak to people, visit them and say *hey, here is the Cantonese speaking service for you, and by the way there is an English speaking for your kids* – you've got to have it there and it wasn't there before. That's the reason why it's there.

Thorsten: Do you know how many Chinese live in Nottingham/shire?

Angela: I'm not the best person to ask about that. I think David Wells or Kwok Long or Bernard – but I think the last count was thousands. And we aren't reaching that at all. The Cantonese speaking side have maybe 50 – 60 in the congregation and the English speaking about 30. So with the kids that's maybe just over a hundred. But there is thousands now and we are just not reaching them at all.

Thorsten: How many come to the Mandarin speaking service?

Angela: Oh, yeah, the Mandarin side – probably about 40 – 50. That's grown leaps and bounce. As soon as that service started it was amazing. So many people, restaurant people would come to that as well. So before they didn't have anything, just because of the language barrier I think. So, yeah, there is about 50 odd there easily. So if anything, that's grown much quicker.

Thorsten: So do you think for a Chinese church like yours it is easier to reach people than for an English speaking church?

Angela: Definitely, for the Mandarin and Cantonese side. And our side – it certainly caters for me better, and my brothers as well. Without the service being the way it is I would go to an English speaking church. But I wouldn't feel completely at home. I would feel nearly at home, but not completely. I would have to work a lot harder to change myself to fit in. Whereas I think *Why should I have to change who I am?* to fit in?

Thorsten: When we look at the New Testament - a lot of the early churches founded by Paul were more multi-cultural with people from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Would your church be open for people from different ethnic backgrounds?

Angela: I would love to say yes.

Thorsten: Let's focus on what you think and then what the church thinks...

Angela: At the moment, what we are doing now is a step in the right direction. I would say it is easier for our congregation - for example we have someone who is Italian, she comes to the service, she is Chinese. Her first language isn't English. But then his is - so they obviously come to our service. And we wouldn't have a problem with that because at the end of the day we are a mix of English/Chinese. The Cantonese speaking side and the Mandarin side - I don't think so. The whole point why they work well is because they are set in their own ways - the Mandarin side is for the Mandarin speaking and the Cantonese is set for more people of my mother's generation – 40ies, 50ies, 60ies... It would be like asking an English church to suddenly accept Germans and Italians. It would be so weird and so different. But it would be nice if we could do that. I think that at the moment the one that is more flexible and more open to sort of outward influences and different nationalities is probably the English one. Because it is a mix already.

Thorsten: I would like to invite you to dream now - just for a second. What should the church look like in 10 years time? Or let's say in 5 years time.

Angela: I'd like the English speaking side to be strong, big in numbers, but not too big. Thirty is fine. I'd like it a bit bigger. But what I mean is that I'd like to know that we reached the Sunday School kids. I'd like to know that they know they can go when they are in their teens. And when they go to college or university - when they come back they know that they can

come to this service. And we don't lose them. I am very conscious of the fact that we lost a lot of people that I used to go to youth group with. Because at university they didn't go to a Christian Union, they didn't go to church. And then they came back and there was nothing there for them. I'd like to know that that's growing because we've retained the families. And the students know that they can come to that as well. And so, let's say if for example I or someone in that English speaking service started to date someone who is English, then we know there is a place you both can go, where your other half could then learn about God, about Jesus, if they weren't a Christian. Or if they were, you can both come together. So I'd like that. And I think that is where we need to go. If we don't, we are going to lose all the youths and the opportunities if you are hoping to marry someone and be a Christian couple together, you are gonna lose that if you don't have that common place you can go.

For the Cantonese speaking and the Mandarin side - that needs to grow as it is. But the most important thing that the church is trying to do - and I don't know how successful it will be - is to keep a link there. And at the moment they have done by having the first or second week a Holy Communion combined service. That is a good idea and at the moment it is doable in the sizes. But if it grows in numbers or as the cultural divide happens... I don't know. It's good. It will show the differences, but also show that you are trying to be together. But it will be hard as well. But I think it is important to do that because at the end of the day you can't get away from the fact that the church started from the Chinese side. So I'd like to see them grow, grow in their own bits, but still have contact as well. I don't know if maybe rather than have a combined service we better have a potluck dinner or something.

Thorsten: So, more socials...?

Angela: Yeah, something more social, because Chinese people tend to do social things very well. And that's a nice way of the elders talking with the younger ones as well. That might be better rather than trying to make the Holy Communion combined. Because at the moment I still think the Holy Communion is a bit stunted. I would just like to have the Holy Communion, rather than having to translate it into two other languages. And it takes for ages. But at the moment it's the way they want to do it.

Thorsten: So what you do at the moment - you say you've got a multi-congregational approach. You've got different congregations in one church. And you try to link them through services? But you say it might be better to do more socials and try to keep people together. But of course the English speaking work is growing. There might be a shift within the church.

Angela: Yes. At the moment the church relies very much on all the English speaking congregation to be the Sunday School teachers. All of us are from that side. All of us are BBCs, pretty much, and we go to the English speaking side. My one concern is that they rely on that too heavily. I don't really know how they are gonna get around it. But, hm, in a way it could be good. Because it means that we can then say to them that hey, we come to this service. And we see some of the teenagers doing that now. But in a way my concern is that by doing that they are definitely making a third generation more westernised, because we are westernised. I don't know if they thought about that though. I didn't really think about that until now. But I don't know if they mind that. Maybe there is no getting away from it. Because the longer a family lives in Britain, the more British they are going to become. And things are going to change with time.

Thorsten: Hopefully, things are going to change, especially with the racial relationships and the problems that Chinese people had when they grew up.

Angela: But in order to stop, hm... - for example, if ten years from now, if it carried on the way it is, the divide between the elder generation, the Cantonese side and the Mandarin - the Mandarin are sort of in between, because they have students as well - the divide between the older generation and the younger generation is going to be bigger and it won't just be language. It will become cultural. It's almost like - whatever model that is decided upon now in year 2005 will not apply in year 2010, and it will definitely not apply in year 2015. It has to be continually monitored every two years. Because at the end of the day things are always changing - even in Britain. So there is no one true model that stands for x number of years. It will have to be flux and flexible.

Thorsten: I think I have learnt a lot. Thank you very much.

Interview No. B02

Interviewee: Bernard Low

Marital Status: Married, three children

Occupation: Pastor, Lecturer

Church: Nottingham Chinese Christian Church

Involvement: Pastor for the English-speaking Work

Interviewer: Thorsten Prill

Date: 20 May 2005

Duration: 1 hour

Thorsten: Can you tell me something about the Chinese Church in general, about membership, how the Chinese Church came into being from what you know.

Bernard: We have recently just celebrated our 34th anniversary. That includes the Graduate ... of church for I think about 11 eleven years. And before that as a Bible study group. So the church started as a Bible study group for students, but it eventually grew into a church. And the first few people who made up the fellowship would be Hong Kong Chinese.

Thorsten: So why did they come to England in the first place?

Bernard: To study - partly because Hong Kong used to be a colony of England. So that gave them access to this country. And I think more so with 1997 approaching, many Hong Kong Chinese decided to migrate here to study, just before China took over Hong Kong. So right now as it stands the Chinese Church has three congregations. The largest would be made up of Hong Kong Chinese and they will be in the Cantonese service. Then the other two congregations would be made up of Chinese from mainland China primarily and the English congregation would be made up of British Born Chinese and other international students.

Thorsten: And the mainland Chinese - what is their background, what is their reason for coming to Britain?

Bernard: For most of them they came here to study. So most of the people who attend the Chinese service would be students.

Thorsten: So both the mainland and the British Born Chinese have a student background?

Bernard: The same applies to the Hong Kong Chinese. But for the Hong Kong Chinese - quite a lot of them came here to work. So the older members would be in the Take Away business.

Thorsten: The English service - we know that it started last year in September. What is the reason for introducing the English service?

Bernard: Ok, I think that is a good question. For quite some time the leaders had been discussing how the church can be relevant to their local born Chinese and how to meet their spiritual needs. Because I think there had been incidents where the children of these migrant Chinese stopped coming to church or they would go to English speaking churches. So in order not to allow this to continue they need their own English speaking service to cater for the British Born Chinese and those who speak English. That was the primary reason.

Thorsten: So the primary reason was an internal reason?

Bernard: That's right. But that doesn't also stop them from looking outwards. While the main reason is to cater to the English speaking Chinese, they also recognise that - you know - with time when these children grew up with English speaking friends, intermarry with the English - so there is a reason to reach out to the English people, too.

Thorsten: What are the motives for your people to come to the Nottingham Chinese church? Ok, language is one motive, are there other motives you can think of?

Bernard: I think so, you seek to find your own kind of people who come from the same country, speak your language. So you feel a sense of identity. For example - in my case - when I first came I tried to go to an English church, but I had difficulty in integrating after several months. After trying I decided to go to the Chinese Church where I can find my own kind.

Thorsten: Can I ask you what kind of difficulties that were when you tried to integrate into an English speaking church? What problems did you meet there?

Bernard: Well, I did not find the people trying their best to reach out to me. I would be basically left on my own after the main service. And also it is very difficult to integrate to their circle.

Thorsten: As a foreigner?

Bernard: Yes, that's right, as a foreigner.

Thorsten: So do you think there are reservations in church of foreigners? Is that the experience?

Bernard: Well, I am really not sure about that. I mean, on the surface they could be very friendly and welcoming. But I think if you want to really connect with them and make friends this is where the actual difficulty is. I'm not sure if this is because of the colour, or because they don't know really how to integrate non-English. I really have no idea.

Thorsten: So there was a cultural gap? And that was difficult to bridge?

Bernard: Yes.

Thorsten: I have spoken to other people at the Chinese Church. What they said was that they wanted a Chinese Church - what they appreciate is what you said that they want to be with their own people, but the reasons they gave were bad experience in society in general, discrimination because of their racial background. Have you come across that as well, personally and as a pastor?

Bernard: So far in my experience I haven't encountered any form of discrimination or any other bad experiences, apart from the fact that I had difficulty integrating into the English church.

Thorsten: Can you think of any other arguments or reasons that justifies the existence of a minority ethnic church? What you have described is kind of a cultural oasis, where people feel comfortable. But can you think of any other reasons or arguments why the minority ethnic church could be a good thing to have?

Bernard: Yes, I think some reasons will include the fact that we'll be more effective in reaching our own people in terms of evangelism or mission, because we know their background. We speak their language. So in terms of effectiveness in outreach, I think this is the key reason.

Thorsten: So, it's outreach, it's spiritual oasis, it's bad experience in society. That reminds me of the homogenous unit principle. So would you say that there is some truth about that?

Bernard: Yes, I think there is something to be said for it.

Thorsten: But then you have to be an outward looking church. You have to be a mission minded church?

Bernard: Yes, certainly.

Thorsten: Now, let me ask you. Is the Chinese Church such a church?

Bernard: Well, I do not think so. This is my honest opinion. Although they try to be a purpose driven church - and that means to have an evangelistic focus. I think there is no concept to really reach out to the Chinese community here. So, if there is any form of outreach, it is more personal - you invite your friends or your relatives. But there isn't a systematic programme as such.

Thorsten: And that's a problem?!

Bernard: Yes, that's a problem and the leaders recognise that.

Thorsten: That can become a problem for the church in future - for the existence of the church.

Bernard: Yes, correct. So, I think linked to this I also want to mention the fact that there isn't a systematic discipleship programme to build up those who come in. So, I think these are some of the weaknesses in the Chinese Church at the moment. But the leaders are aware of these weaknesses.

Thorsten: What needs to be done from your perspective, in your view, to change that?

Bernard: The church has decided to hold a special weekend. They have invited some external consultants – a pastor and his wife. And he would be in our midst to interview representatives from the different fellowships and ministries to see how they view the church, what they think are the needs of the church, what they think the church should become. This is part of the review process. And hopefully through this process the church would be able to re-focus their mission and also to catch the vision and to take the great commission seriously.

Thorsten: If this doesn't happen, if the church stays a more inward looking church, where would you see the future of the church, let's say in 5 or 10 years? Where is the church going if it continues like it is at the moment?

Bernard: If this continues as status quo, I think it would just be any ordinary social club, where members just come together for cultural reasons, because they meet their friends there. Once a month there is an Agape feast, that kind of thing. So it may lose its distinctive as a Christian church. This would be my concern.

Thorsten: That's an experience I have made as the pastor of the German Church. When I arrived the German Church was a social club. It was very difficult to change that. Would you say that that is the greatest danger for the church to lose its Christian character and become a social club?

Bernard: Yes, that's right.

Thorsten: Now, let me ask you, where would you like to see the church in let's say 5 or 10 years time. What vision do you have for the church?

Bernard: The vision for the church would include the following elements. Firstly, it is to get pastors who can stay long-term with the church. So far there had been several pastors. But they stayed for two years/three years and in the case of one only one year or even less. So this isn't well for the growth and spiritual well-being of the church.

Thorsten: They need continuity?

Bernard: That's right. So part of this vision would be to have a pastor or pastors who can be here long-term - to lead the church, to shepherd the people, to teach the people the scriptures systematically. The other dimension would be to have systematic and intentional equipping of the leaders. If this is not done, then my concern is that these leaders would just be managers in a church. They do not know their calling as elders and deacons according to the Bible. The third thing would be for members who are committed to stay long-term in Nottingham. So this is part of my vision that I have communicated – for more members who are committed to stay long-term in the city to commit their time, their talents, their gifts to build the church up. And I think last but not least it is for the church to have in place systematic and intentional

pastoral care programme and also discipleship programme for people who come into the church. If these things are in place, then the church would be well situated to fulfil the calling to reach out to the people in the Chinese community in Nottingham. As I see things now, there are many Chinese coming to Nottingham, because the university here has a branch in China. So it is a great opportunity for the Chinese Church - but again I am sad to say that not much is being done at the moment to reach out to these Chinese who come here - whether to work or to study. So part of the vision would be to see the church becoming a very active not to say aggressive in reaching out to these Chinese. Because I think the Chinese have a calling to reach out to their own people.

Thorsten: But there could be a problem if this influx of Chinese people stops all over the sudden because of the change of policy at the university. If the University decided not to take any Chinese students any more - or they build another campus so that there is no need for Chinese students coming to Nottingham. They can actually stay at the University of Nottingham at Ningbo and other places. So that would be difficult for a church that concentrates on Chinese people.

Bernard: That's right. Yes. As I mentioned earlier on this is the primary calling of the church. I think we are not closed to ministering to other people, too. I think in recent months we had people from Spain, India coming to worship with us. So we welcome them too. And the latest is one worshipper who comes from Thailand, coming regularly. So, I mean, we are trying also to have a global outlook.

Thorsten: From my experience, the problem that I've had is that I can't - as the minister of the German Church - I can't invite my English speaking neighbours to my church, because it is German speaking only. So I can't reach out to my neighbours. Well, I can reach out to them, but then have to send them to English speaking churches. I can't invite them to my church. In some way we limit ourselves if we only offer services and events in our mother tongue, but not in the language of the indigenous population. Do people talk about this at the church? How do people in your congregation feel about this? Would they bring English friends to the church now as they have an English speaking service?

Bernard: Yes, we have worshippers who have brought their English friends to our English speaking worship service. But they just came and went - and again - I'm not too sure whether they would stay on in a primarily Chinese Church, although we have an English speaking service. But at least we have three options for the people to choose from - Cantonese, Mandarin and English.

Thorsten: Someone from the Church Council mentioned that Chinese churches in Canada have dropped the word 'Chinese' from their name to indicate that they are open to other people as well. Is this an official view or is it just a private view of certain people?

Bernard: Well, I think in the Chinese Church here some of us would prefer the word 'Chinese' to be dropped out of the name of the church. Because we see it as a hindrance, but it is a very sensitive issue. The church was started by Chinese and now the majority is still Chinese. To drop that would be like killing a sacred cow.

Thorsten: I can see that. But when we look at the Bible, the New Testament we know that the body of Christ is international, is multi-cultural. So why shouldn't a local church be multi-cultural. Why should it only be uni-cultural?

Bernard: I agree with your observation. I have no answer to that except to say that it is an ideal that the church should strive towards realising to make the church to an international body of Christ.

Thorsten: Some of my church members go to English speaking churches. They come to the German speaking service, but are also linked to English speaking services. Do you have people like that in your church as well or are people only coming to your church?

Bernard: We have a handful who once went to the English speaking churches, but the moment we started our own English speaking service they stopped going.

Thorsten: They came to your service then?

Bernard: That's right, yes. And I think the reason is because - you see we have Sunday School programme that runs concurrently with the Cantonese service. So for these people who serve as Sunday School teachers - they missed a service. So what they would do is go to an English speaking church either on Sunday morning or on Sunday evening. But now that we have our

own English speaking service they stopped going as far as I know. They will come for the English service at 1pm and then from 2.30pm onwards they would be involved in the Sunday School. This is also another reason why we want to cater for these people to meet their needs.

Thorsten: The problem that we have in the German Church is that the second generation is almost completely anglicised. So they don't speak or do hardly speak any German. What is the situation in the Chinese Church with the second or even the third generation?

Bernard: I think it is comparable. I think many who were born here and are growing up here they do not speak their parents' mother tongue anymore. They may still be able to understand. They will still enjoy Chinese food. But in terms of language and thinking they will be anglicised.

Thorsten: It's only language and thinking also culture, I mean I've heard that for example in Chinese culture the relationship between parents and children is quite different from English culture. Do you think that's still the case in the second generation? For example, is there more respect?

Bernard: I think in the Chinese culture we still maintain very strongly this value of family party, but I could notice that there are some clash values between say the parents and the children who grew up here. So this is a potential problem. Because there are some the parents who claim they speak no English, only Cantonese. But their children who grew up here, they speak English.

Thorsten: It is their first language and Cantonese is their second language, which they have to speak if they want to communicate with their parents. I can see that. Maybe that's a different between our churches. The first generation – they speak English more or less. There was no need for their children to speak German, to learn German in order to be able to speak to their parents. That's definitely a difference.

Bernard: One more observation I admit also is – even though we have three services I could see a potential area where there could be conflicts. The Chinese in the Cantonese service are primarily from Hong Kong. And those in the Mandarin service are primarily from mainland China. So I think from experience the two groups have difficulty co-existing. Now again – due

to a different value system. So this is a potential area where there could be problems even in the Chinese Church. Not to mention the fact that for those who speak English it is again another group altogether.

Thorsten: One could say that you are uni-ethnic, but you are still multi-cultural.

Bernard: (laughs) Yes, that's right.

Thorsten: Coming back to the second generation just shortly. I've heard this expression that '*we are like bananas – we are yellow outside, but white inside*', meaning '*we look Chinese, but we are actually British or American or whatever*'. What is your experience? Is that a true description of the second generation?

Bernard: Yes, I think there is a very discernable difference between the first generation Chinese who live here and the second generation. For example the second generation Chinese who were born here, who were educated here, they tend to be more vocal compared to their parents – they will speak their mind and maybe they wouldn't show respect of authority in some ways. Although they know the importance of family party in the Chinese context. They would be very – how should I say? I wouldn't say disrespectful – but they would speak their mind. So I think this is one observable difference between the two generations.

Thorsten: Maybe that's also a difference between the Chinese and the German. The second generation – they are anglicised, but they also look English. People can't say *this is an English person* or *this is a German person*. The Chinese will always look Chinese. Are there tendencies or inter-marriage within the second or third generation? Or are ethnic Chinese mainly marrying between themselves within their group?

Bernard: Well, I think the majority would marry their own kind. But there are a handful who married across the races. But they are in the minority.

Thorsten: So that means for the second, third and fourth generation the majority of people would marry people of their own ethnic background?

Bernard: Yes.

Thorsten: Are there any things that you would like to say at the moment that are coming to your mind about the mission of an ethnic minority church? You said a few things – reaching

out to your own people and the difficulties that came up. I think my problem with an ethnic minority church like yours is that people live all over the place. So they have sometimes to travel a long way to get there. How do you try to get around this? How do you react to that? You've got different fellowship groups. I know that. Is that a reaction to that – different fellowship groups at different places all over the city? To keep that community feel, to establish that – people don't live in the same community or live in a wider area.

Bernard: Yes, this is a real problem. For example the Hong Kong Chinese who came from Hong Kong – I think they basically lived very close to one another, just because it was a small country. But the moment they came to England – I mean, it is such a big country compared to Hong Kong. So the Chinese who live here, they live quite scattered from one another. So this actually poses a problem – not only for the pastors in terms of travelling, but I think it also poses a problem for the Chinese themselves. They would feel cut off from fellow Chinese. And more so if – let's say the husband has to go to another city to work or the children grow up and they leave another city to go to another city – so there will be some pastoral problems with their wives.

Thorsten: So the family links networks are very important for the Chinese. And that makes it difficult if they are scattered all over the place. And that makes it difficult for church life?

Bernard: Yes

Thorsten: How can you react to that? Do you have an idea, is there a solution?

Bernard: Currently, I have no solution to that.

Thorsten: One problem that we have with our elderly people who are not mobile any longer – they can't come to church because they live so far away from church. If they want to come, they have to take three buses and change three times. So that's a real problem for them. So we've got a lot of elderly folks who would like to come to church, but who can't. Sometimes you can organise lifts, but it's not always possible.

Bernard: It is a similar situation. So far the older folks will have to rely on other church members to fetch them to church and to bring them back. It is a similar situation. The younger people, of course, have it easier.

Thorsten: So would it be helpful for them to have connections with a Chinese Church and a local church where they live? Is that a possibility?

Bernard: It would be feasible if people speak English. If they don't – that would be quite difficult.

Thorsten: So language is really one of the main problems or main hindrances for Chinese people to go to an English speaking church.

Bernard: Yes. But I think this is only a short-term problem. With time the church will be made up of second and third generation Christians speaking English. So I think this would only be a short-term problem. Unless there are more migrants coming over who don't speak English at all.

Thorsten: Do you know the number of Chinese in Nottingham or the number of Chinese that are coming over?

Bernard: I don't have the figures or the statistics.

Thorsten: But there has been an increase?

Bernard: Yes, it was very noticeable in the last few months.

Thorsten: What do you think is the reason for that? Do you see any global reason? I used the word globalisation and migration. Do you see any connection with that?

Bernard: I think so. I think UK education is regarded very highly by Chinese where they come from. And of course they would always – I mean now the fact is also Chinese are getting richer, the Chinese in mainland China. So they would leave their country and study overseas. So this is a very common phenomenon.

Thorsten: ...that people travel a lot and move to other countries for further education...

Bernard: That's right.

Thorsten: The other thing that comes to my mind right now is – you said that a lot of people in the English and the Mandarin speaking group have a student background. So that means that they are here for a limited time.

Bernard: Yes.

Thorsten: Is that difficult to build a church with people who are here for maybe one or two or a maximum of three or four years?

Bernard: Yes, it is difficult. I mean from my experience this can be quite discouraging to see people come and go. But the medical students and those who study nursing tend to stay on. So it is these people that we try to encourage to stay in Nottingham and get a job here. So for those who are only here for one or two years, they tend to leave the country after that.

Thorsten: What you just said is that people move to another country for education, but some of them move on to another country. They are just moving around from one country to another – wanderers. Ok.

I thought about arguments for a minority ethnic church. And I came across cultural reasons. And we mentioned that. Cultural oasis, sociological reasons, maybe discrimination. Cultural gaps again. We mentioned missiological reasons and the ability of the same people of the same kind to reach out to their own people. Can you think of any theological reasons that might justify the existence of a minority ethnic church? As a church, do you have any distinctives that other churches in this area in Nottingham don't have and that might appeal to people, especially to Chinese people?

Bernard: What comes to my mind is Christ saying *I am first sent to the house of Israel* and then after that to the Gentiles. So it is a case with Christ to reach out to their own people first before looking beyond. I think this would be something comparable to what we are doing.

Thorsten: I think that's right and that's good. What I was actually thinking about was what one of the church members said to me. We are an inter-denominational church. In this country you find a lot of denominations. Is this a thinking that is strange to Chinese in general or to Chinese Christians – the separation into denominations? And are they more comfortable with an inter-denominational church? I had the feeling when I talked to one of the church members.

Bernard: I don't think so. For example the older members of the church, when they were back in Hong Kong they came from denominational churches. Firstly, when they first came over here, the ... are quite loose, but they are able to live with it. So there is a sense of difference.

Thorsten: But nowadays in China you don't have denominations. You've got one church that is recognised by the state and house churches. So for mainland Chinese, maybe they are more comfortable with an inter-denominational church than with an Anglican church or a Catholic church or a Baptist church.

Bernard: But that won't be surprising. The church in Asia or China is young compared to the church in England. So this sense of belonging to a denomination is not so deep. But they are people who could say they came from a Baptist church or from a charismatic church or Methodist. So they were once involved with denominational churches. But I think if the Chinese Church reaches out to Chinese Christians – then in a sense we have to be non-denominational to embrace as many as possible without compromising the distinctives of the gospel. So in our midst we have Charismatics too, but they don't speak in tongues. They do it in their homes, but not in the church. We have people who are for women pastors, but others are not for them.

Thorsten: So how do you deal with these theological different positions at the moment?

Bernard: Well, based on my time here so far, we have not really dealt with them. So I think we try not to make distinctives an issue, which will divide the community. Yes, I think this will be my response to the question.

Thorsten: This is the last question from my observations. You've got a Sunday School. One aim of a Sunday School – it's not only a Sunday School - you teach the Bible, you teach the Christian faith. But you also do language classes. What is the idea of language classes?

Bernard: The idea of that is to basically help the children to still keep in touch with their Chinese language – to know the characters, to communicate in Chinese...

Thorsten: You mean to pass down the cultural heritage to the next generation?

Bernard: Yes. I think the parents wouldn't want their children to lose all this. Even though they may stay in England for long term. And because of this they are able to speak the language, read Chinese books and still communicate in Chinese.

Thorsten: But that's the second generation. Or is it even the third generation?

Bernard: This is the second generation. The third generation – I'm not too sure. It remains to be seen. They are also increasingly complaining about the difficulty of learning Chinese characters. So it remains to be seen.

Thorsten: Thank you very much.

Interview No. B03

Interviewee: Inge Vallance
Marital Status: Widow, two grown-up children
Occupation: Retired
Church: German Lutheran Congregation Nottingham
Involvement: Church Council Member
Interviewer: Thorsten Prill
Date: 16 June 2005
Duration: 30 min

Thorsten: Inge, can you please tell me how you became part of the church here?

Inge: Jim and I joined it through a friend which I met in Bingham. She invited us to come to a dance. That was during pastor Seeger's time. I can't well - you will know when pastor Seeger was here. It was in the sixties. We came to this dance. I was happy to get back to be able to speak German, to speak German with lots of people. The first evening I met a lot of people. I was then invited to come to the church to services which I happily did. My first service here was at Easter. I came with a young German visitor, a young boy. We then after the service got back into the car and then pastor Seeger came out and asked me if I would not like to stay for coffee which would be served here. But unfortunately we had not got the time to stay because we had other visitors at home, so we went but I came regularly then to every or most of the services.

Thorsten: So for you it was important that you could speak German to other people and have a service in German?

Inge: Definitely, definitely, because I did not have so much opportunities. I had lots of visitors from Germany every year, but not opportunities outside the family to speak my language.

Thorsten: So that helped you to keep up your language.

Inge: Definitely, yes! To speak the language again and to be able... the services reminded me of home because being confirmed in Minden in Westfalen. The services, yes, reminded me of

home because I knew what I had to say, what I had to respond – the same liturgy. Whereas when I went to different churches in England it was so strange, so different. And that's why I still would keep going to the German-speaking Lutheran Church and not to any others. I prefer going to the German-speaking services.

Thorsten: Because that's where you can speak your language and where you find the familiar liturgy.

Inge: Yes, was I was taught as a child and that's what I knew.

Thorsten: Is that typical for the people who come to this church?

Inge: I don't think so. I don't think so, because they all can speak their own language still but lots of them prefer or wouldn't mind if the service was held in English. But then the English service is different to the German liturgy.

Thorsten: What was it like in the beginning when the church was founded?

Inge: No at the beginning, we definitely spoke more German, especially at the times when we were socially together

Thorsten: And that's still a reason why people come to this church today. – to speak German and to take part in a German service?

Inge: Yes, I believe so. Even though to a lot of them, probably to far more it wouldn't matter. English would be easier for them. You know, to converse in English and even to listen in English.

Thorsten: So what you are saying is that to many people who come to the church English has become their first language?

Inge: Oh yes, yes!

Thorsten: What about the children, the second generation?

I mean in the past you had the Saturday School. What was the idea behind that?

Inge: I'm not absolutely sure, because my children were then already too old then. So I don't know. But I know there was the German children's group here. And lots of children came to the groups.

Thorsten: Why do you think people send their children to these groups?

Inge: For them to learn a little German perhaps. I am not sure. I know that the Konfirmanden were taught here as well. I'm not sure if they were taught in English or German. I think more in English than German.

Thorsten: So where is the second generation today?

Inge: O the second generation doesn't speak German.

Thorsten: Do you know why that is the case?

Inge: Yes, because the children did not want to be different from their peers. Children want to confirm. If they go to a school and bring their friends with home and the mother speaks another language to them they don't like it. Not in my case, but in many cases you stop speaking German.

Thorsten: In your family that's different.

Inge: Well. It's different because we always had a great contact with the family in Germany. Yes, fortunately both of my children speak fluent German. But not my grandchildren.

Thorsten: You said that it was the children who didn't want to speak German. Were there any other reasons?

Inge: I heard that children had great difficulties. They had difficulties when their mothers sent them to school in Lederhosen or in gestrickten Struempfen. I mean it happened. These children of course had great difficulties.

Thorsten: Coming back to the church as it is today. The church is a small group of elderly people. What to you think is the mission, what do think is the task of the church today?

Inge: I should think that the German Lutheran Church should look after their elderly congregation. Because we are, yes we are definitely living on borrowed times now. If we are lucky enough to be looked after by the German pastors in the evening of our lives that would be marvellous. Well let's face it. You always come back to your language as well - the older you get. I have known elderly people who spoke English quite well but would not speak English in

their last few years. There was one lady who was over a hundred years old, she could speak English but she would not, she only spoke German during her last few years.

Thorsten: And you've come across a few of these people?

Inge: O yes. I looked after several elderly people several years ago.

Thorsten: So there is still a need.

Inge: Yes, yes.

Thorsten: What do you think is the future of the church here?

Inge: The future of the church, a German church or a German-speaking Lutheran church will be reduced, it will be one Midlands church. And we either have to have one pastor who will just do visits or come once a...the congregation will get smaller and smaller... we don't need the big houses anymore. So if he could come into family homes and one would just get the few elderly who are still their together. There maybe of course some younger ones coming but We know that those younger ones are only here for a short time, usually through their work.

Thorsten: That's a good point. There are a lot of Germans in the East Midlands. A lot of younger people. Why do you think are they not coming to this church?

Inge: Because youngsters nowadays...Youngsters are going to church as far as confirmation. They then have finished with the church and with it completely for many years. Few of them are coming back but most of them are leaving the church.

Thorsten: So you think it's a general trend?

Inge: Yes!

Thorsten: But some might prefer going to English speaking churches?

Inge: They may, if they come only for a few years they would like to know about England, probably about the English way of life. And that means going to different groups and different churches.

Thorsten: You mentioned a possible merger of the German churches here in the Midlands.

Inge: Yes, I have a feeling there will be one Midlands congregation. Stationed where, I don't know. We would have to come together and meet at one point suitable to most of us, if we are still able to do it.

Thorsten: But would mean that some time in the future there will be no church any longer in this place.

Inge: Not the church as this one, the particular one. We cannot expect this church which will hold easily 80 people to fill it. Except at special occasions.

Thorsten: What are your feelings about that? When you think about this development?

Inge: Well, I'm quite sad that it will have to go somewhere. And I hope because the congregation has worked for it for many, many years to get it to this state. It looks lovely, it is clean, it is light, it is well looked after. And it would be sad if it just went somewhere and the money which it will get for the buildings would go anywhere where it is not really needed.

Thorsten: Maybe a final question. Do you have anything to add? Anything else you would like to say?

Inge: Well I do hope that youngsters or middle aged would come back to their faith because when you get older, yes you do believe even more. Let's hope younger people will feel that they need to believe.

Thorsten: What can they church do to help people to come back to faith?

Inge: To open their doors. It at one time and we tried it 'To go with the times. Do something new. Do some things modern.' It didn't work.

Thorsten: Can you specify that?

Inge: Well, we tried to have children within the Gottesdienste. The elderly didn't enjoy it at all because they could not understand and there were not enough people to help with the youngsters during the Predigt. It needs people, and if younger people are not there then it is very, very difficult to do something.

Thorsten: So a problem is to get into touch with younger people in the first place?

Inge: Yes. Well, we do try. We got it in the Internet already And if people are willing to find it they will do. But we have to look for these people. And that is difficult. Because lot of them just don't want to know.

Thorsten: I can see that is a difficulty. Are there any other difficulties for the members of your church right now?

Inge: The problem is transport. That is one of the biggest problems. Transport to the church. Home visits. That only involves the elderly again.

Thorsten: So transport is a problem because people live all over the place.

Inge: Yes.

Thorsten: Do know if church members have contact with local English churches?

Inge: Oh yes, definitely. I for one thing I go to my Methodist church on days when we have no German service here. I am not coming to the English-speaking Lutheran church, no, because it is alien, not alien, but it is so different I might as well stay in my village and go to church there.

Thorsten: What about other people in church?

Inge: I'm sure lots of them do it. There are quite a few who come here and go somewhere else as well.

Thorsten: Do you see any other problems for your church members besides the transport problem?

Inge: No, not really. The transport and the illnesses of course. You do have your, you know, once you are over eighty you do get all sorts of things which you never expected.

Thorsten: O.k. I think that's very helpful. Thank you very much.

Inge: You're welcome.

Interview No. B04

Interviewee: Marlies Sparrow
Marital Status: Widow, two grown-up children
Occupation: Retired
Church: German Lutheran Congregation Nottingham
Involvement: Church Council Member
Interviewer: Thorsten Prill
Date: 16 June 2005
Duration: 30 min

Thorsten:

Marlies, how did you become a member of the German Lutheran Church in Nottingham?

Marlies:

It was during Pastor Mahler's time. But I can't remember what year that was. And it was through my neighbour Inge Vallance. She invited me to come to church. I can't pinpoint down when exactly that was. I remember there was some special do at my house. And they all came to me for the first time. That must be 20 years ago, about 20 years ago. And, yes I was very impressed Pastor Mahler was very, very friendly.

Thorsten: So what did you like about the church?

Marlies: The friendliness of everybody. And the fact that we could converse in German again which I had very little opportunity to speak German. My family didn't want to know.

Thorsten: So, your children don't speak German?

Marlies: Yes, my two daughters do, yes.

Thorsten: So they speak German as a second language?

Marlies: Well, both of them learnt it at school. Didn't want me to teach them.

Thorsten: What's the reason for that? What do you think?

Marlies: They just didn't want. When they were older yes it did sort of ... but when they were smaller and I tried to speak to them in German they said 'Oh we don't want. We don't want to listen to that Mummy!' Then they both learnt it at school. Later my older daughter then worked in Germany for a year. In the catering trade. Her German is more or less perfect. So, yea,...my husband spoke it when was a bit under the influence of alcohol. Yes, I like coming here, I like worshipping here. I find it oh well I don't know the service that well. The services the Reihenfolge of the services because I was brought up in the Catholic faith. Not all the time because my father was not a Catholic. So I went to both churches in Germany. I also used to like to come to the film afternoons when they hired films from the Goethe Institut.

Thorsten: And these films were in German?

Marlies: In German. I used to bring my mother to those when she was over here. And she enjoyed those very much.

Thorsten: Why do think did other people come to the church in the past and why do they come today?

Marlies: Similar reasons... there is still that little bit of bond with the old home. I mean there is a bond with Germany even after 50 odd years.

Thorsten: For how long have you been living in England?

Marlies: 50...1947 I came. More than 50 years

Thorsten: Would you say you're more English or German?

Marlies: It's a difficult question. What do you feel like when feel English or when you feel German?

Thorsten: I mean, do you think in English or dream in English?

Marlies: Yes, but I pray in German.

I seem to get back to my German...I don't know why. Sometimes I don't even realize whether it's German or English. But I do, yes.

Thorsten: But you would say that you are assimilated, that you have adjusted to British culture?

Marlies: Yes, yes I think so.

Thorsten: But still there is a bond?

Marlies: Yes, but it's less and less. Because I have no more relatives in Germany. While my mother and my father were still alive obviously the bond was much, much more. It's now getting less and less. I've got my family, I've got my children, I've got my grand children here, so...At church you meet people of your own age with the same sort of background, history.

Thorsten: Looking at the church as it is right now. What would you say are the biggest problems for the church?

Marlies: I think the biggest problem for the church is that people stay away from religion. It's not only the German church, I think it's all over the world.

Thorsten: What about the German Lutheran Church in Nottingham?

Marlies: Well, the fact that we are getting so very old. And as Inge said we are dying out. We are dying out!

Thorsten: So you are saying it's a dying church with regard to numbers?

Marlies: In regard to numbers yes, yes. I mean most of us came here after the Second World War. Yes. I mean you know yourself how many funerals we had in the last year or so.

Thorsten: Where do you see the church in 5 years time?

Marlies: Yes, combined. All the Midlands churches together. I think it's got to come. I don't think the individual churches as they are at the moment are going to exist anymore. I don't think the pastor will be worth coming.

Thorsten: And you don't see any development that could change that?

Marlies: Yes you see the younger German people who are here for the short time,..., do they come to the German church or do they integrate into the English churches, while they are here. I don't know. A lot of Germans come over here and work here. And then they seem to want to integrate a bit more perhaps into the English way of life.

Thorsten: Why do you think is this so?

Marlies: I find that even when you go over to Germany and you speak to people in German, oh they say to you 'Are you from England? Ah speak to me in English, cos' we would like to learn a bit more. I find that even this time when we went to Wallenfels in the little hotel. They said 'Oh speak English!'.

Thorsten: So you are saying that there is a greater willingness to integrate among Germans who come here for a short time?

Marlies: Yes, I think so, probably. They are working with English or with English people for short time and then they are going back where they can join their German congregations again.

Thorsten: So today you'd say the situation is different from the situation when this church was founded?

Marlies: Oh yea, if only for one thing. They were all a lot younger then. They were young people that knew that they were going to stay here, and wanted to still hang on to their German origin by going to the church here.

Thorsten: So you think that was the main reason why people came to that church in the first in fifties?

Marlies: I would imagine so. But I mean honestly I didn't know that it existed, till Inge sort of introduced me. I didn't. And then my children, both my daughters went to the Church of England. One was a Sunday school teacher, they were both in the choir and they were both confirmed in Bingham church.

Thorsten: So what you are saying about the future of the church is that it looks dim.

Marlies: Well I wouldn't say it looks dim. I just feel there is got to be a change.. for a German pastor to warrant to come over. I mean it's not good if he's coming to see half a dozen people sitting here.

Thorsten: Do you think that the church should have been opened up for English people at some point in the past? Would that have made a difference?

Marlies: Yes, yes, because I think more of the English relatives would have joined their German mothers and grand-mothers. I think so. I don't know. I'm not sure.

Thorsten: What do you think were the reasons why this didn't happen?

Marlies: I don't know. Well, perhaps they should have done...I also feel that the services, not so much the services but the hymns and everything are getting very old fashioned I think perhaps although the older people don't like any change but I think it would perhaps help if it was a little bit more modernised, lighter. I mean sometimes I'm was thinking we are dead, we sound as we if were half dead Mind you the organist plays very well, but if it was a little bit more It should be joyful, I mean we should be so happy that we are able to listen to God's word and that we are fortunate to believe. It's not easy to be a believer and we should be very, very happy. I think we should show it more.

Thorsten: So you think that the liturgy is a hindrance.

Marlies: Not so much the liturgy. I think more the hymns. If the hymns were livelier. I mean when your wife played the guitar...It lightens the whole thing up a bit.

Thorsten: What other problems do you see for the church as it exists now?

Marlies: Well the fact that a lot of them don't have transport which is not very easy. Then the fact that we are getting more dilapidated if that's the right word. We are getting old and it's not easy to come to the services, is it. It will get worse when we are all integrated, There'll be bigger distances to travel.

Thorsten: And in the past that was no problem, or not so much of a problem?

Marlies: I think more people specially when their husbands were still alive they could take us. Ladies who couldn't drive could be taken to church. I mean a lot of them don't drive anymore. And it's a matter of money too. Not everybody can afford the petrol and everything to come to the services as you get older. And then of course people get old and can't move about as much and perhaps feel to much trouble.

Thorsten: What you are saying is that if people were more mobile or had better transport more people would come?

Marlies: Yes!

Thorsten : So distance is a problem.

Marlies: It's a problem definitely.

Thorsten: That's the difference between church like ours and a normal parish church like the one in Bingham.

Marlies: Nobody goes to church in Bingham.

Thorsten: There might be other reasons for that. Any final thoughts?

Marlies: I hope it goes on as long as possible. There is small congregation. I hope we still get a pastor from Germany.

Thorsten: Thank you very much.

Interview No. B05

Interviewee: Toni & Billie Barthold
Marital Status: married, one grown-up daughter
Occupation: Retired
Church: German Lutheran Congregation Nottingham
Involvement: Church Council Member
Interviewer: Thorsten Prill
Date: 21 June 2005
Duration: 45 min

Thorsten: Please tell how you became part of the German-speaking Lutheran Church in Nottingham.

Billie: 1975. Our daughter Maria was studying for confirmation. And she had to visit three different denominations. Catholic mass, Anglican convent in Derby and the Lutherans. We went with her and we have been ever since.

Thorsten: What was it that made you stay at the German Lutheran Church?

Billie: They made us so welcome. We wanted to be with them.

Thorsten: Was it important to you being of German origin that it was a German-speaking church?

Toni: Yes, it was. Then there were English services as well in those days.

Thorsten: So the main reason was the friendly welcome by the people there?

Billie: Yes.

Thorsten: Do you think there were other reasons why people came to the church?

Toni: Well we had get-togethers. We had at various occasions dances for a start. We're just now too old for that. And that brought a lot of people together on those occasions.

Billie: And we had jumble sales, and summer fairs.

Thorsten: So the German-speaking element was important for a lot of people to come?

Billie: Yes. Some in the congregation were not Lutheran at all. They were Catholic. But they still came because it was German-speaking.

Thorsten: So what you are saying is that the German-speaking element was actually more important than the Lutheran?

Billie: Yes, to a lot of people.

Thorsten: How has the church changed over the years since you first joined it?

Billie: We had old hymn books in old script which we couldn't read.

Toni: I can't add anything to that. To be honest.

Billie: Oh, the congregation has got smaller. Because of age.

Thorsten: It's predominantly an elderly congregation. So where is the second generation?

Toni: Well, they got married to English people and was the end of it.

Billie: They moved away.

Toni: Our daughter got married to a German and she stays in Germany. Martin's children are all over the place. There's only one local and she doesn't seem to be interested.

Billie: But they are still going to the Lutheran church in Germany. And they got married in the Lutheran church.

Thorsten: That's your daughter?

Billie: Yes....Because Friedrich's family are Brethren... and the girls go to Sunday school and church.

Thorsten: So what did it mean to your daughter when you decided to go to the Lutheran church at that time?

Billie: O, yes she was keen to do so. Wasn't for long because she went to Germany.

Thorsten: So there was a chance for her to speak German?

Billie: Yes!

Thorsten: Did you speak German at home?

Toni & Billie: No.

Thorsten: So she learnt her German in Germany?

Billie: No she learnt it at school and she went to Manchester University.

Toni: She did German and French.

Thorsten: What would you say are the biggest problems of the church nowadays?

Toni: Well, we can't raise the money that we need to raise, to stay above water for a start.

Billie: Old age again.

Toni: Help is very scarce these days because of age as well. People are... Either they don't want to help or they are not fit enough to do so. We've got one or two people that can hardly get about. And we can't ask them to do anything really. It wouldn't be fair at all.

Thorsten: Are there any other problems?

Billie: Lack of ability and mobility. No transport.

Toni: Public transport on a Sunday is practically non-existent. They got to wait too long for a bus.

Thorsten: And that was different in the past?

Toni: Yes. We had more people with cars.

Billie: And more people picked other people up.

Toni: Yes!

Billie: Maria Williams from Kirkby would have a car full.

Thorsten: Kirkby, that's quite a way from Nottingham.

Toni: Yes, she would pick up Vera and bring her back.

Billie: But that has always been a problem. It's not like the church in West Bridgford where everybody lives around the church. People have to travel to get to church.

Thorsten: And that was manageable in the past?

Billie: Yes, it was manageable.

Thorsten: Why do you think there are no young people in the church today?

Billie: You mean our younger people or in general?

Thorsten: In general.

Toni: Where do you get young German-speaking Lutherans from? Unless they are our children. Unless there are students. We get the odd student occasionally from the university. But that's not a great deal. They've got to be interested in church activities...for them to be able to come... otherwise...

Thorsten: And your own children, they've moved away you've said.

Toni: That's right.

Thorsten: So it's a problem to find new people in the first place.

Toni: Well there are plenty of Germans in the area. We know one or two. They're just not interested in church at all... They are not interested.

Thorsten: Maybe they are going to an English church?

Toni: They probably do. If you have mixed marriages it's either you go to your wife's church or your husband's church whichever you are used to.

Billie: Which is nearer.

Thorsten: I came across German students who went to an English church. Maybe the attitude has changed.

Toni: Yes, that's right.

Thorsten: So what do you think were the reasons for founding the German Lutheran Church in the first place?

Toni: I don't think they could adapt to the English in the first instance in the late forties and fifties. And then they probably got together. Some people came over here and they were in camps. In various camps. They probably got together. They had a few words and 'Can we arrange a service?'

Thorsten: What do you mean with 'They couldn't adapt'?

Toni: To the English services. Many of them were not married then. They probably got married later on. Like Maria Williams who came over here as a nurse.

Thorsten: But they could have gone to an English-speaking church, couldn't they?

Toni: That was shortly after the war. They came over here to work. They were lonely. They were lonely so they probably get together, all these various Ukrainians, the Germans, various nationalities. And formed a community. Probably some said: 'Why can't we have a church here?' I would imagine that's how it started.

Billie: They were lonely.

Toni: Wasn't there a German Lutheran Church in London?

Thorsten: Yes, but that had been founded centuries before...So there is the aspect of loneliness, of community.

Billie: Yes. They wanted to speak their own language.

Toni: So we've got quite a lot of people that aren't German. And they come to the German church. Like Mrs Nakutis. They were with the Germans but they were Lutherans and they tagged on to the German community. That's a good thing really.

Billie: And there was the man from Czechoslovakia.

Toni: O yes, Mr Bielan.

Billie: Then we used to have a Latvian congregation and a Scandinavian congregation.

Thorsten: The Latvians are still there.

Billie/Toni: Are they?

Thorsten: Yes they meet once a month on Sunday afternoon...Where do you see the future of the church?

Toni: Well, it will be shrinking, still further. We have shrunk quite a lot in the last ten years. It's going progressively to get worse. Fewer people eventually.

Thorsten: What are your feelings about that?

Toni: Well, I haven't got any feelings. It's a progression we can't stop. There is no way we can stop that at all..

Billie: You see, most of the German congregation were much in the same age range because they all came over at the end of the war.

Toni: The age range is from ah...the difference between the elder ones and the younger ones is no greater than twenty years. Yes, we've got one or two youngish ones...Heinke, and what's her name...Joyce. And how old would be Doris? They could carry on if they want to.

Thorsten: what you are saying is that there were one or two waves of Germans coming over, who founded the church or joined it. And then later not many people joined it.

Toni: Yea, yea.

Thorsten: When people came over, did they come to stay here for ever or did they come to work here for a short term?

Toni: That was the contract they signed. To come here to work for a short period. But most of them got married and the settled.

Thorsten: What do you think does the church mean to the people who come to the services regularly?

Toni: It's a very difficult question! Very difficult. I can't answer it truthfully...It is the German element. They come to have a talk with their friends, German friends. Be they Latvian or whatever. That's why they come. I think so, what about you?

Billie: What about the church service itself?

Toni: Well, I'm not sure whether they are interested in that to be honest. Some of them are interested but...

Thorsten: So what you are saying is that there is a strong social motive?

Toni: Yes!

Thorsten: Some people come to speak the language and to meet their friends. And to some that's more important than the faith aspect?

Toni/Billie: Yes, yes!

Toni: That is what brought them together for a start. But I think it's no longer the main thing. That's my opinion.

Thorsten: Billie, would you agree with that?

Billie: Yes, you are brought up as a Christian. And it's part of your life. So you go to church. I could not go to church.

Thorsten: But you as an English person I mean you could go to an English church.

Billie: Yes, I could go to the local parish church. Oh we used to go.

Thorsten: So why did you decide to go to the German church then?

Billie: Because of Toni.

Thorsten: And you have no regrets about this?

Billie: Not at all. Otherwise we wouldn't have been going for thirty years, would we?

Thorsten: Exactly.

Toni: But I mean there again there is other things involved. Supposing...one of these days I can't drive a car. And Inge can't drive a car and Marlies can't drive a car. How do we get to church? Unless you go by taxi. That's seven or eight pounds to the church and seven or eight pounds back. It's all right for people who got that type of money. That's a lot of money.

Thorsten: And you think that that already keeps people back from coming?

Toni: It does keep people back. There is Lucy, unless somebody picks her up she has to come by taxi.

Billie: Mrs Austin.

Toni: Mrs Austin, yes. That's a problem.

Thorsten: So the problem is that it is not like a normal parish church that is around the corner.

Billie: Yes!

Thorsten: O.k.

Billie: For most people it's a double bus journey.

Thorsten: So what you are actually saying is that if the church was more like a parish church more people would come?

Billie: Yes, yes!

Toni: Most of the people in a parish church are in walking distance. It's a parish.

Billie: Like Maria's church in Fuerth. Their parish church is Lutheran. In walking distance.

Thorsten: So transport and the locality of the church are the main problems for the church today.

Toni: Yes.

Thorsten: Do you think it would be different if the church was based in the city centre?

Toni: I don't think so. I don't think so, I mean it is not all that far out of the city centre. Mile and a half - that's all. And at the moment where we are there are no parking problems. Well, there wouldn't been years ago anyway. We can all park there on a Sunday.

You go to town, where do you want to park? Nowhere! Unless you go to a high price parking place.

Thorsten: I mean what you are actually saying is that in a few years time the church might not exist any longer.

Billie: Yes.

Toni: Yes, it will fold up. We've got no future really.

Thorsten: So what can the church do in the mean time?

Toni: Unless we get some new people in which is very unlikely there is no alternative. There is no alternative.

Thorsten: Do you think it would have been good for the church at one point to become an English church?

Billie: No!

Thorsten: Why not?

Toni: You got the German-speaking people again. Some of the would have gone...I mean there are one or two who go to the English-speaking services... Angela does. But why doesn't she come to the German church?

Thorsten: Well, I mean most people speak English even better than German. So they could have gone to an English service if the church had become an English church.

Toni: Well I would have thought so. If she liked English-speaking services she could have come to the German as well. What have they got that we haven't?

Thorsten: But you don't think it would have made a difference if it had become an English church at one point or let's say a bilingual church?

Toni: Well, it was bilingual more or less.

Thorsten: But not officially:

Toni: Oh no, not officially.

Thorsten: Do you think that would have made a difference?

Toni: I don't think so! I don't think so!...I'm just going back to the English services, the English church. Have they got any younger people?

Thorsten: Not that I am aware of.

Toni: Exactly! So where are they going? They will be in the same boat as we are now.

Thorsten: They are in the same boat, I think.

Billie: You see, our parish church has a large group of young people. They live here, they stay here, they go to school here.

Thorsten: The church is where the people live.

Billie/Toni: Yes!

Thorsten: And that's not the case with our church! And that's a problem for the church.

Toni: Yes! The social side played a big part in the German Lutheran Church. A very big part. It did hold it together. Whenever there was something going on they were there.

Billie: But then we were all younger, dear!

Toni: That's right.

Thorsten: So without the social side it would be different today?

Toni: I would have been different. But it wouldn't have altered things at all. We would come to the same conclusions.

Billie: Some just came to the social side mainly for the social side. Others came to the social side and then came to church.

Thorsten: Any final thoughts or comments?

Toni: I don't think so.

Billie: We would feel sorry if we can't go. But if we can't have transport...it's a big part of our lives.

Thorsten: Thank you very much!

Interview No. B06

Interviewee: Sin Ting Vong
Marital Status: married
Occupation: Lab Technician
Church: Nottingham Chinese Christian Church
Involvement: Church Council Member
Interviewer: Thorsten Prill
Date: 24th June 2005
Duration: 1 hour

Thorsten: Please tell me something about the Chinese Church in Nottingham. Do you know anything about the history of the Chinese Church, how it all started?

Sin Ting: Yes, I know a little bit about that. I think it is the 35th anniversary this year and it first started as a fellowship. It was a group of Christian students and there was a Chinese pastor. He came here, you know it is the work of the COCM. He came to work here in Nottingham. It started as a small Bible study group. Even then we met in St. Nicholas Church. And then there were some nurses from Singapore and Malaysia. I think Kum Kew was one of them back in those days. And then they sort of started like that. I think at one stage the downstairs Church Hall at St. Nicolas, where they have the office now, they actually let it out to the student nurses to live there and then further down is the Hall and the Chinese fellowship actually met there. After some time, I think back in the late 70ies the students went to a conference. And at the conference they were moved by the fact that there were so many non-English speaking Chinese living in this country, un-reached people. So they felt called to reach out to the local Cantonese speaking Chinese people.

Thorsten: These students – were they Cantonese speaking students?

Sin Ting: Some of them were and some were not. It was a mixture of students from Singapore, Malaysia and Hong Kong. Those from Hong Kong are Cantonese speaking. Then they made a change from just reaching out to students to reach out to those restaurant workers. I don't

know exactly how it happened, but somehow the meeting was then changed from using English to Cantonese.

Thorsten: So to start with all the meetings were in English?

Sin Ting: Yes. I came here in sort of 1990. Then they were using only Cantonese. But then gradually they felt that – it was changed to use Cantonese only. But a group of non-Chinese speaking students actually left because they didn't feel comfortable with that language, using a language, which they don't understand very well. So then they left and they found the 'Solid Rock'. And over the years it was gradually the feeling that we should actually go back to cater for some people who speak English. Also those who were born and brought up here like Angela. They can understand a bit of Cantonese, but not in depth – the BBCs. So there is a need for using English as well. Then the service was transformed into a bilingual service. And whenever there was a Chinese speaker he would be interpreted into English and vice versa. And then – I can't remember exactly – I think it was 1994 or 95 – we started changing the constitution to change from a fellowship to the Chinese Church. So it is actually gradually changing.

Last year in September we formed different language services again because it is very difficult to cater for people's needs in a bilingual service. The style is so different in a purely English speaking service compared to if we hold a Cantonese service.

Thorsten: What is different? Is it the music?

Sin Ting: The music. The music is very different. And also the speaker, the style would be very different as well.

Thorsten: And you have to translate everything.

Sin Ting: Yes. Sometimes it is quite a challenge for the interpreter. It is very disjointed as well for people who can't understand both languages. If we understand both languages, then it is fine just hearing it twice. But people who have only got one language – they find it very difficult sometimes.

Thorsten: And that was the reason why you introduced the English speaking service?

Sin Ting: Yes.

Thorsten: And that's mainly for BBCs and for students?

Sin Ting: Yes, actually anybody who speaks English. Part of it is because the style is so different. We know that there is a big need to reach out to the BBCs or any English speaking Chinese adults. But if we keep the bilingual service or the Cantonese style service this group of people will not find it easy to fit in. So if we want to reach out to that people group we do need to change and we do need an English service.

Thorsten: But these people could go to an English speaking church. So why do they come to your church? I mean I can understand that, but there are a lot of English speaking churches around.

Sin Ting: Well, I think it is a very interesting situation. Some of the BBCs – because it depends on how their parents are – some of the parents are very traditional. And even though the BBCs, they probably think in a lot of ways like the English, but there are certain things in which they are very Chinese.

Thorsten: Can you give an example?

Sin Ting: I can't really think of one thing just now. Oh, yes, I think one very obvious thing is if their parents are traditional, even though they were born and brought up here, in the back of their mind they want to marry a Chinese person. That would be their first choice. I'm not saying that they won't marry a local British person. I find that very interesting. Even though their way is very British.

Thorsten: Is that because their parents expect them to marry a Chinese person or is it because they want to marry a Chinese person as well because they have grown up in that culture?

Sin Ting: I think it is a bit of both. And also I think they find in an English church – even though they speak English like an English person without an accent – that people still regard them as Chinese. It is very interesting. A few years ago there was a pastor. He himself is a BBC and he is now working among the BBC. He told us a story. He said about this young BBC girl – on her way to school she keeps telling herself that she is Chinese. She is Chinese. Because all her friends and the people she met at school are treating her as Chinese. But on her way home she keeps telling herself she is English. Because her parents are always saying to her '*you are*

just like the English'. So it is a kind of very interesting way the way they were brought up. They will find it sometimes difficult to fit into a purely English situation.

Thorsten: So in some ways they are between the cultures. And that is a problem for them. And you think that a Chinese Church can cater or serve them best?

Sin Ting: Yes, to a certain extent they have their home here. At least they feel safe in that sort of an environment.

Thorsten: As a Chinese Church you want to serve Chinese people. That is part of your mission. How do you do that? How do you reach out to Chinese people in Nottingham?

Sin Ting: Well, I think that is one part that we are not doing too well. Because, partly the situation of the Chinese Church at the moment is that we've got quite a lot of people in the older age group, retired people. And then we have the students in the University. In the middle, that group is very low. So to reach out to local people sometimes we quite lack the manpower. In the past we organized people to go out and visit them, go to their homes or call at the Chinese Takeaways and talk to them and give them leaflets. But really the effective way to do it is to try and help them out when they are in need. And we can only do a limited amount of work in that area. Really it does need to build up quite a long-term relationships with them to be able to interpret when they go to doctors or hospital appointments. Read letters and explain things to them, filling in forms for them. That is very useful.

Thorsten: So that is a kind of friendship evangelism?

Sin Tin: Yes!

Thorsten: But then how would you make contact with them in the first place? How would you know about Chinese people, where they live?

Sin Ting: Well some would be the people who have been here for a long time. They have their friends. So they can pick up from there. But if we are doing any kind of outreach one way is we go through the phone book and pick out all the Chinese names and pick out the Chinese Takeaways and restaurants and just knock at the door.

Thorsten: Ok, and you've done that?

Sin Ting: Yes.

Thorsten: And what is the response of people when you do that?

Sin Ting: I think generally it is quite good. But you need to pick the right time. So if we do any visits we do it at the beginning of the week when the restaurants are not busy – typically in the afternoon after two or three on Mondays or Wednesdays. Tuesday they usually have their day off. The shop is shut. They will be doing things for the family.

Thorsten: Now these are adult people who work in restaurants. What about the children?

Sin Ting: For the children we use Chinese classes. The parents usually like their children to learn some Chinese. So we have Chinese classes and usually the parents would bring their children along. I think we do quite well because the church won't charge them anything. And there are some Chinese organizations. They also organize Chinese classes. But they charge them something.

Thorsten: So you teach Chinese, but there is a Christian input as well?

Sin Ting: We usually tell their parents if their children come for Chinese classes would they mind if the children stay after the Chinese class for Sunday School. And we use English to teach them Bible stories. So the parents usually are agreeable to that. Occasionally, there are some parents who say no.

Thorsten: How many people come to your church on a Sunday? What is your membership?

Sin Ting: Membership is round about – I think at the moment we've got 48. But some are not regularly attending. Some have already gone back to Hong Kong. But we usually keep them on the membership list for another six months before we take them off. With the congregation, when we have a combined service, it can be 100 or 120.

Thorsten: That's great if you have a big congregation. Do you invite people into membership then? Or what is the process if you want to become a member in your church?

Sin Ting: We invite them usually. The constitution says that they need to regularly attend the church for six months and have been baptized. During the course of the six months we make friends with them and invite them. Then they fill in an application form. We give them the

church constitution. And then a member from the Church Council plus another member will interview them. But basically it is just to find out how their faith is.

Thorsten: We mentioned the BBCs already. But what do you think are the reasons that people come to your church and not to a local English church? What are the main reasons?

Sin Ting: I think when people want to be among Chinese people they will come to our church. With the English-speaking, the BBCs sometimes if they have friends in the Chinese Church then they will come. I think the attraction is not quite so strong compared to some other people, for example the mainland Chinese or for people like myself. Because I think we have stronger identity of being Chinese. We want to be among Chinese.

Thorsten: So to be with people of your own kind – that’s a strong motive?

Sin Ting: Yes. I have actually seen that in the past. I heard somebody talk about which I think something we need to consider I think in ten or fifteen years time is because now, when the second generation Chinese is growing up in this country they are English speaking. Those who cannot understand English and have to go to a Chinese Church will gradually pass away. So if we want to remain just a purely Chinese Church – unless we’ve got a lot of foreign students, but in the long-term it is going to be different. It will be transformed. I heard that some churches in Canada they actually dropped the word ‘Chinese’. So they then reach out to other ethnic groups in the community who may find that they don’t fit in well in the English church either. But they feel more comfortable in an ethnic church. Also those local born Chinese – their friends will feel more comfortable coming to a church which is not branded as Chinese.

Thorsten: Yes, that’s right. That’s a problem if you’ve got a minority ethnic church. It is difficult to invite your non-Chinese friend to that church or your non-Chinese colleague or neighbour. So that’s difficult to you.

Sin Ting: Yes.

Thorsten: In some ways would you agree that you limit your mission?

Sin Ting: Yes. To a certain extent yes.

Thorsten: But you are saying that that is in 10 or 15 years time. So you don't think that's a right thing to do right now?

Sin Ting: The reason why I say in 10 or 15 years time is because we need to build up a core of English speaking people first to be able to take leadership, to take leadership role. Then they can develop the English ministry so that it will be more international. At the moment the supportive force in the Chinese Church is still the Cantonese speaking people. And I don't think they are able to change so much.

Thorsten: That would be too much for them at the moment, but it takes time. That's what you are saying?

Sin Ting: Yes.

Thorsten: What is the relationship between the different groups within the church – between the Cantonese, Mandarin, English speaking? And in some ways it looks like you've got three congregations under one roof. So what is the relationship or how do you keep that relationship going?

Sin Ting: This is an area we are looking at at the moment. We can anticipate problems because we do need to integrate them very well. So each group can have good understanding in the relationship with each other. Because I go to both the English and the Cantonese service. I can see both groups have some misunderstandings with each other. Sometimes because of the language barrier they are not able to communicate and let each other know. So there needs to be a bridge somewhere.

Thorsten: Can I ask you what misunderstandings are there without going into too much detail?

Sin Ting: It is just purely language. I have heard some of the BBCs say that they don't like to come to the Chinese Church because when they come they can't speak Cantonese. And they felt that people don't respect them because they are Chinese and they can't speak Cantonese. And they feel inferior. And then the older generation Cantonese – they also felt the same because they can't speak English. So consequently it is a misunderstanding. They both felt the same and there is no need.

Thorsten: So you said that you need to build bridges. How can you do that? What can you do to build bridges between the different groups in the church?

Sin Ting: We try to encourage them. In fact Kwok Leung has taken the lead these last few weeks to encourage students to sit with the older generation and ask the older generation not to just wait until the students come to sit next to you in the service. So that is one step. And we hope that gradually, particularly in the combined service we can encourage people who speak different languages to sit together because most of the BBCs can understand some Cantonese.

Thorsten: So there are some challenges.

Sin Ting: Yes, there are challenges. The mainland Chinese will be a bit more difficult because their culture is so different from us yet again. But again, one common language is English. So some of the training, the talks that Bernhard gives they come along as well. That is again another opportunity to ???.

Thorsten: Do the Church Council represent the different groups or are they mainly from one group?

Sin Ting: At the moment it is mainly from the Cantonese speaking group.

Thorsten: Because that was the core group for many years.

Sin Ting: Yes.

Thorsten: Are there plans to change that?

Sin Ting: We hope to. At the moment the Mandarin speaking side hasn't got people who are mature enough to be leaders. And the English side, they are coming up. So there may be.

Thorsten: Now the English side you've got a lot of students who come to the English speaking service. But now the students are only here for a limited time and then they go back to Singapore, Hong Kong or Malaysia. So there is a difficulty to build up an English speaking group with people who are on the move in some ways.

Sin Ting: It is, yes. It is a difficult part. So really we need to concentrate on people who can stay here for any length of time to reach out to them and once they become Christians to build them up so that they can take up a leadership role.

Thorsten: How do you get in contact with students in the first place? How do they learn about the church?

Sin Ting: Some students in the University will join with a Christian group and they are welcomed and I think Debbie will give....

Thorsten: Yes, I know I did it myself. Ok. Now where do you see the future of the church in five years time? Or let's say where would you like to see the future of the church from a personal point of view?

Sin Ting: I think in five years time I would like to see three different strong congregations within the church and they would be able to integrate with each other. And I would like to see leaders from three different languages/congregations represented in the Church Council.

Thorsten: Let me come back to the Cantonese speaking group. You said that it is one of the chore groups, but it is also a group of elderly people. Now from my perspective as the pastor of the German Church our biggest problem is that people live all over the place in Nottingham, but we meet in Aspley. And for them it is very difficult to get there, especially the elderly people. Do you have the same problem with the elderly people that they are not that mobile any longer and they don't have a church around the corner. The church is in St Nicks which interestingly is where the German Church met in the fifties at St Nicks.

Sin Ting: I see. We have a slight problem with that, but not serious partly because St Nicks is in the city centre. Most people can get there by one bus.

Thorsten: For most of my people it is two bus journeys. That makes a difference.

Sin Ting: Yes. And that is also the reason why we are very reluctant to move away from the city centre.

Thorsten: Ok, I can see that.

Sin Ting: It is an advantage to be there, but on the other hand we are limited. I know St Nicks want to develop their own ministry as well. They are very good to us. They don't want to say *you can't use this anymore*. So they try to accommodate us. But in that sense they are limiting their development. And our development is limited as well because we can't use the church in the morning for morning service. We need to wait until the afternoon. All the service are so

packed. We have to run a very strict timescale. But to try and find somewhere else in the city centre which is convenient is so expensive. We can't afford it as such. We are a small church. So there are pros and cons.

Thorsten: So what are you going to do? I know you've got a building fund. So are there still plans to build somewhere or to buy something?

Sin Ting: Yes, in the long-term we are still hoping that we can get out of the premises, preferably near enough to the city centre, but not right in the city centre – somewhere like Lenton would be good.

Thorsten: I know that the preacher/pastor of the Cantonese congregation retired. Bernhard is going back to Singapore at the end of the year. So that's another challenge for you to get new leaders/new pastors. Are you in contact with a Chinese Mission to find ministers or in general how do a Chinese Church like yours get their ministers?

Sin Ting: Usually we get in contact with the COCM. They are very good with recommending suitable people. But this time we tried a different strategy. Instead of advertising in Bible Colleges or in Christian magazines we try to have our contacts. There are some Chinese pastors who we know and we asked them if they know of any suitable candidates. Preferably these contacts understand our churches well, so before they recommend someone they would know whether this person is likely to be suitable for us. Then we do some research first before we would approach the person. And we also thought about – because our situation is quite different from traditional Chinese churches let's say in Hong Kong. Somebody from North America who has experience in sort of overseas Chinese church who are exposed to different cultures and different groups of Chinese people would be more suitable. So we are mainly looking for people who have experience of a mixed culture.

Thorsten: My question was whether it is easy or difficult to get someone. But you do it as many churches do. You try through contacts.

Sin Ting: It is difficult.

Thorsten: Is there anything you would like to add having spoken about the Chinese Church, your experience, challenges, future? Is there anything that you would like to add? Can you think of anything?

Sin Ting: I think Nottingham is quite different to other churches I've been to since I've been here. I was interested when you mentioned about your thesis doing work among refugees. We actually haven't got that many refugees in our church whereas some Chinese churches have Vietnamese refugees. They are Vietnamese Chinese. I think it is back in the 70ies, there were lots of Vietnamese refugees who settled in this country. At that time there was quite a lot of outreach to them. So some Chinese churches have quite a strong Vietnamese Chinese group.

Thorsten: But you haven't. – Why is that so?

Sin Ting: I don't know. It is probably to do with part of the history of this church which I don't know.

Thorsten: Thank you very much. That was very helpful.

Interview No. B07

Interviewee: Kwok Leung Cheung
Marital Status: married, two children
Occupation: University Lecturer & Consultant
Church: Nottingham Chinese Christian Church
Involvement: Chairman, Church Council
Interviewee: Loretta Fung, MA BA
Age: 39
Marital status; Married, two children
Church: Nottingham Chinese Christian Church
Occupation: Housewife
Involvement: Leader youth ministry
Interviewer: Thorsten Prill
Date: 5 August 2005
Duration: 1 hour

Thorsten: You are the chairman of the Church Council?

Kwok Leung: Yes.

Thorsten: Can you tell me a little bit about the Chinese Church in Nottingham. How would you describe the church?

Kwok Leung: First of all I have not been in the church for too long, actually. Although I visited the place about ten years ago for about 9 months when I was having ... here. And I came back 6 ½ years ago. I think the church is quite a heterogeneous bunch of people, I think quite different to the church I used to go to in Hong Kong, because it involves a lot of different cultures. Although they are all Chinese – apart from David – most of them are ethnically Chinese. But we've got British Born Chinese, we've got increasingly more people from mainland China. The original people who started off the church came from Hong Kong. Now we've got a mixture of some other people, for example from Singapore and Malaysia – mainly coming to study. So there is a mixture of different origins of countries and also how they have

been brought up. And a mixture of different ages. The Hong Kong people tend to be older folks and mainland Chinese at the moment in Nottingham are mainly undergraduate students – seldom older people. The English group is small at the moment, but expanding.

They do different jobs. The original group from Hong Kong is mainly from the catering industry. The rest are students, some professionals, not a lot, not many middle age group people like myself come to the Chinese Church.

Thorsten: So what were your reasons for joining the church 6 ½ years ago when you came to Nottingham, Loretta? Why didn't you go to an English church?

Loretta: Well, we did go to an English church initially. We tried to attend the Chinese Church in the afternoon and Cornerstone in the morning. But since we have to little ones we struggled quite a lot in terms of time. They had difficulty in schooling at that time. So it was difficult for them to get into the Bible study class. Later on we decided to quit Cornerstone. Because of our background – at the Chinese Church in Hong Kong we've got, hm, we were equipped in terms of Bible knowledge and compared with the congregation here we feel we have a sense of commitment to the Chinese population here. That's why – even if there are not many professional people or more educated people like us with our backgrounds with young family we try to commit ourselves to the church at the weekend.

Thorsten: So you felt that you had to give something to the church.

Kwok Leung: Just one perspective of it – I think personally it has always been my conviction that whenever I go I will serve. This is my mission in my life, you know. I don't have a calling to become a full-time pastor or something like that at the moment. But it has always been my conviction to serve in my work and also in the church. Some people might seize the opportunity when they go abroad to hide away by going to a local church where nobody knows you. But I don't like that. I would like to see how I could use my gifts in the right way that God wants me. So this is one perspective that I think in the Chinese Church from which I knew ten years ago that I think that's an opportunity that I can use my gifts and God can use me in here. This is the aspect of serving.

The other aspect is the fellowship. Although we can speak English – I don't think we have a problem in going to Cornerstone – we did go to a housegroup for a while. Just because of increasing commitment in the Chinese Church we couldn't do any more. So we enjoyed going to housegroup and getting to know some people there. However, when it comes down to having deeper fellowship, relationship-building, I think it is easier. From my point of view – maybe because I was brought up in a Chinese background – although because of my education I can manage. I work in an English culture at the moment. I don't have a problem with that. But down to relational stuff, I think I enjoy talking to Chinese and sharing with Chinese. I'm not saying I can't do it. I think that's another reason that despite hard work I would enjoy more going to the Chinese Church as my main church.

Thorsten: So what do you say is the difference when you say you find it easier talking to Chinese than to English people?

Kwok Leung: There are several issues here – one would be the background. Because I was born and brought up in Hong Kong, I am over 40 now. So over 30 odd years I've been brought up in a place with a distinct culture from here – and then with the background, so it is a bit hard for me to easily assimilate or integrate to a new culture. I am ok to do it for work, but I think it is much easier and more enjoyable to be able to share with people who were brought up in the same way. That's not only for general cultural difference, but also it could be Christian culture, too. There is generic common grounds based on believing the Bible. So that's why we can and do share with people like you or the members of the housegroup in Cornerstone.

Thorsten: Do you think that is the same reason for other people who come to your church or can you think of other reasons?

Kwok Leung: I think that depends on which group you are talking about. For example the existing Cantonese group, if you talk about older folks or the ones who may be younger who are in the catering industry, Take-away or restaurant workers – if they come to a church they have no choice. They've got to come to the Chinese church because this is the only language they can speak. They cannot go elsewhere. They have no choice. The other thing why they enjoy coming is the social gathering for support, you know, which is something the Church

has got to look into. The church is not there for social gathering. We are there for Christ. But there is temptation for them to mix this up. Because this is the only place they can go to for social gatherings.

Then for the Cantonese speaking people who can also speak English, like us, not many of them come to the Chinese Church. Although they might enjoy coming, a few of them are scared of the hard work that they might be asked to do. These are the people who would be quick to do the work, while the older folks or the people in the catering industry – I think they are ok to do a bit of work, but for some, in terms of money and leadership, the thinkers – this may not be the thing they are able to do. Then the thinkers, the group of people like us – these are people who can have choices. They can go to an English church where they can go and worship. They might compromise by not having very good relationship with other people, but they can still worship. They can still go to the Bible classes. And the other thing, this is something that I heard from people like myself who don't come here. They have good children work over their for their children, like Sunday School, which is far better than what we do here in the Chinese Church, because it is more established over there. And they suit the children. The children are brought up here. And if they go there they can worship comfortably without being asked to do a lot of work because they cannot integrate – most of them. A lot of them come to England middle-aged like me rather than those who were brought up here. They may not be able to assimilate or integrate into the local churches. But they can still go and enjoy the worship there. So this group of people may not come, but there may be keen people like us who would come, but they are a minority. However, these people try to maintain relationships with the Chinese, interestingly. I can quote you examples from a few couples, a few families who come to the Chinese Church for a family service, for special occasions like Christmas. And they still give us a ring and ask 'would you like to come for a meal' and vice versa. They still maintain relationships. But when you say – *'could you come and join us as a member, come and do some work'*, they will say *maybe a bit later*. That's Cantonese.

For the Mandarin group – Mandarin I think is quite interesting. Some of them come to the Chinese Church again because of the culture, it might be easier because you would come across similar people. But I know that quite a number of people from mainland China they

prefer to go to English churches because they want to get in touch with the culture. This is one of the purpose of going to church. Coming to the Chinese Church they would not get that bit. That's why a lot of them go to Cornerstone for example. And they want to learn English. However, I've got to know someone who came from the States for his placement. He is a Bible School student. His opinion was – he is from Taiwan – subsequently went to the States, worked as an engineer and then went to Bible School. He came to us and spent four weeks with us. And his view was that these people would like to go to English churches to get used to the culture. However, there is something when it comes down to deep sharing they would not be satisfied. That's his observation. In a Bible study group – I think I quite agree with him – they talk about learning the Bible, that's ok, but when you talk about sharing of your feelings about the Bible or about a message they are stuck. In that respect the Chinese Church will probably have an advantage because they will be sharing with their own people. So about feelings like deep seated emotions would be quite difficult. That can be something we can work on to attract them.

For the BBCs – for BBCs they are quite, hm, it is a bit out of the way. They are not, well, some people say BBCs are British – so that they could integrate to British/local churches or the society as they do at workplace anyway. But some people still feel more belonged when they come here. I don't know. Some of them come because their parents come. And then they've got to have some relationship, but I'm not quite sure about this bit, because as you have come to our English service – we don't have a lot at the moment who are actually coming.

Thorsten: Do you have anything to add, Loretta? Any observations?

Loretta: He has mentioned quite a lot, all the main points. So I think it is the culture as one component, and then the relationships as another component – whether you offer this or that which makes a choice whether you want to go to an English or a Chinese Church. But I think most people who come to the Chinese Church come because of the matter of identity, for the feeling of affiliation because of their national identity and because everybody has a similar cultural mindset that is the main component here.

Thorsten: How would you describe the mission of your church? Now you have described the people who come to your church and the motives why they come. What is the mission of your church?

Kwok Leung: We've got a mission statement which is so lengthy that no-one can remember. That's the problem. (laughs)

Thorsten: I don't mean the full statement. What do you see as your task?

Kwok Leung: My personal view is that the Chinese Church has got to continue to be a Chinese Church, because I think the church in the UK for Chinese still has its role for at least one more generation. It has its role to play, to evangelise and then to equip the people of Chinese origin or people who are related to this sort of ethnic origin. I don't think this group of people or the Chinese can be served exclusively at the moment or completely by, hm, I mean the needs of them, that is in the next few decades, by the local churches. This would include people who cannot speak English. So no doubt we've got a role for them. And the people who are immigrants, which could be like us for example, who were not brought up here. So I would think that we would still feel a lot more belonged by going to the Chinese Church. And in terms of evangelizing this group of people is probably strategically easier, if there is an existence of a Chinese Church as such.

Mainland Chinese, as I mentioned, I think I've got a role to play, which may be a far more important role in the next few decades because of the influx of people from mainland. And I don't think this group of mainland Chinese would be able to truly integrate into society in the foreseeable future. The only the group that I'm not quite sure about is the BBCs whether their need could be covered by the local churches if the Chinese churches disappear. I'm not quite sure about that.

Thorsten: So it's basically pastoral care in the sense that you look after people who don't speak any other language and it's evangelism. Would you say that you have an advantage because you are Chinese to reach out to Chinese? Is it easier for Chinese to evangelize Chinese?

Kwok Leung: I think so, yes.

Thorsten: Do you agree with that?

Loretta: Yes, I think so. There is another group – the students – not mainly from mainland China, but from Hong Kong as well. We have fellowship with them and intent to fellowship very frequently and regularly. So this group of people – they want fellowship, they want relationships. They want Bible studies and spiritual feeding because of their background.

Kwok Leung: There is another point as the purpose of the church, which I wasn't quite aware of back home, because we don't have this peculiar situation when people are coming and going – they are the students. The two of us have been quite heavily involved in supporting one of the student fellowships. They are mainly from Nottingham University. Just because we live close by. I support the coordinator. Initially, it was quite a hard feeling when after a couple of years they were all gone. And then we supported quite a number of new faces. And we saw them grow up and they left. And then we were going to do the whole thing again. It is something – I got an insight into this and I tried to sell this to the congregation as well as a whole, not only for students. It is that we should look at it from a kingdom perspective, which I didn't do in the past. Because I thought, ok, why look after these people, support them. I helped them out with a programme how to do Bible studies and I did a few workshops for them to train them up in some skills, not Theology. That is not my skill, but leading Bible studies, practical things of which I have got some experience. Then they may not be used by the church, this church, ourselves. But then I thought of the kingdom perspective. This will all be very useful when they go back to their home country so that hopefully these few years when they are here they would be equipped. That would be going back to the same principle – Ephesians 4, 12, isn't it? So the Chinese Church has got a place.

Loretta: This is the same for the Mandarin speaking group. China is opening up and they are allowing them to study. They are studying from young age rather than 20 years later when people came here to do their PhDs or scholarships. The number of students coming here was limited. But now teenagers can come here because their parents can afford to support them. So this scenario will continue. It is just the beginning and there will be more and more Chinese people coming to study overseas and UK is one of the big markets. You know China is a Communist society and people don't have much time. Yet, they have a chance to attend local churches in China, but they are under the government supervision. But then in the UK they have freedom of choice to go to any church and they learn about Bible, Christianity. They

have a real heart for the gospel. And in this way, just as Peter Lewis mentioned many years ago China has come to our door. You don't have to go to be a missionary in China to evangelize the people. They are now at your doorstep and you speak to them and they bring the message back to China. And the movement can be great in years', decades', centuries' time. They can have a great impact when they move back to China.

Kwok Leung: This is what I mean with kingdom perspective. They are in transit in our church, but they would benefit for life.

Thorsten: But you need a chore of people in your church who are committed to that work.

Kwok Leung: Yes, and that's why it should go hand in hand. We need to have a reasonably stable leadership within the church to do that. And also we need to be a bit more outward looking – not just looking at the people that we've got and the people around us, but also at those who are in transit.

Thorsten: That would be my next question. How do you get in touch with these people? How do you reach them? How do they come to your church?

Kwok Leung: At the moment we are in great problems because of the shortage of pastoral workers, you know that. I think strategically you need a good leadership structure and also working in partnership with the full time pastoral workers. Then my dream is that the pastoral workers should work together and be able to look at the relationship or interaction of these groups rather than just doing their own thing. Because they are interacting with one another. Like for example the parents of the Mandarin..or the older people/working class in the Mandarin group. Their children will be coming to Sunday School, and so are the children from the Cantonese group. So the children's work is important to attract them. Because some of the people who don't come to church – one of the reasons was because of the lack of good children's work.

Then the student ministry probably might need to be integrated. To some extent we ought to be a bit more versatile in the sense that two groups are mainly for Cantonese speaking people. We lack a Mandarin group at the moment. One of my friends, a mainland Chinese from Hamburg said to me: *in order for you to do the work here the strongest manpower with*

leadership/management skills will be those from Hong Kong at the moment. But the Cantonese congregation might shrink eventually except for the new immigrants. You know, the older folks will die out. The next generation will be their children or mainly the people from mainland China, which is an increasing number over the last few years. Some of these people might settle down. But they are quite inadequate at the moment.

So strategically, I think we should have a good leadership structure where the leaders would represent different groups and also have a coordinated, integrated mindset to coordinate all these different groups or ministries. And then the congregation need to be educated about this openness and this kingdom perspective. The problem with the Chinese Church at the moment is that the majority of the members as they are are mainly from the older Cantonese side. This has historical reasons. But the need actually rests on the Mandarin group. There is a lot of room for development. So you've got to convey the message today to the people who are supporting the church to understand the importance of it.

Thorsten: So one of your challenges is that you are a Chinese church, but you are also a multi-ethnic church because you have different groups within the church who speak different languages. What are the challenges or problems that the church face, practical problems maybe.

Kwok Leung: The friend from Hamburg that I mentioned, we invited him and his wife to come along and review our situation. So he spent a weekend with us. Hopefully he will send me the report within the next few days. One of the points that he made in his sermon on Sunday was that in the past we tended to think about barriers – language/culture is a barrier – as you said, ok, you are one church, but you've got different languages, different cultures – but he said that we need to forget about this. We should accept that these are real, but they should not be in the way for you to have a good church life. A good church life does not depend on whether you speak the same dialect or language or whether you have the same culture. You need the same passion. He spoke a lot about passion. He gave me an example. In the past, ok, we think I am Cantonese and here is someone who speaks Mandarin. I am very bad at Mandarin, so I won't try to address the person. He said that that's wrong. You can still address the person. There are a lot of body languages that you can use. You need to show that you

care. You may not need to go into deep conversation about explaining details. But it's a matter of being cared for, which is the love of Christ. So this is something that we need to work on.

Thorsten: Where would you like to see the church in 5 years time? Where do you see the future of the church? What is your dream? What should the church look like in a few years time?

Loretta: Well, I think the imminent this is to get a pastor who is an overseer, who can mobilize and bring the church forward, a pastoral leader – maybe one, or two or three – hopefully.

Thorsten: Is it a problem at the moment to recruit someone?

Loretta: Yes, Bernard will be going by the end of September. That means we don't have any pastors. Mr Chong has retired already and the Mandarin group have no leader to look after them. So this is the imminent problem. Because we don't have the training to lead the church in such a way. So we need those who have a training background. And secondly, we would like to have more leaders like Sin Ting. A stable leadership is very important as they establish the organization of the church. It is very important for the stability of the church.

Kwok Leung: I'm not completely hopeful about getting pastors in a short period of time. I am the Chairman of the Council and I've got to think about a contingency plan. It is beyond our control. It is in God's hands. It is beyond our control as to when this pastor or pastors can be found. The church still needs to go on. So my thoughts at the moment would be – apart from strengthening the systems that we have got so that it won't collapse in the absence of full-time pastors (we have external speakers and so on). But within the church itself – what I've been trying to do for the Cantonese group in my announcements and intercessions – I try to emphasise the importance of studying the Bible. And so far after Mr Chong's retirement I have been encouraging them to at least read the text for the message that the speaker is going to preach on next week. That's the minimum. I think the minimum is that you need to read your Bible every day. But you need to start somewhere and that would be meaningful. And also to get to know one another with passion. We need to work on those a bit more. So there are little things I am trying to encourage them to do, a bit like pastoral stuff. I keep reinforcing it and reminding people. And also to remind them that while we are waiting there are things

we can do. We should not just sit there and wait for a pastor to arrive. This is not going to happen short-term. I know that. We are hoping to have a few more leaders like Kwok Leung and Sing Ting. It might happen, thank God for that. We would be relieved. But even if they don't happen, there are things we can do.

Thorsten: Is there anything that you would like to add. Any other comments?

Kwok Leung & Loretta: No.

Thorsten: Thank you for your time.

Interview No. B08

Interviewee: Dominique Yeung
Marital Status: Single
Occupation: Pharmacy Student
Church: Nottingham Chinese Christian Church
Involvement: Church Council Member
Interviewer: Thorsten Prill
Date: 11 October 2005
Duration: 30 min

Thorsten: Dominique, can you please tell me something about your involvement with the Chinese Church here in Nottingham?

Dominique: Maybe the most recent things first. I just joined the Council in September. I'm a new council member for the Chinese Church. And have I worked quite a lot with the Fellowship group as well.

Thorsten: That is the Barnabas Fellowship?

Dominique: No the Beeston Fellowship. That used to be Cantonese-speaking but now we invite the Mandarin-speaking students to come as well. I'm the retreat coordinator for the Fellowship this year. They're organising the retreat for coming February and I was the coordinator last year, but not this year anymore. They've got a different coordinator. And I've been involved with bible study group before, like two years ago, I was involved in the Chinese class in church two years ago as well. I've been the pianist for the church sometimes in a rota basis.

Thorsten: That sounds as if you have been very busy.

Dominique: Yeah, quite.

Thorsten: You, come from Hong Kong. So your mother tongue is Cantonese?

Dominique: Yes, Cantonese.

Thorsten: When you first came to Nottingham, were you a Christian then?

Dominique: Yeah, I was already a Christian.

Thorsten: Why didn't you go to an English church? Why did you choose to go to the Chinese Church in Nottingham?

Dominique: I went to an English church during my first year. Because it's in Broadgate it's close to where I live. I find – I can't really. I liked the service and the people are nice but I feel that I can't really join in – like...maybe it's not my home. I go there, listen to the sermons, but afterwards.

Thorsten: So you found it difficult to settle in?

Dominique: I don't know how to say it .Maybe it was the language problem or it's my personality. I'm not very outgoing. Like in my second year I joined the Beeston Fellowship, that's where I started first. I didn't go to the Chinese Church straight away I started in the Beeston Fellowship a few weeks before I joined the Chinese Church.

Thorsten: That is Cantonese-speaking?

Dominique: Yes, the group is Cantonese-speaking

Thorsten: And then you moved on to the Church.

Dominique: Yes, I started serving in both. I started serving for the Fellowship as a group leader and then involved in the Chinese teaching in the church.

Thorsten: So what would you was the difference between the Chinese Church and the English church that you had gone to before?

Dominique: I think it's the language and people with the same background. At the Chinese Church most students are from Hong Kong or from maybe another country but we all come from overseas. We are staying here as overseas students. It's much easier to share and to like discuss things, or to hang around. In the Chinese church I'm more active like to introduce myself. In the English I may just sit there not knowing anyone.

Thorsten: So it's the same background but also the same situation you are in.

Dominique: Yeah.

Thorsten: Do you think that is an experience that other students who come to the Chinese Church share?

Dominique: I think, maybe some of them haven't tried to go to an English church at all. Maybe they just came and they thought... They searched for a church on the web and thought 'Oh there is a Chinese Church I just go there' and they find it o.k. and settle in it. But I know some friends, they don't really like the Chinese Church and they go to the English church. I think it really depends on the individual.

Thorsten: So that comes down to personality?

Dominique: Yes, and what do you really want

Like do you really want to go to the English church or you want to join in the culture like the British culture. For me it's about service, I want to do something for God. I find myself more useful in the Chinese Church basically.

Thorsten: Why do you think is that so?

Dominique: Like we have said it's the culture. Maybe I can help the newcomers or the freshers in the university, or they came to UK for not long. I think it feels good if you meet someone who is from the same place, and you can share with them and they maybe understand what you have been through. There's more understanding. They can understand more your feeling. Like maybe some time you have homesick and maybe people here don't really understand but people who come from Hong Kong they understand O, you have homesick. Yeah, I have too.

Yes, I think there are two reasons why Chinese students come to the Chinese church. One reason is that we have a similar background and culture. And yeah it's better when we go to the Chinese church because for me when I go to the English Church I just like sit there, come and go. Didn't involve much in the church. But I can see myself involved more in the Chinese Church, I can be open up myself and maybe I will offer to help but maybe in the English church I wouldn't do much because of my personality maybe.

Thorsten: You feel more comfortable in a Chinese environment?

Dominique: Yes. And I think also some people just follow their friends as well. Because their friends go so they just follow their friends and go to the Chinese church.

Thorsten: Why did become a Church Council member?

Dominique: I wanted a step forward basically. I wanted to see if I have this spiritual gift from God. If I don't try I would know if I have this gift or not. I did it for the church as well because there were only three or four church council members, and they really needed more support. We had an election and now the council has six members. It's important to support them. Maybe I can't do many things for the church but at least I can try to and see what I can do for the church. I can be link between the students and the church leadership.

Thorsten: What do think are the challenges for the Chinese Church here in Nottingham?

Dominique: There are a few problems. One thing is the pastor like what we are encountering now, that we have difficulty to recruiting a suitable pastor for our church, a full time pastor. We have been looking for a pastor for the last year or last six months, but we still couldn't find. Other Chinese churches have a similar problem.

Thorsten: Why is it so difficult to find a pastor?

Dominique: They have to know both Chinese and English. And then they need to be willing to come. There are some pastors around but they are involved with their church or want to go home to their home country. Some are suitable for us but maybe they have their own vision, they have their own things to do. It's quite difficult to find one.

And the other thing is to improve the communication between the three different congregations. There is a language barrier. There is not very much contact between us. We need to improve the communication between the two groups of Chinese people in the church, like the local Chinese who have been here for many years and the students who just come to stay for a few years.

Thorsten: Do you think it can have a disappointing effect on the local people when they see students come and go?

Dominique: I don't really know. Maybe sometimes people feel like 'Oh they have to go again'. But then this is really common, people come and go. People are used to it.

Thorsten: What vision do you have for the church?

Dominique: I hope that in five or ten years time, it's a long term thing, that we can one or two like full time pastors. That people in involve in the church, that they know each other and not just their friends, that the English and Mandarin congregations will increase in size. I can see the Mandarin ministry increase in size because there are more people from China coming to UK.

Thorsten: Why do you think is that that more people from mainland China are coming to the UK?

Dominique: I think it's a trend, just a trend. Every year there are Mandarin-speaking people from China coming to study in UK. I think it's good for them to go to church. It's a place where they can find comfort or strength to support their study over here.

Thorsten: Is there anything else that you would like to add?

Dominique: Yeah, the thing that I like to add is the report from Simon and Iris following the review weekend for the church. It's quite thought-provoking, because it has many visions for the church and many suggestions and quite a detailed report of what we can do. For example for the education side, not just the Sunday school and the Chinese class for the students but also some workshop, some training or even Sunday school for the adults as well.

Thorsten: Some sort of discipling then?

Dominique: Yeah, for the education side we are looking now for coordinators to coordinate the different groups whilst we are still looking for pastors, so that the church council can know how it is going. The church council can't do it really, everyone has got their full time job and they got their own things to do. It would be good to have the another four coordinators for organizing the different things in the church.

Thorsten: Thank you very much, Dominique.

Interview No. B09

Interviewee: Kah Ming Chan
Marital Status: Married
Occupation: Engineer
Church: Nottingham Chinese Christian Church
Involvement: Fellowship Co-ordinator
Interviewee: Jessica Chan
Age: 28
Marital Status: Married
Occupation: Secretary
Church: Nottingham Chinese Christian Church
Interviewer: Thorsten Prill
Date: 28 October 2005
Duration: 45 min

Thorsten: Can you tell me something about your involvement with the Nottingham Chinese Church?

Kah Ming: Our involvement with the Nottingham Chinese Church is mainly with the English speaking worship service. That is obviously because of the Barnabas Fellowship of the Chinese Church. They are English speaking and a lot of people come from there. That is the resource group to take people from. We go once a month because we have an Anglican church we go to on Sundays. And when we go we tend to be there to do the service in some capacity. So Jessica operates the projector when she goes and I have done some worship leading. And if I don't do worship leading, I will be on the reception. So that's our involvement. Obviously, the other involvement is the Barnabas Fellowship which we both go to and of which I am the coordinator.

Thorsten: Can I ask you why you are involved. You say you want to serve, but why the Chinese Church? You could also spend your time in the Anglican church.

Kah Ming: Actually, we also serve in the Anglican church – just to give you a little background to that: Jessica helps out in the Junior church once a month. I help out with what we call the welcome team – which are the people who help out with welcoming folks to the morning or evening service. We also have to count up the offering and I am also on the prayer rota for the morning service. So every six weeks or so me and my friend together we write prayers and then read them in the service. And I am also on the reading list as well. So there is little things I do there. Why do we serve in the Chinese Church? Hm...

Jessica: I think there is a link to Barnabas.

Kah Ming: Oh yeah, Barnabas. I mean firstly Barnabas came first. We go to Barnabas, well, I start with me because obviously I've been there longer. I am one of the original people who went to Barnabas. So David started to target locally born Chinese, young people and I was one of those young people. It goes actually further than that because we also all know each other because our families all know each other. I remember when I was eight years old I also went to a youth group on a Friday night, which was actually run by students who were then part of the Nottingham Chinese Fellowship, which obviously then became the Chinese Church. So all through the years there is a link there. And Barnabas or Seekers or whatever we called it at the time, when it started there were people I knew. There were people like Angela, her brother Simon, my sister Wei Yee went – the core people. The Chinese community is tightly knit. We all know each other to some degree. So I wasn't going to a fellowship at the time and I knew the people so I thought I would go. And it sort of developed from there. And for me and I am sure for Jessica as well, helping out in the English ministry of the Chinese Church is like an extension of Barnabas. So we know that resource-wise there is not a massive pool of people to draw from, so if we can help out even though we have our own main church, we try our best to help out. That's why we are at the English service helping them there.

Thorsten: When you first came to Barnabas a few years ago why did you go to Barnabas and not to an English speaking church?

Jessica: Because of Kah Ming...

Thorsten: That is a very good reason. It is not a very spiritual, but a very good one...

Jessica: Kah Ming goes to the church in Hucknall regularly then we just go to the same church together.

Kah Ming: But why did you choose Barnabas?

Jessica: In the first place, as I mentioned earlier I was looking for fellowship at a church and my friend found Barnabas and she asked me to go with her together. I thought – oh, yeah, that’s good. Before I came to Nottingham I studied the Bible with some friends. They had weekly Bible studies in their house. But I hadn’t committed to Christ yet. So when I came to Nottingham I thought that it is a good opportunity to continue to study the Bible. So that’s why I came to Barnabas. And also I was looking for more mature fellowship. And the people were very welcoming and friendly and I didn’t feel like a stranger when I first came to Barnabas. That’s why I kept coming.

Thorsten: Kah Ming, can you think of any other reasons why people go to the Chinese Church?

Kah Ming: Now, I think it is an ethnic issue like culture and stuff and there is no denying in that people who are Chinese go to Chinese Church because there is communality there. There is a link. They feel comfortable because of the language or because they think it is people they can relate back to. It is different for different people because I have noticed some Chinese, Malaysian or Singaporian students who go to other churches because the style is more than what they are used to. I was speaking to a student who goes to T Street and he went to the Fellowship, but didn’t go to the Chinese Church at all, whether it was Mandarin, Cantonese or English. And I asked him why and he said *I went once before*, but I think he was more used to a charismatic style and T-Street is more his style.

Thorsten: What about the BBCs?

Kah Ming: Well, I can only speak for myself and the fact is that the Chinese Church never has been my main church. I can only talk about the people I know, people like Angela. Angela goes because she was born in a Christian family and quite active in the Chinese Church and I think by default almost she has ended up serving them. She has a heart to serve as well. Personally, I don’t think they have looked after some of those people. But she has been

involved in the Chinese Church from a very young age. So I think that's why she goes. My sister goes because of familiarity. She knows a lot of people. She was baptised by the Chinese Church. And because she is very good friends with Angela she felt, yeah, I go to that church. I am not sure before when it was bilingual that all her needs had been catered for. But now it starts to go that way with English services. They are the two people I know best. I think a lot of it comes down – because I've seen it for myself in that the reason why I kept going to my English church in the early days was because I had friends there. It is supposed to be between you and God, but it always feels better when you know somebody else. So again I can speak for me. Because I knew somebody there I didn't feel so alone, not so many strange faces. Sometimes it happens in churches that they are not very welcoming and they don't come across very friendly towards strangers. So that's why I went to the church where I went to in the early days because I knew people there. It got to the stage that if I knew my friend wasn't there then I wouldn't go. I remember one occasion that I went when he didn't go and it was ok. That was a milestone. Now I feel comfortable going there. So personally I think Chinese people would go to Chinese Church because they feel comfortable, familiar with the surroundings and the people.

Thorsten: Would you agree with that, Jessica?

Jessica: Yes, I think so. Especially for Chinese people who first arrive in the UK. I think it is human nature that they would like to go to a group that they feel comfortable with and speak the same language so that they can help each other.

Thorsten: So it is language. It is the same cultural background.... What would you say are the biggest challenges for the Chinese Church, when you think about their ministry? (13.08)

Kah Ming: Biggest challenge....

Jessica: Resources...

Kah Ming: Yeah, I think the challenge is to find like a core team or core people – because with students it is quite difficult as people come and people go. I can see that in the Cantonese congregation. Those who are here long term tend to be quite old. I don't know the congregation that well. But it is my impression that it is quite an old congregation and I am

told that they have a continuously changing student group. The English speaking side, which is the side we are closest with – How do we reach out to local people? How do we make ourselves attractive in a certain way?

Thorsten: Do you mean the local Chinese people?

Kah Ming: Yes. I think, yes, that's the first thing – the local Chinese. Although David always says I don't want to just focus on the Chinese. But that is a challenge in itself, because when you are locally born Chinese – because of the language, you know, we are fluent in English, so there is a lot of choice. And I suppose from the English speaking point of view the Chinese Church has to have a really unique aspect that they can find that would appeal to those people. Do they become just another church on a list that you can choose from or is it something that is going to be really captivating, really different from everybody else so that they say they come to our service. Or again is it just a case of what we do is to serve the student population in Nottingham. Obviously, we have a core group of locally born Chinese who really see this as their main church. But then the majority is maybe students who come and go.

Thorsten: You mentioned resources as the biggest challenge. What do you mean by that?

Jessica: I think of people to help with the service – for example the PA position. We don't have many people to help with the PA, like Wei Yee. She has to do the PA every two weeks at least.

Kah Ming: I think resources is not just an English ministry thing. It seems to be across the whole church. I am not sure about the Mandarin service, but certainly in the Cantonese service they struggle a bit as well. I know the fellowship groups struggle as well. One of the reasons why we went to the City fellowship group the other week was to support our sister in Christ Ada who comes to Barnabas. She is not a student, but she is willing to coordinate, to lead that group. But it is only her and her boyfriend Tony. We pray for them, because City fellowship for a long time has been quite a strong fellowship group or was seen as a strong fellowship group, but it seems like the last year they have really struggled in numbers and also in leaders. In the first meeting they had like one person. So Ada was really worried. She is worried anyway as there is no people to take on the leadership or to spread the load of the leadership across next term or so. But the second week when we went to support her – we

tried to help out, to set up and everything – they had about 30 people. Whether they keep coming again we don't know. But the question whether there is still people who are mature enough to take part of the leadership is still unanswered. We feel for her because she needs support. And since the fellowship is part of the Chinese Church, the Chinese Church has a responsibility to try and help if they can.

In contrast, the Beeston Fellowship is going really well. There is forty odd students and they have got quite a good leadership team there. So you've got quite a contrast.

Thorsten: Can you think of any other challenges or problems?

Kah Ming: I think there is still the challenge of how people in different parts of the church perceive different ministries. I think when the Mandarin ministry got going nobody really batted an eyelid, but then when the English ministry got going, a lot of people challenged that and questioned why it was needed. I think there are still people within the church, I don't know about the Council, but certainly within the congregation who still don't see the point. Probably because they can't understand it, they don't know how to handle it.

Thorsten: Where do you see the church in the future, say in five years time? Or where would you like to see it?

Kah Ming: Where do I see it? I don't know to be honest. This was a question in the Samuel and Iris thing. I attended that weekend. I try and remember what I put down. I think what I put down was – no matter where we are at we have to stay focussed on Jesus. Whatever you do you've got to stay focussed on God. He is the reason who we are and why we meet as a people, as a body. If you don't focus on that you can let issues or whatever cloud what your focus, your direction is.

We did a study book called 'Gospel centred Church' – we did that for the first half of the year. So I would say wherever the church is in five years, it's got to be a gospel centred church. It's got to be trying its best to go out and tell people the good news. How they achieve it, I don't know. In five years time it could be a completely different situation. I don't know. Things can just change, just like that. But my hope is that in all things we stay focussed on God and in doing so we can discern his will and do his will.

I suppose the Mandarin side – that will continue to grow. That's the criteria, isn't it? Everyone says that. But what you don't want to do is neglect other areas.

Thorsten: Why is that the case that the Mandarin service will grow?

Kah Ming: Everyone acknowledges that – the mainland Chinese coming to study – there is more and more coming over. It has exploded.

Thorsten: So you see that growing?

Kah Ming: I don't really keep a tight tab on the Mandarin side, but yes, I can see that the Mandarin side has really grown within the last couple of years compared to other areas of the church .

Jessica: I agree with what Kah Ming said earlier. For the English ministry I hope that in future we won't just focus on English speaking Chinese. It would be good if we could reach out to any people from any nationality or background and not just a Chinese style/Chinese focus.

Kah Ming: Yes, you said not so long ago why the focus is only on English speaking Chinese from Hong Kong, Singapore... Probably because they are the easiest to get in. So it looks like that's all the people they are focussing on.

Jessica: For example somebody from a different nationality coming to our church – if they way we say things, we preach or we have our focus only on Chinese, then they may feel isolated.

Thorsten: They think it is the wrong church for them because they are not Chinese.

Jessica: They may not feel comfortable to join us if we have that atmosphere. We should welcome any people from any background. That would be good.

Thorsten: It is my impression that a church like the Chinese Church they limit their own mission to Chinese people, but the majority of people around them are not Chinese.

Kah Ming: Probably, you are quite right. Maybe it is a language thing. I think for the Cantonese and the Mandarin speaking side of the Chinese Church – that is the language I think. But I suppose as you say in the English side that's where we have the greatest chance to

reach out to a further field. Like Jessica said – we have to be careful not to limit the English speaking side to English speaking Chinese people.

Jessica: It is good that the church has a Cantonese and a Mandarin speaking service. And this can help those people who either speak Cantonese or Mandarin so it is a big help for them. For example the senior people, they immigrated to the UK/to Nottingham for many years and they just speak Cantonese. They don't understand Mandarin or English and the Cantonese service can give them lots of support and help.

Thorsten: Is there anything else you would like to add?

Kah Ming: No, it is better if you ask questions...

Addition:

Thorsten: That has happened before.

Kah Ming: The reason why I have resisted going there... Quite a few years ago, about 10 years, when I started going to Chinese Church from time to time, because they were short on resources they wanted you for what you could do for them. The leader of the church at the time, he said *oh, you can be a worship leader...* and I didn't say how to say no, so I tried it and it put me off a bit. Cause you got the impression that ... they would say *Kah Ming, oh yeah, how are you?* And the next thing was that they would say *Can you do this or that?* And I don't know whether it still happens so much nowadays. I would guess not so much because it is offputting. That's not really good. That wasn't a very good experience for me. But I would say at the time, because it was bilingual it went on for too long as well. Because of the translation, you see... I always find that sometimes the services go on for too long anyway.

The English ministry, my honest opinion, I think it is a bit of a Chinese way of doing the service. It is always teaching. I mean Bernard is really good and David is really good. The services are really good, but I find that there is a lack of response from the congregation. It is like the Chinese way when we go to school – it is you sit there and the teacher feeds you, feeds you, feeds you. And you are absorbing, absorbing, absorbing. The service is almost like the Chinese culture – like I'm teaching you, teaching you, teaching you and they are sitting

there... Well, it has its place, but I personally feel that it is also about worshipping God and your response back to God.

Thorsten: Response in what way?

Kah Ming: It is a time to be close to God. I know you are supposed to be close to God all the time, but when I go to church, for me it is a time when I am especially close to God.

Thorsten: Is it the liturgy that is lacking, or?

Kah Ming: It is the opportunity for you to come close to God... (Ende des tapes)

Interview No. B10

Interviewee: Heinke Hogg
Marital Status: Divorced
Occupation: Retired
Church: German Lutheran Church Nottingham
Involvement: Church Council Member
Interviewer: Thorsten Prill
Date: 11 December 2005
Duration: 20 min

Thorsten: Can you please tell me how it came that you joined the German Lutheran church in Nottingham?

Heinke: I heard about the Lutheran Church through some Scottish dancing. That was really strange. Because I came to England just for one year because David was doing Mandarin in London. And he had to see a counsellor and the counsellor went to Scottish dancing and I went with her and someone gave me a lift and found out that I was German: She said 'O, I know. My name is German.' And she goes to the German church. And that was how I started coming. And of course I went back overseas again. And then when I came back I sort of started coming again. And to me it was just important to have some German connections. Though my husband and I used to go to a local English church but I just found that it was important to have that German connections.

Thorsten: So the German element was important to you.

Heinke: It was to me. Yes, it was.

Thorsten: There was the opportunity to speak German and to listen to German.

Heinke: Yes, yes. And being used to the German Lutheran service. So you know, there was something sort of familiar about it. That was good.

Thorsten: The order of service, the liturgy.

Heinke: Yes.

Thorsten: And you found that was different in the Church of England?

Heinke: Yes, it is different. I mean there are similarities. But being used to a Lutheran church is rather different from an Anglican church. Though the church we used to go wasn't terribly high church. But it was more like in a Roman Catholic church a theatre going on. People marching in wearing robes and so on. So I was quite happy to be in this Lutheran church because I grew up in it.

Thorsten: Do you think that's the same for other people in the church? Or what are their motives?

Heinke: I don't know. I think some of the older generation of course came to England just after the war. I felt very much it was home from home. And maybe not so much to do with the church but to meet other Germans. Because they must have felt terrible lonely after the war coming here. So I had the feeling when I only got there towards the end when they use to have a lot of dances and lots of things going on. So think for them, for a lot of them I can't say for everybody, but I think for a lot of them it was just a social German get-together, which was very, very important. That's how I perceive that – the older generation that came straight after the war.

Thorsten: So it's the social element as well.

Heinke: I think so. Yes, I mean that's important wherever you go – the social element. But I think I've got a feeling I mean I don't know but I've got a feeling that for a lot of people that was a very important aspect of it.

Thorsten: Do think that in the fifties when the church was founded that there was a stronger motivation for people to join the German Lutheran Church then it is today?

Heinke: I think so. I think so, because partly the communication for instance was German. There was a much stronger bond. Like a little Germany in England. While now you can travel easily, you can phone easily. And younger people who come to England coming here mainly to immerse themselves in an English way of life. They speak English, they don't have the same feeling about church altogether, and they don't have the same sort of strong feeling that they

have to meet other Germans. So you know things have changed, I think. And if they want to go to church I think very often they would go to an English church because they want to feel to be part of England I think.

Thorsten: So they wouldn't come to the German church.

Heinke: No, they wouldn't feel the same need really.

Thorsten: And there was a stronger need in the past.

Heinke: Yes, there was, there was.

Thorsten: Would you say there was a stronger need in the past, because people didn't speak much English or was it because of the circumstances?

Heinke: Both of it I think. Yes, both of it. I think they all spoke English after the fashion but I think being with other Germans was just very important, because quite a few of them were fairly isolated when they came here. Quite a lot of animosities because they were Germans. And there was a place where they could feel safe maybe. That's how I feel.

Thorsten: What do you think is the biggest problem of the church today?

Heinke: Young blood, young people. But I think that is not particularly a problem of our church I think that is everywhere now. Any sort of society and other churches as well. The world has changed and young people don't feel the need.

Thorsten: What do think is behind that attitude?

Heinke: I think the tradition is not there anymore. I have to admit that with my own children. They don't go to church. We haven't sort of given them that tradition. And there so much else on offer nowadays. People can find so many different ways of finding there whatever they trying to find. And I think a lot of young people sort of don't believe. They want to see something to believe something. The world has changed so much, there so much else on offer. And the tradition hasn't been carried on, like...I'm one of them, we haven't really carried it on in my family. So, that's maybe part of that.

Thorsten: So where do you see the future of the church?

Heinke: The German church?

Thorsten: Yes.

Heinke: I think, it will fold, it will fold. Because I feel now suddenly that I'm sort of trying to organise the tree, try to - suddenly it has all fallen on me, and I can't be the only person left in the church. Because I know Doris is slightly older than me. Then there is Joyce, but there are not many of my age. So the answer is it will fold. You have to be realistic about that. It's a shame but that's how it's going to be.

Thorsten: Do you think that it could have been prevented in some way?

Heinke: No! I think that's just the normal way. To my mind.

Thorsten: Do you think it would have made a difference if they had changed the church into an English church twenty years ago?

Heinke: I think you have to be realistic. We've lost a bit. Erika for example was mentioning today that Christmas Eve is not the same as it used to because a lot of English relatives would come as well. There might have been a time where we could have gone over to English, but I think we missed the boat.

Thorsten: But that's a long time ago that we missed the boat.

Heinke: Yes. I think it will just sort of fold, and that's it.

Thorsten: It's sad, isn't it.

Heinke: It's sad, yes it is sad. But I think we have to be realistic about that. Who else is there? It's sad, I think it's very sad. But that's the reality, really.

Thorsten: Is there anything that you would like to add?

Heinke: Alright. The only thing I think it was a very difficult time when Josua was putting down the fist or whatever. It had been quite nice to have once a month an English service because some relatives would come as well and Christmas eve to have it English German, which made it quite lively and a lot of people are regretting that. And I think that's a shame that it had become an issue. I know why it was. But it's a shame it happened. It would have been quite nice to carry on without all that politics. I think that would have been quite nice.

But we can't turn the clock back. I think a lot of people feel that way. May the life would have been a bit longer but I don't know, maybe not.

Thorsten: Do think it would have made a big difference? Look at the English church. It's not thriving at all.

Heinke: No it's not. But again I think a lot of people have left from there. Because again they are missing the way it was before. I think everybody felt they lost. Whether the church would have continued much longer than the German church would have I don't know. It was difficult because of all the politics going on about it.

Yea, it's a shame.

Thorsten: Thank you very much.

Interview No. B11

Interviewee: Josua von Gottberg
Occupation: Pastor
Church: German Lutheran Churches in the Midlands
Interviewer: Thorsten Prill
Date: 28 December 2005
Duration: 35 min

Thorsten: Josua, wir haben vorhin ueber die Gemeinden gesprochen. Was wuerdest du sagen, aus deiner Sicht, ist das groesste Problem der Gemeinden oder vielleicht auch fuer dich als Pfarrer?

Josua: Mit den Problemen zu beginnen ist immer so eine Sache. Problem ist, wie kriege ich die Unterscheidung hergestellt, dass wir Gemeinde sind, dass wir Kirche sind, dass wir Gemeinschaft der Glaebigen sind und nicht ein kultureller Verein. Das Kulturelle, das Deutschsprachige und all das, was mit der Vergangenheit der Menschen zusammenhaengt ueberhaupt nicht negativ bewerten will, sondern es gehoert einfach auch dazu, aber wie erreiche ich die Menschen, dass sie ueber die deutsche Sprache hinaus ueber die Gelegenheit sich mit anderen deutschsprachigen am Sonntag zu treffen oder bei anderen Zusammenkuenften, dass sie dort wirklich erfahren – es geht um eine Beziehung zu Gott. Es geht um Leben und Tod, sehr spitz formuliert jetzt. Es geht um meine ewige Seligkeit, wobei ich ja damit verbinde, wenn ich diese wichtigen Fragen stele und in den Gesichtskreis bekomme, dann sich auch mein Leben im Alltag veraendert. Dass wenn Menschen den christlichen Glauben annehmen und sie wissen sie kommen dahin, um im christlichen Glauben gestaerkt zu warden, dann veraendern sie auch ihre Umwelt, dann veraendert sich auch ihr Leben.

Thorsten: Was glaubst du sind die Gruende warum die Leute in die deutschsprachigen Gemeinden kommen oder vielleicht in der Vergangenheit gekommen sind?

Josua: Das haengt mit der Entstehung der Gemeinden hier zusammen nach dem 2. Weltkrieg. Das haengt, denke ich, mit der Biographie der Menschen zusammen. Sie wurden ihrer Heimat beraubt. Sie mussten einen Weg gehen, den sie sich so nicht ausgesucht haben. Es ist die Vereinzelung, es ist die Fremdheit, die Fremdlingschaft und es ist einfach das Beduerfnis zunaechst wieder ein Stueckchen vertraute Umgebung zu bekommen, ein Stueckchen Heimat zu bekommen, was ja durchaus auch Kirche bieten soll. Nur dass man eigentlich dann nicht bei diesen Dingen haengenbleibt, sondern dass man diese Dinge ernst nimmt, auch als Aufhaenger nimmt und die Menschen dann aber weiterfuehrt, Kurz gesagt noch einmal – die Gruende weshalb die Menschen zur deutschsprachigen Gemeinde kommen, sind sicherlich so unterschiedlich, wie die Menschen, die dorthin kommen – verstaendlich. Und vielleicht sind es auch viele Gruende, mehrere Gruende, die einzelne Menschen dahingefuehrt haben, die also nicht nur monokausal sind.

Thorsten: Wenn du kein Pfarrer waerst, sondern als deutscher Geschaeftsmann oder Dozent hier leben wuerdest, was fuer Gruende gaebe es fuer dich, in eine deutschsprachige engelisch-lutherische Gemeinde zu gehen?

Josua: Ich setze voraus, dass ich Christ bin und mir Gottesdienst und Gemeinschaft der Glaeubigen wichtig ist, dann waere der wichtigste Grund fuer mich – wird dort das Evangelium verkuendigt? Treffe ich dort auch Menschen, die Christus auch als ihren Herrn angenommen haben, um es etwas fromm auszudruecken. Dann kann ich natuerlich auch sehr viel mit diesen Menschen teilen, weil ja dann auch der kulturelle Hintergrund derselbe ist. Ich habe Anknuepfungspunkte. Und das ist schon interessant, dass zur Staerkung des Glaubens und fuer meine Alltagswirklichkeit zu erfahren. Inwieweit es jetzt die deutsche Sprache zunaechst waere, kann ich nicht sagen. Aber es muesste vor allen Dingen, denke ich, waere fuer mich wichtig, dass Menschen, dass man sich in der jeweiligen Gemeinde dem eigentlichen, dem Spezifikum was Christen, was Kirche sein will, auch aussetzt, naemlich Jesus Christus grosszumachen.

Thorsten: Gibt es fuer dich auch mehr konfessionelle Gruende, wie das Abendmahlsverstaendnis oder andere Dinge? Koennte das eine Rolle spielen? Oder kennst du Leute, fuer die das eine Rolle spielt?

Josua: Das haengt sicherlich damit zusammen, ich habe vorhin hauptsaechlich den kulturellen background erwaeht, aber da haengt ja viel mehr damit zusammen, der konfessionelle, der soziale und vieles mehr. Ganz sicherlich waere fuer mich dann auch das Taufverstaendnis, auch die Abendmahlsliturgie zunaechst einmal, wie ich sie vielleicht kenne von Kindheit her. Ganz sicherlich waere das fuer mich auch wesentlich. Was nicht bedeutet, dass ich nicht auch in andere Gemeinden gehen wuerde, aber dann wuerde ich doch Schwierigkeiten haben, an dem gesamten gottesdienstlichen Geschehen teilzunehmen, wenn ich wuesste dass die Abendmahlsliturgie sowie auch das Abendmahlsverstaendnis ist total anders. Das muesste dann aussen vor bleiben fuer mich. Dann wuerde man die Gemeinschaft dort nur partiell nutzen. Schoen waere es natuerlich, wenn ich dort das wiederfinde in meiner Gemeinde, was fuer mein theologisches Verstaendnis auch wichtig ist, was mich zu einem tieferen Bibelverstaendnis anleitet.

Thorsten: Wie wuerdest du, um das Thema mal zu wechseln, das Verhaeltnis der Gemeinden hier zur EKD bezeichnen, die Entsendung von Pfarrern der EKD, die finanziellen Beziehungen.

Josua: Halte ich inzwischen fuer reformbeduerftig. Ich denke, dass das nach dem Krieg eine gute Entscheidung war, aber ich denke, dass man inzwischen doch darueber nachdenken muesste, hier neue Wege zumindestens anzudenken, fuer die Gemeindeglieder selbst ist die Person des Pfarrers oder der Pfarrerin entscheidend, und nicht ob sie jetzt von der EKD kommt oder nicht. Das steht im Vordergrund. Die Menschen haben ein Interesse daran, mit ihren Fragen, mit ihren Aengsten, mit ihren Hoffnungen, mit ihren Erwartungen, mit ihren Wuenschen irgendwo gehoert zu werden und sie irgendwo anbringen zu koennen. Die EKD ist da ganz weit weg, spielt da ueberhaupt gar keine Rolle. Sondern es ist der jeweilige Seelsorger, der ihnen menschlich begegnet, der ihnen das Wort Gottes aus Liebe sagt, aus Liebe zum Wort Gottes, aber auch in Liebe. Und das heisst auch mit der entsprechenden Empathie und auch mit dem entsprechenden Verstaendnis fuer ihre Lebenssituation. Und die scheint mir bei den deutschen Pfarrern, die zum Beispiel auch aus einem ganz anderen wirtschaftlichen Hintergrund herkommen, auch ohne Noete eigentlich sind und fuer die hier vieles neu ist und die das als Bereicherung ansehen, ein Aufenthalt hier, aber dabei nicht unter existentiellen Bedraengnissen leiden muessen.

Es ist ja die Frage, ob die Pfarrer immer das rechte Verstaendnis gleich haben fuer die Belange der Menschen hier vor Ort. Auch zum Beispiel, dass die Menschen inzwischen nach 40 oder 50 Jahren nicht mehr ganz genau wissen, wo sind wir eigentlich. Sind wir Englaender? Sind wir Deutsche? Denn wenn wir fuer einen kurzen Zeitraum hier ist, dann weiss man nach wie vor noch man ist Deutscher. Und man konnte eine Zeit lang hier hineinschnuppern in eine andere Kultur, aber man hat dabei eigentlich wenn man einigermassen normal ist, keine Identitaetsschwierigkeiten und geht dann wieder zurueck. So waere es vielleicht sogar besser oder man muesste von Fall zu Fall darueber nachdenken, ob dieses System in der staendigen Anbindung an die EKD und nach sechs Jahren einen Wechsel, ob das hier richtig ist. Ein Wechsel mag gut sein in Deutschland, weil auch die Gemeinde dort wechselt. Aber hier, wo die alten Menschen eigentlich nicht mehr wechseln, da sind sie auf Kontinuitaet angewiesen, auch auf dasselbe Gesicht. Und da kann's ruhig auch etwas laenger sein als sechs Jahre. Das aber wieder erlauben die Gesetze der EKD nicht.

Thorsten: Also du siehst es als problematisch an, dass es keine Kontinuitaet bei der EKD gibt?

Josua: Davor haben die Menschen denke ich auch Angst. Sie haben sich gerade innerhalb von sechs Jahren an jemanden gewoehnen koennen und muessen nach sechs Jahren, die zu Beginn eine relative lange Frist sind, aber dann nachher doch fuer den einen oder anderen schnell vergangen sind, scheuen sich die Leute vor. Wiewohl ich der Befuerworter eines Wechsels bin, aber es haengt auch immer mit der Gemeindestruktur zusammen. Ein Pfarrer, der 30 Jahre in Deutschland in einer Gemeinde ist, da hat die Gemeinde nach 30 Jahren total oder ziemlich gewechselt und das ist eben anders als frueher. Aber hier vor Ort mit den alten Menschen, die hier zu betreuen sind in der Struktur unserer deutschsprachigen Gemeinde, wo die Kerngemeinde keiner Fluktuation unterliegt, da muesste man fragen, ob das immer so sein muss.

Thorsten: Ist mit dem Entsenden der Pfarrer aus Deutschland nicht auch eine finanzielle Abhaengigkeit gegeben? Oder dass die Gemeinden nicht zu einer finanziellen Selbstaendigkeit erzogen worden sind, dadurch dass der Pfarrer immer aus Deutschland kam und aus Deutschland bezahlt wurde und vieles aus Deutschland finanziert wurde ueber die Jahre?

Josua: Wer wirklich sich zur Gemeinde rechnet, der ist auch bereit, fuer diese Gemeinde Opfer zu bringen, der er angehoert. Und wer hingegen die Gemeinde nur mehr oder weniger der anderen Veranstaltungen, die dort angeboten warden, wie Basar und was weiss ich, Gespraechsabend und Filmabend und so weiter, wer die Gemeinde derartig nutzt ohne sich ihr aber besonders als Kirche Jesu Christi verbunden zu fuehlen, da denke ich, hat es sicher dazu beigetragen, dass man sich auf die EKD verlassen hat und gesagt hat, da kommt ja immer einer und ich bekomme etwas, brauche aber eigentlich nichts wiederzugeben. Das denke ich ist sicherlich durchaus bei einer nicht unbetraechtlichen Zahl wenn vielleicht auch eher unbewusst wuerde ich meinen so der Fall gewesen bis in die heutige Zeit hinein. Ansonsten wuerde ich das System, wie es frueher war, nicht in Bausch und Bogen verurteilen. Es muss nur immer dem eigenen Anspruch der Kirche, die Kirche die immer eine auch sich selbst reformierende Kirche ist, auch genuegen. Und da darf es dann kein Tabuthema geben. Und da muss es dann moeglich sein, auch neue Strukturen zu denken und zu konzipieren ohne dass das ganze erst durch eine Strukturdebatte wieder erstickt wird und nur weil gerade eine Strukturdebatte angesagt ist, beteiligen wir uns auch daran. Sondern es muss eben das Geistliche im Vordergrund bleiben. Und wenn das Geistliche im Vordergrund bleibt, dann hat man auch die Strukturen zur rechten Zeit und nicht dann, wenn gerade alle ueber eine Strukturreform nachdenken.

Thorsten: Was ist der Unterschied zwischen deinem Dienst hier und einer Kirchengemeinde in Deutschland? Wo liegen die groessten Unterschiede?

Josua: Zunaechst einmal liegen die Unterschiede natuerlich in der geographischen Ausdehnung des Pfarramtes. Sie liegen auch in, dass es hier nicht so etwas gibt wie eine kirchliche Infrastruktur. Dass man also gleichzeitig auf Kindergaerten zurueckgreifen kann und kirchliches Altersheim usw. Auch das ist hier nicht gegeben. Es liegt daran, dass wir mit unseren deutschsprachigen Gemeinden hier eben auch nicht Staatskirche sind, zur anglikanischen Kirche gehoeren, sondern eine Art Freikirche sind, wiewohl die Menschen volkskirchliche Erwartungen zum Teil haben. Und zunaechst einmal der Pfarrer hier auch ziemlich alleine steht. Das hat insofern auch seine Vorteile, dass er nicht ewig in Gremiensitzungen verbraucht wird und Pfarrkonvente und Aehnliches besuchen muss, die er eigentlich ungerne besucht und das auch als Zeitverschwendung ansieht. Das gilt nicht in

jedem Fall, aber das ist leider heute so. Das hat auch den Vorteil, solange er alleine ist, dass er oder sie die Menschen schon auch persönlich ansprechen kann und unmittelbar mit ihnen zu tun hat und nicht durch andere, aber alles in allem ist es eigentlich eine grössere Aufgabe, eine grössere Arbeitsbelastung, der er nur unvollkommen gerecht wird.

Thorsten: Du hast als erstes die geographischen Gegebenheiten genannt, d.h. du musst sehr viel fahren. Wieviel Meilen schätzt du, bist du im Monat unterwegs fuer die Gemeinden?

Josua: Das werden sicherlich schon etwas mehr als tausend Meilen sein, die man im Monat faehrt. Es ist ja nicht nur so, dass die zu fahren sind, sondern dass es hier auch auf den Verkehr ankommt, man abgespannt ist und auch gerade nach Gottesdiensten, wo man voll dabei war anschliessend auch muede ist und vielfach dass man das auch erst am naechsten Tag spuert.

Thorsten: Gibt es etwas, das du hinzufuegen moechtest zu dem Komplex 'Deutsche Gemeinde in den Midlands/Gemeindearbeit'?

Josua: Ich bin dankbar in dieser Zeit in euch beiden eine kompetente und auch kontinuierliche Hilfe erfahren zu haben, was ich fuer sehr wichtig halte, dass man eben doch nicht alleine dasteht. Es ist nur fuer eine Zeit lang interessant, alleine wirken zu koennen. Man ist auf Gemeinschaft angewiesen und ich haette diesen Dienst ohne die Unterstuetzung von Prills kaum in der Weise tun koennen. Das war natuerlich auch der Vorteil, dass ihr auch schon laenger hier wart und auch schon in der Gemeinde bekannt wart und auch schon hier gewirkt hattet. Aber ich denke man ist darauf angewiesen. Da kann man ja Glueck haben, dass man je nach dem in welche Gemeinde man kommt, dass man auf Menschen trifft, die sofort verstehen, worauf es dem neu angekommenen Pfarrer ankommt und wo er auch Hilfe benoetigt. Es gibt Menschen, die sind talentiert auf jenem Gebiet und diesem Gebiet und brauchen die Unterstuetzung auf einem ganz anderen Gebiet und das kann beim Nachfolger schon wieder ganz anders aussehen. Dass man hier Menschen vor Ort hat, die das dann auch beurteilen koennen und sich dementsprechend auch auf den Pfarrer einstellt und es gleich zu einer gelingenden Kommunikation kommt im Sinne darin, dass wir nie vergessen duerfen, dass es bei Kirche darum geht, Jesus Christus dem einzelnen gross zu machen, damit er dann auch in seinem Leben erfahrt, wie schoen das ist und wie befreiend das ist. Und insofern hat

Kirche und Glaube ja auch etwas mit unserem taeglichen Alltag zu tun und ist nicht nur etwas fuer Menschen, die kurz vorm Sterben stehen.

Ich bin dankbar fuer diese Zeit. Ich bin dankbar fuer die Begegnung hier mit den Menschen, gerade wenn ich manchmal nicht wusste, wie wird es dort weitergehen, die Hilfe erfahren von Menschen, aber doch von Gott gefuegt und so ist also die Zeit hier in den Midlands auch eine Zeit der Glaubenstaerkung und der persoenlichen Glaubensvertiefung. Und ich denke auch das ist fuer einen Pfarrer wichtig, dass er ein seinem persoenlichen Glauben nicht stehenbleibt, sondern immer wieder angeruehrt wird und auch ein Stueckchen leidenschaftlich bleibt. Davor hatte ich immer die groesste Angst, dass man irgendwann so etabliert ist, dass man im Grunde genommen so seinen Dienst tun kann ohne noch auf Wunder Gottes und das Eingreifen Gottes zu warten. Und das ist hier tatsaechlich voll zu Buche geschlagen. Ich gehe wenn ich wieder zurueckgehe 2007 sehr sehr dankbar fuer viele viele Erfahrungen auch im persoenlichen Glaubensleben und kann dann auch nur dankbar zurueckschauen.

Thorsten: Vielen Dank.