

APPENDIX 4

13 February 2005 'B1' Group interview Transcript

Questioner: Methods – how did you start up?

Person 1: Quite interesting actually as I think maybe that the idea for B1 came from a number of places, in terms of where people were at in various conversations, and then it was something which Geoff made happen by having the vision for it and then forming together a group of people of about four to start off initially.

Person 2: I have been having conversations with people with whom over the years you were one of them weren't you.

Person 1: Yes

Person 2: Where we were discussing about what we wanted to happen, but the trigger I suppose was me going on sabbatical at about two or three years ago and I looked into the implications of post-modernity for the church and people and at the end of that the diocese said well how about trying to create a church to meet the needs of people in the twenty-thirty category, so I began to have conversations with people I thought might be interested and the way we did it was that I approached half the people and I left it to God to call the other half as a Dutch compromise. There were people with various gifts that I thought were useful to have. I think its right that 25 or 27 came from St Johns

Person 2: Yes

Questioner: That was the church you were at previously at and working at?

Person 2: Yes

Questioner: And that was a Charismatic Evangelical church?

Person 2: Yes

Questioner: Was there anything there that made you think that you wanted to do something different, say experience-led?

Person 1: One of the reasons I wanted to talk to Geoff about church was that I was finding St Johns quite a difficult place to be personally because I felt that there was an enormous gulf in lots of ways, sometimes in language and in the way that people related to each other and its style and culture between church and actually the rest of my life - and I really wanted to see integrity in those areas and the place where it would be comfortable to integrate people and that is what I think would like church to have been like. I had also got to a point with it where there wasn't a culture where you can actually ask the question 'how are you?' where relationships were very superficial.

Person 2: I think over the years the church there would have been seen to be quite effective at mission, and evangelism certainly. It was still OK to see attracting only a certain type of person, but there were sub-cultures that were not represented in the church. I suppose for a couple of years we ran a monthly event at a pub down the road which we called 'online junction' and that was a learning ground for me really. I began to see that although it was attracting non-church people who wouldn't normally come to church it was still a too big a gap for them who showed interest to say 'now we need to go to normal church' and so I began to think actually we needed to create

a different type of community. So there was all sorts of things going on in my head, but the Diocese provided that the reason for doing it. But it was definitely a missiological reason on my part you know, as I reflected more on changes of culture you can't just keep going on doing the same things. What we were doing was just creating a cultural ghetto.

Questioner: OK so just going back to the method how did you work it out – you've got this group together with a similar vision so how did you work out how you wanted to start and what did you start with?

Person 1: I found it hard to remember actually thinking back to it although an interesting element is that I do think we sat down together and discussed what we thought was the best vision would be? What our reason for being was? What we wanted it to feel like? What we wanted to call our community? Having things that we thought were important enough. Interestingly that has been an ongoing feature of our church life together as an open group forum where we do discuss and talk about things.

Person 2: So in monthly or fortnightly meeting we did get together all together. We talked about values, we wanted to get our values thrashed out before things like a mission statement so we reflected on culture together and what we wanted to see that was different in this church, so there was... I was released a few months early and actually started I think 3 months earlier, so over that period of time this core group began to meet. I think that was quite important really so we didn't launch, I think it was January.

Questioner: What year was this?

Person 1: Did we have a weekend away together in that time as well?

Person 2: Yes we did actually

Person 1: I do remember it as being the beginning to build relationships and also concentrated time together to talk about things that we wanted

Questioner: Did you set aims and goals you wanted to achieve in a certain time plan or was it just starting?

Person 2: One of the things we did kick around and what we expected it to look like in 2 to 3 years time but actually quite early on we realised that probably not and a good question to ask at this sort of church none of us really knew what would happen certainly not numbers of us. We probably had an expectation that after 4 years we might have been at the point, I don't know, 75 but maybe I am talking about my own projections.

Person 1: I think one of the reasons why we found it difficult to tell what things would look like in 4 years time is that we all had different reasons and expectations.

Person 2: Yes

Person 1: None of us knew actually what the reality of being church together would be like.

Questioner: So what was the first sort of things that you did?

Person 1: In the first instance we met once a month on a Sunday evening upstairs in a 'walk about pub'

Person 2: Yes that was our launch event, the first one. I suppose those events took insights from the 'seeker' approach, but it was the idea was a much more fast-moving magazine format event making use of video and film and TV and live music and that sort of thing.

Person 1: Yes, it was using the situation of a central Birmingham bar and we thought that it would be interesting to integrate and join in what was there in order to break down that physical shape of space by not having a circle or rows of chairs but having groups interact round tables.

Questioner: So that it does look very café like?

Person 2: It did and downstairs you know there was on Sunday nights a band night there and all sorts of things were pumped through the floor, everything was shaking as they cranked up the sound systems, but there was something quite endearingly rough edged about it.

Person 1: Yes definitely

Questioner: So was that quite presentational or was it more about people doing group work or more about presenting the gospel?

Person 2: It was to start with it was quite presentational wasn't it really but I think we quite quickly evolved from that. Again really through joint meetings when we discussed it. People said to me look Geoff it is time for you to drop the talk.

Person 1: We moved into thinking that perhaps we would quite like to have some more people's stories being told as a way to communicating messages so we began to have a panel type things with interviews which we thought would be good and bring with it slightly more subtle ways of communicating.

Person 2: We would invite particular Christians to come and share their perspective on issues and other concerns. I think really the major development was that we moved from wanting to lead people on a predetermined outcome where actually what we are doing is sowing seeds to see how things turn out. It's OK to do that. We are just trying to, it's a relationship builder where we are trying to raise issues of common concern and trying to dismantle preconceptions of what church and Christians are. It is a stepping-stone perhaps increasing their sense of desire to have more to do with someone in other environments. So it did move quite a long way from the seeker thing so that now it has become more sort of basic engagement and we have been running one on 'risk and fear' in February. It is going to be different in that its going to be a fusion between a sort of art and creative worship service with art installations around so that people can view those as presentation for a period, but it is going to be a lot more complicated and quick fire with story telling and interviews in a warehouse type atmosphere. I suppose we saw that as our shop window event, but we were also meeting by December at a place called the 'pavements' stuck in an 80s time warp. Steve likes to remind us stepping over plates of pizza.

Person 1: It was horrible.

Person 2: Yes, I think the Bar used to forget that we were coming so we stood out in the street for 40 minutes waiting for them to open up.

Questioner: What was that about, what was that for?

Person 1: If anything I would say that for a long time that was our Sunday morning congregation our church for us was the thing that most resembled where we had come from.

Questioner: Was that worship then?

Person 1 & 2: Yes

Questioner: So are you saying that the things you are doing, the other event was mission?

Person 1: Yes I do. I think personally it felt as though there is always in a group of people there are always a number who want to be changing everything.

Person 2: Yes

Person 1: Straight away, but actually we need to be mindful of not interrupting the part that other people just moving out of where they have been as a huge change although it is good to know that change itself. Also in terms of our resources it takes an awful lot of time and effort for people who have committed their lives to pull together on a Sunday evening so I think we did fall back into Sunday mornings being a bit safer to then move forward, it was easier to come together.

Questioner: Because what you were doing felt dangerous or challenging?

Person 1: Yes exactly

Person 1: It takes a huge amount of resource to organise particularly when we were just getting used to it, about how amps and things fit together and lugging all the kit around. That actually then as Geoff would say just coming up with new ideas all the time for everything was just really exhausting and so Sunday mornings were more traditional and familiar.

Person 2: I also think that it takes a while to unlearn stuff. I think we take a lot more risks now and we have different labels for what we do, which is much better and I think in the early days the Sunday stuff was much more conventional to feed the desperate needs to give people something trying to be relevant with the context we were working. There was so much to do and think about.

Questioner: So its like that was sustaining something ..?

Person 2: Yes, and at that stage we were still a new and small group of like-minded people building a church that had only just begun doing things.

Person 1: We are still just getting to know each other as well, in a much smaller group so we found ourselves dependent upon each other in a way that you have not been before.

Person 2: There were about 27 people at this stage.

Questioner: And what sort of people were in that 27.

Person 2: Some single people some newly married without kids some married with kids and kids unmarried and slightly older kids We didn't really have students did we, and we were predominantly in fact completely white which probably put us at a disadvantage. But then we were a reflection of the church that we had come from.

Questioner: In terms of the break with the past church, were they supportive and was there no animosity?

Person 1: No Absolutely they tried to help us as much as they could and we were very and thankful for the support they gave us. I think very much they saw us as a symbol of their own outreach, and they continued to support us financially.

Person 2: A bit of history, this was the third time that they had contributed to a plant, so they had done church plants before. They were generous in giving away the type of people who came with us that left a hole in their finance and also they understood that what they were doing was not a mother daughter relationship, but entirely something separate from them

Questioner: Did you have a target group, and has that changed after you started? Who are you trying to reach now?

Person 1: Notionally sitting down here I would say our target group would be unchurched adults in a post-modern culture or who are post-church, where we are trying to bridge that gap where you can explore your faith or what that might mean to someone where they can explore their core faith. I think it also we are attractive to disenfranchised Christians, people who find church difficult who have just struggled with it not because they are struggling with their faith, but because they can't cope with that institution, and therefore that causes a faith struggle which causes them to leave the church and I think we pick up some of those people in what we are about.

Questioner: And do you pick them up once they have left such a church?

Person 2: Yes there are people we have been in contact with people who have been out of church for 2 to 3 to 5 years. They find there way to us through our web site or through friends. We actually give out to a bigger scene probably than we were expecting.

Questioner: So what proportion of your communities are likely to be unchurched or dechurched?

Person 1: That's a hard question as well because I think in our lot, which is a lot of people, one of the difficulties for us is that we count those who are un-or-dechurched as new people who we hope will join our community

Person 2: Mainly those who went down in categories of new people are those who had moved into the area, those who were dechurched, we have seen probably about 4 or 5 people who actually come to faith who were unchurched, and others who have joined us because there was a split in their church and they left, but mainly the new people come mainly through moving into the area, but Vicky is right we probably see getting on for a 100 people who feel that they belong to B1 over 4 years, so its has been a big turnover of people who have been with us for 9 months. I think there was a misunderstanding in the early days about the people we were trying to reach probably as we were perceived people latched on to us a kind of troubled church which in our self identity I don't think we ever were. Very few actually wanted to come and see I suppose we felt that we were more say café bar pub like.

Person 3: More of a coffee shop culture sort of 'Costa Coffee' revolution type of people.

Person 2: I think all the time actually our target is slightly changing as where the spirit leads you your community you get an opportunity for instance at the moment we have an opportunity to run a sort of 'essence type' course in a holistic spa centre, which has just come up as contact with a cross cultural mission if you like, so you cant always say sort of yes these are the people you want to go for, so you have to see where God leads you.

Questioner: So that is very network focused then?

Person 3: We try to be, we have grown more organically through friendships really the word friendship underlines everything we do, friendship evangelism as giving a taster then really many people come along and experience one of our events and stay. So then...

Person 1: We have also got people who know us and are around on the fringe of things there are lots of things, which are started up where groups of people come along to every event that we are doing such as football, so people get involved through the many things we do.

Person 2: Our hearts really in activity related Its interesting that recently we ran a thing for an arts centre where they promoted a discussion about Christian Spirituality, which they marketed jointly with the University as a discussion following a film. They sold out tickets, more than 160 people attended you know 30 –35 names of people who wanted to come to future themed events. So we are looking for partners for projects like that. There is still a lot of work to do.

Questioner: So just to summarise then the presence you have sounds like it is via the Internet and you work through networks then in that way are relational friendships plus doing things engaging with the arts and spirituality scene?

Person 2: Yes, we are definitely looking for local arts and spirituality opportunities to interact with the community in central Birmingham and hope these will develop in time.

Person 1: The relational aspects and befriending aspect is crucial.

Person 3: It is interesting that you mentioned the web site there I had passing conversations with people on chat rooms and things, and they have said you are lucky to belong to such a spiritual community, eventually as a result of these cyber connections they have gone along checked out our website and have come back to me and said things like 'sounds like the type of church I would like to go to', from places like Canada and they sounded really excited about it. I have had a friend who lives in what used to be Yugoslavia ...Serbia and she said that she found it quite interesting particularly our event 'spiritual exchange' she thought that she would quite like to go to an event like that, but being over in Yugoslavia that would be awkward but she and others are keen.

Questioner: And so in terms of your vision is the Internet something that you want to think more about?

Person 2: Yes I think it is definitely essential, I think the website is crucial to having a presence in what you do in a network world.

Questioner: Is there anything you think we have missed in the story of B1 so far?

Person 1: We haven't really talked about the priority in the relationships side of our church which I can see – the sense of church as family, we are certainly not perfect at it but it is something that we think is important, church as community having a commitment to each other, and we do try and encourage each other in that into deeper relationships and our small-group life is something which has helped us with that.

Questioner: Going back to the point you said before, making links with what you were saying about Church as community – is that because you had a vision of the way the church should be that wasn't happening? Or was it something else that you were thinking?

Person 1: According to me that's right my personal view of it to me that's part of what church should be. It is about shared, authentic and deep relationships in being people who are committed to openness as Christians getting away from triviality and judgement about who you are where there is giving and receiving of love and acceptance – and shared lives.

Person 2: We chose the name B1 because of our sense of wanting to be community – we want our community to be the best that we can make it, and I think we did talk at the time before we actually launched about the consequence of truth being about community, about the quality of our relationships with one another and with those who join us, so when we began we did quite quickly find people who did want to come and belong and take part and to contribute to our community and activities.

Questioner: So going back to the B1 name – is there an importance of place in the name?

Person 2. Initially the city centre was the place which we felt drew large numbers of people, a natural focus, in reference to a post code, a place where we would interact with people in bars and pubs, so we wanted to be hosted in neutral territory we felt actually you know we should be going to, and therefore actually going where lots of people go.

Questioner: Is that because you saw that the culture was mixing in the city centre – so that you wanted to interact with that community, or was there another reason?

Person 2: No, I do think it was because of the cultural area reflecting lots of people's lifestyle and our desire to interact with it.

Person 1: Yes we did want to focus on the city centre. Part of it was because it is where there are bars and things to do. It draws all kinds of people from the arts side or people just going out to have fun. One of the questions was about do we have an understanding of who we are in relation to the city centre, we have a phrase about being a church without walls, meeting on neutral territory, and coping with the difficulties that this brings with it about not doing things always in the same place.

Questioner: So has it been explicit about having a presence with these people who go to the city centre? About people knowing that there is a church, which has a presence amongst the wine bars, clubs and pubs?

Person 2: We tried a few things at times before some of our events we went down to meet before hand in various bars and pubs, once or twice hanging out in the centre of town, we tried to give out leaflets. But you know, it is hard actually to keep it in peoples consciousness.

Person 1: Yes not easy as there is so much going on.

Person 3: So we didn't really want to be caught in just being a brand because it is so easy to sort of turn into almost sounding like a community venture as part of the church and it is good to get a presence there but for the people to see that and think that its OK but that it is just another brand of church. We don't want it to be like that we want it to be a community of people they feel they can belong to rather than that being just a trendy brand that people can say they are a member of.

Person: 2 Yes, it a presence focused on the relational. We actually do very little by the way of advertising, basically because it comes through relationships and different types of networks, through work, the gym. We have been in different types of environment haven't we? We have been through about 8 different venues and obviously when you meet at the venue with people in the hotel or the bar and they get to hear about it, people from these venues have put themselves on the rota to be at the alternative worship service itself, to go round the stations and ask questions, so there was that sense of helping people to move on with us.

Person 3: There were bar staff at the 'Walk about' as well weren't there that were interested in us, who engaging in conversations and the discussions we were having, we would talk to people when they went to have a drink with them and a few of them wanted to get involved. A few of them did come along now and again but not necessarily when they were working.

Questioner: From the outside it does look like you have a brand. I suppose if you are going to try have a presence in a consumer culture, brand is quite important, to be culturally relevant, but you react against the idea of that?

Person 3: Partly because I think because I work in my personal work is for a brand experience company and I sort of see church slightly differently through a corporate and think that I suppose that the corporate face of the Church of England is a little bit different to what we sort of have as a church. So it 's about changing perceptions and what I would consciously think is that, I came part of the Church of England and that has wider associations but we did think slightly differently to the general idea of what Church of England means to people.

Questioner: Would you say what you think that is? And why is B1 different?

Person 3: Well the general perception as I see it is the Church of England church is a physical building which has been there for a very long time that perhaps at one point was the centre of community life but isn't necessarily any more, people see it as a high street dinosaur really, which isn't necessarily relevant to them now recollecting bad associations of having been forced to go to Sunday school and not really wanting to go, and the rest of it, and I think the community aspect of it has been sort of been lost in the way that society has changed with long distance relationships crucial to work. We think we are trying to create a sense of community now that in the old village life

way, where the church was the centre of the community that isn't necessarily a thing now. The centre of peoples community is their friendship networks and to have a church which is based on community rather than a building, that is how I feel the B1 church is.

Person 2: So it's a brand within a brand. We did have a service where we thought where we tried to explore the context of being a 'brand –ambassador' to explore it in Christian terms, I do think we take consumerism seriously, whilst retaining aspects of the prophetic, we recognise actually we are trying to push a lorry up hill if we think we can stand outside consumerism, the church needs to work with this concept to try to explore what authentic church is for today.

Person 3: The thing that I was trying to say is that some people may have a particular brand they always buy somewhere, say like some say 'oh I am a Sony man' or say 'I always buy Gucci clothes' or something like that, and I think that it could be quite easy to sort of become say 'I'm a B1 sort of person' rather than a Christian one, that I am a member of the Christian community. That is the sort of differentiator of what I was trying to get at.

Person 2: There is a tension there in a way, because actually because what we try to do is to verbally present authentic B1 church culture, the way we do things, so I do agree with you, but I do think also there has to be a B1 type flavour through what we do, and if our flavour is the same as everyone else's flavour then we are wasting our time.

Questioner: Is the flavour contextual; is there something about Birmingham in what you do?

Person1: Absolutely definitely, that what we do has a certain flavour and variety in what we do, reflecting the people in the community. Which is driven by the very people who are the actual church, there are different styles for singing or not singing or different forms of worship that get reflected, and we attempt to flavour things differently to ensure that there is variety to reflect this community. We accept that we are different people, and this difference is expressed in what we do. That is in its self is a B1 brand value.

Person 3: We don't stick rigidly to set liturgy do we? We might borrow liturgy from one of the other, from another branch of Christianity. Occasionally it is Taize chants, occasionally we use everything from the Book of Common Prayer or from the Anglican Service Book you know, obviously communion was very much, has to be in a particular way for the Church of England but the way that is presented isn't the same say as many other churches, we do have visuals on the screen and we might play some music, whilst, we might even sing the Nicene Creed.

Person 2: When you asked the question about whether what we did reflected Birmingham, I immediate think, which bit of Birmingham, Birmingham is not one monolithic culture but a myriad of various sub-cultures as well. I think we recognise we can't reflect the whole lot what we can do is try and reflect the key subcultures that maybe we are a bit closer to naturally and so people who go out on a Saturday night, and then it's about us starting to think about these 10,000 people moving into the city centre in these new flats and what does their culture look like? and what does the church needs to look like for them? We do ask that question and we are prepared to be flexible.

Person 1: In that sort of question, we do ask that on a regular basis.

Person 2: You have to constantly do that because you could kid yourself that you are an authentic reflection of a particular context, with the danger of dragging church or pulling back the church to be as it has always been done is very strong.

Questioner: If we could just focus on that, one of my connections with that about communion having to do that in a set way do you see that as something positive or something irritating?

Person 3: Part of it I think for me is I have been used to doing it a particular way for many years almost to the extent that I could do it almost off by heart so from prayer and to a certain extent there is a familiarity which feels safe and secure and almost like home, but at the same time I quite like to think a bit differently and maybe when we have some things music played or some visuals instead, it makes me think of something else it changes my directional thoughts so that I am not just maybe going through the motions, ok this is coming up next, this is coming next, it changes my focus of attention onto actually what the meaning of communion is rather than what is coming up next.

Person 2: I feel very strongly when I started B1 that there was a whole collected Anglican tradition, liturgy and music out there that, churches just do not touch. We have a liturgical framework but actually it's boring if it is not drawing on the treasure trove of our heritage. We said early on that we wanted to mix the best of the old and mix it with the best of the new. I think we have done that.

Person 1: Yes we have used some lovely lovely liturgies and prayers from all over the place and various different traditions and that's now in our services, and I really value it.

Questioner: Would a person who is used to an Anglican say traditional communion service recognise what you do as communion as authentically the same?

Person 2: I think they could, actually because for one thing Bishop Sanders said to me I don't mind what you do, but when it comes to the Eucharist please use the authorised versions, so actually we haven't really tinkered with the Eucharistic liturgy.

Person 1: We don't use exactly the same form of words though, we do change the way that bread and wine is administered, we share it amongst ourselves and sometimes do the more traditional Anglican thing of forming an orderly queue, and we do use different visuals and different music, so its not always the same in the way you have described.

Person 2: We do vary things around the margins, but the core element follows the authorised Eucharistic rites, so it is packaged slightly differently, but otherwise the core element, it is the same.

Person 3: And certainly my mother in law has been in a service and she is very much from a "normal" say Anglican church, not really that charismatic, more conservative evangelical I suppose you would call it 'Keswick-convention' style and she is quite happy to take communion in that service and its not like they won't take communion because they feel it is sacrilegious or something like that, to take communion from a different type of church.

Questioner: Just going back to the implementation of this, there are two interesting questions, the first one, you mentioned network quite a lot so in terms of the terminology of the 'Mission-shaped church report' how would you describe what you are doing? Is it a combination of a number or is it distinctly weighted towards one of those?

Person 2: I think it is network, and carries elements of alt. Worship, but it doesn't fit neatly into any one category.

Questioner: Would you say there was an element of café church in the mix?

Person 3: The closest to that would be the 'talk b1' type of service

Person 2: Yes there are elements of that I would say. I think regarding these categories, it is a willingness to be creative and try hard at a different number of things, but over the years we have been trying to do all kinds of stuff, so it's very playful. One of the problems is that it is playful but I am aware that time pressures, business, means that some of the time it's like Geoff Lanham community creative play, and we are trying to involve more people, but it's not easy when we are trying to carry so many different activities.

Person 1: I am sure that something like fish and chip church is where we are; we are always trying to push new boundaries, exploring different ways of being church.

Person 2: Even the network tag you see, there are some people, particularly those who have older kids for whom school is still a well-defined community that still works, there network might be amongst school mums, so in network it is not all neat and tidy – and meets the description in the Mission Shaped Church Report, we are much more heterogeneous than I expected. Perhaps not as heterogeneous as we would like to be in the end.

Questioner: You have talked a lot about church and about belonging to the community, again is there something driving it – what is it you think when you think church, it seems to me that there is something you have in your mind, what are the key words for example I have one here 'trinity in respect of relationships', are there kinds of concepts that are driving what you do?

Person 3: I always think of church as 'they met together in each other's homes, on a daily basis' and that's the sort of feel I get when I go to home groups, I really enjoy that obviously not on a daily basis, we meet together regularly in each other's homes to have fellowship together and we recently started a new thing which is to have instead of having a full church service, but to have a church meeting within home groups on a Sunday, and I find that quite nice, different.

Person 1: One of the key words for me is about journey, shared journey, and that is in all sorts of ways that we have relationship with each other, relationship with God and each other.

Questioner: Is there something biblical driving you about how you see Church? What is it that you are visualising?

Person 1: It is about how Jesus was with his disciples, the way he loved them, and how they belonged for three hard years before he died. What is important to me about B1 is how we reflect that, in loving people, allowing them to belong, and encourage them to grow spiritually.

Person 3: Its also about trying not to judge people. It is quite easy to do that because you have a particular way of life and for somebody sharing an interest in your belief its helping to get that bit further along finding a bit more about Jesus and getting closer to Jesus, than when they say I don't believe then judging them straight away which would put them off.

Person 1: We have that great image of yours which describes visually the woman at the well looking at and trying to find God.

Person 2: Personally for me the exile and desert wandering describes what we have been doing and exploring, doing a new thing in a new place in a new venue, depending on God, trusting that he has gone ahead of us, I'm feeling that at times, we have looked at sometimes at the whole concept of church and culture and looked like something that has been set-adrift in the gap. The journey to for me has been really important and there are loads of things actually that kind of fit biblically.

Person 3: For me partly its thinking about Paul and the early church, trying to be like, for example I used to be involved in going out to 'Goths ministry' years ago, not saying the Goths must follow the type of traditional religious ideas, but just to get alongside them and show them that just because I am a Christian doesn't mean I'm boring and have nothing of interest to say.

Questioner: Are there any other matters or images of the church that has been important?

Person 2: For me it is the whole picture of rootedness, the whole picture of being rooted has become more important as we have gone on, the whole tension between the itinery driving and the relating, the whole sense of branches that need to be cut off, and the importance of the rootedness of church if it is going to sustain real relationships. To be a 'body of Christ'.

Questioner: How much do you feel connected to the wider church?

Person 2: You may find that it is slightly different for me to say lay people because I probably am very connected to the rest of the local Christian body because I have a strong sense of something very catholic and local, so that we are not just existing on our own, although, we have interdependent relationships in the church, its arrogant to say you don't need others, so I feel personally... at the moment I act as chairman for a meeting of local church leaders. I don't always enjoy that but I feel I need to do it as I need to be in a relationship with the wider church and we have what is called a synergy mission partnership with 'St Martins-in the bull ring', and the Cathedral, working together as city centre churches, so I do have a good sense of needing to be connected to the church community, but I think probably at the moment because we have had so much to deal with it doesn't hinge as much on lay people in the church. We don't have legal representation in synods or have places on Deanery. We don't have these sort of legal bonds.

Questioner: Is there a reason for this lack of representation in Anglican structures?

Person 2: I think we are still waiting for the Church to address the pastoral measure issue to enable this.

Person 3: The Bishop said something interesting actually when he came to see us that day and he said he would like to see us perform parish recognised as a parish church but without the parish geography, which I thought was encouraging for him to say that.

Person 2: At the moment it is more that we don't have a legal status.

Person 2: The Diocese has just reviewed us and has given us another 5 years as a missionary congregation/church. I suppose at the moment I have just lost my line manager who was the Director of Mission. There have been a number of changes; I am now accountable to an Archdeacon. I have met up with Anglican ministers about 3 or 4 times a year things now, which is a bit up in the air as to what takes place now that we are into the next stage of the Bishops plans. In terms of how we relate to Anglican structures, I feel like they at one level they have been supportive. I think they are quite happy for us to kind of happen in our cause, and get on with it, but I don't always feel that they appreciate the cost of this way of being church or really understand the issues, but certainly they have been welcoming to us and to me as an Anglican minister, so we have stayed.

Person 1: I think we have been pigeon holed as a mission rather than warranting the label of being an authentic church in some of their eyes.

Person 2: They did go down the language of being an extra parochial place but the problem was that because we had to move venue so often, that when we came to baptise or when-ever it was linked to a certain activity, it wasn't viable as our moving around prevented an idea of place necessary for the measure. We had been licensed there but then we wouldn't have been able to move on, so it wasn't flexible enough to cope with what we do. I keep being told the lawyers are working on it, but that we are not used to this in the Church of England.

Questioner: So has the Bishop said anything about the planned changes in the pastoral measure and how the Diocese plans to move forward?

Person 2: Only that there is this new document which will enable us to participate more in local structures and will find a solution to our situation.

Questioner: So going back to the Bishop, are you tied into a Deanery in terms of some form of representation?

Person 2: Yes, but not about being part of the decision making process as we are not legally a church yet, but Yes I go to these study meetings I probably go more often than most, and go to deanery and diocesan synods.

Questioner: Are they the deanery supportive and this process of allowing B1 to belong?

Person 2: Yes they are, they are quite an eclectic bunch, I have had very little suspicion about what we do, I think they are actually pleasantly surprised with what we do, and at my participation, where other parish church ministers are far more independent of the structures, and have nothing to do with them, so my actually trying to build relationships has been good. At times we've used one or two of their venues, and they are very keen to help out and sometimes they come to events that we run and they have seen it as a resource that they could use even though they may not feel utterly comfortable with all that we do, which is great for us.

Person 2: Certainly we have been given material resources through the Diocese that we have been using to good effect. We have shared our creative resources that we have produced with many in the church that that we have created.

Person 2: Concerning Communion, we constructed a children's communion policy developed in consultation with the Diocese.

Questioner: Does he, the Bishop, come and do confirmation with you?

Person 2: Yes we have done confirmations.

Questioner: Do you meet with the Archdeacon that you work with or those sort of structures in terms of traditional church?

Person 2: Yes the Archdeacon at the moment I suppose is sort of my line-manager, and we are building up a relationship but it is quite new. I think part of the exercise all along has been not subverting but helping the structures to understand what we are about through dialogue and not being confrontational or demanding. So it has been quite a long journey with some people bringing them up to speed, sometimes people struggle to see what it is we are trying to do and why it is church rather than just a mission, and I suppose he would fall into that category though actually at one level he has been very supportive of us pastorally, but if it does require a changing mind set then you need to be exposed to the type of people we are working with, to understand why what we are doing is church for them.

Questioner: Going back to communion please be honest with this when you are doing communion do you have the idea that you are actually joining in with the rest of the church or do you see it as a very much about you and your community?

Person 3: Yes, for me it is all about us being a community.

Person 1: I do think it is the thing that you say, about something Christians do as being church community – which is wider than being Anglican and yet I do feel the sense of a wider church community outside of B1, although the way we express it is slightly different. I am aware that many in our church community come from very different traditions so the way we experience communion is at the end quite different.

Person 1: One of the ways we express this appreciation of the wider church, is through supporting mission-type work in Afghanistan, so we do I think have a vision for this more wider thing. We have an active connection with other churches in Birmingham, so we do appreciate being part of a wider scene.

Person 3: One of the issues is that actually a lot of people who are with us come from very different backgrounds, some of which are quite uncomfortable with being Anglican, but I think slowly as we get more comfortable with what we are doing, they are getting more comfortable with 'Anglican' in terms of understanding, but really for me it doesn't really matter that much, it is more about being Christian that matters to me.

Person 2: I probably would be the most Anglican of the lot, I have found it to be a constant home, flexible, whilst many in B1, they probably don't realise what it is about, about being Anglicans.

Person 3: Certainly I have thought about being an Anglican, but I have always felt first and foremost it is about being Christian and secondly I happen to have an allegiance almost to the denomination to which I became a Christian in.

Questioner: What does Anglicanism as opposed to Christian mean to you?

Person 3: In its very traditional sense, one of the things that we talked about was traditional communion and the traditional service, reading scriptures and also the fact that there is a minister being used, procedures for everything that you dothe church rules of the church being setrather than say a shared pastoral feeling as some churches are sort of may be the way, something that marks out the minister there is a perceived person who is the representative of the church like a paid member of the staff while Geoff who you know is quite distinctive, always wears a dog collar.

Person 1: I if anything I rather think of it as a negative term, and that is because for me that I associate it with being a rigid institution. There are things about the Church of England that I just do not like, for me I personally find it difficult in the layering of beurocracy and the hardness.

Person 2: For me the beauty of Anglican has always been its history, its resources, the very sense that the church exists for people out there, that the church seeks to serve people in community, in their homes, at work, where ever people are. So I always hang on to that actually not just me, but the sense of the social, and its sharing hospitable nature, for me also I think it is very helpful to have a faith that has been rooted in scripture, church and mission, that seeks to discern through scripture, reason and tradition. That you can't literally interpret the scriptures as some form of blue print from the 3rd century, but that you need to grapple with the social context of their day and of our today, to explore the application of what the scriptures mean. In Anglicanism there is a strong sense of the body in images and language it again helps our rootedness. Concerning the people we are trying to reach, we don't talk to them about denomination because they don't understand denominationalism.

Questioner: How do you deal with differences and disunity how you deal with difficulties and may be there are things that haven't worked out so well?

Person 1: I said earlier that I realised going through the process of thinking about this question that we did right at the beginning and we continue to do always through our church communities to talk about things in a full church context to sit down and have a big discussion and that also has applied even where we might recognise there are some tensions in that the way people like to do things, and even though that hasn't always been easy I think it is really valuable part of our moving on together but I haven't quite worked all those things out yet. I am not sure about the way to recognise difference and disunity specifically as to how we want to deal with it and one of the ways we decided we wanted to deal with it in terms of style of the church and I do talk about that clearly as to a variety of different plans in the way that you do it and yet actively choose to participate with each other in the things that we find that aren't our own natural preferred style I think that is something that is really important about doing that, which is counter cultural and it is for me an important part of being Christians.

Person 2: We have people who have slightly different theological positions surprise surprise and different approaches to worship and shared faith so we have to come to a position of really saying we will get on with each others own positions and so I think it is important that there is a variety of ways that you do things so our feed-event which

is a kind of open spirituality discussion forum may not be something that is somebody else's passion but they are happy for it to happen for some one else to appreciate. One may be a bit more uncomfortable with aspects of the kind of 'alternative worship arty crafty use your hands' activity but they will come and support it even though its not necessarily their preferred style so perhaps we have established a way to work through in an open way, the differences, and that's not all worked through now but it has been thrown into context of a community working through things. I felt it was important because we were part of the body, a kind of church that we should, we must have a responsibility for. We once did a film and spirituality night, and people came to faith through it. Now some people believed that that's not their style and wanted to share faith differently. We think that's fine there are other ways in being able to do it but for those that wanted to make it happen, they can, its just a challenge so there is diversity and we are struggling to ensure that there is action-activity whilst maintaining the 'community spirit' because we believe that is important. Another interesting thing that happens is that as you get more fuzzy edged and you get more people joining, you get more of the people that didn't share your original vision when you started, some of whom do not have the same kind of mission thrust that you have and that creates a slight tension, and you just... I don't have the answers but you have to incorporate them without losing your original focus.

Questioner: So how does governance work for B1, and what do they do if the minister of B1 is at fault.

Person 2: There is a church council, and lay wardens who technically who relate to the Archdeacon. I am accountable to the real Church Council how many is it – 8, which meets once a quarter its probably 5 times a year possibly. And then probably once every 10-11 weeks we have a joint meeting in the church where we thrash out how we will continue going, and sorting out issues.

Questioner: So what has not worked ?

Person 1: I do feel that there are still some of those tensions knocking around that are around the area of the style we do things and our approach to evangelism, that we then have to keep working with and on and really and that they might drive the shape of our church in the future. I'm not quite sure how that will be and for me another thing is just sometimes the intensity of activity, and the way that is ongoing that in the beginning that might be quite exciting, we don't have a church building but actually after 4 years down the line it is still a church that requires a lot of energy to be given to it by the people who make it happen and that's not always easy and I think that's the hard thing for Geoff as well.

Person 2: Its creative energy sucks people dry I think and because people have busy lives and busy jobs. So burn out is an issue. Some people are excellent at coping with this, but it is amazing sometimes how you have been going 4 years when you get new people coming visiting you, it doesn't take long for people to start because they are enjoying the sense of community, they slip back into being very good at welcoming and chatting with people they know, missing the outsiders the new people so that is a constant bind.

Person 2: Communication at times I think hasn't been acted on well as should have been but I think it is getting better as I mentioned earlier I think the genuine church is around the Sunday worship. I think we struggle to sometimes to make events like the talk walkabout round custom factory from making that switch from people who enjoy coming and being part of our way of doing thinking that is a really positive experience, to actually building a community which costs. We have had great difficulty making a

stepping stone approach for people to belong in church. We found it hard to build up a regular clientele of people. I am sure if we start loads of things there is I think the challenge to trying to be more diverse in terms of our ethnic mix. People often say to us how many black or ethnic minority people do you have, we have a token one or two, but that is not something you can force. You can pray for it hoping that events will bring you into greater contact; I think we are conscious of that.

Person 2: There is another tension, we have a few people who are kind of 'working class' regarding them we probably predominantly 'middle class' so in terms of where service brings social action that's still something to be worked out for the future. What we have done interesting enough is we have found our service supporting members who work with large amounts of kids at schools its not the lack of B1 ministry in trying to support the.....so we have lots of people like that maybe that's the way it goes and actually probably its just as well. I think we feel increasingly more of an affinity to the city centre.

Person 2: Regarding Mission, I think generally I would be quite inspired by the idea of its OK to try lots of different things, so personally for me what we are doing or should do is about a holistic approach, for example having a presence with a health club is one of those unexpected opportunities, and is quite exciting. It might take us into another area to enable us to do sort of cross cultural mission but I feel that as we expand to try for this and don't feel the pressures from the diocese to come up with numbers.