

## **APPENDIX 7**

6<sup>th</sup> April 2005, 'COTA' Group Interview Transcript

**Questioner: We don't have to follow this legally we can go off at a tangent but I might come back to ask questions if there are things we need a go at.**

**Questioner: So go back to when it was started when you were thinking of about Church of the Apostles – do you want to go into a bit more of why it started, what was the vision, why was it needed, why you went forward with it**

**Speaker 1:** I started the church because for personal reasons I wanted there to be a church that my friends could go to. So it was very simple. It wasn't in Seattle it was back in Chicago when I had a circle of friends most of which were in their 20s and 30s mostly non-church going except for me and it was a great divide in my life between my church world that I lived in, in the day time, and in the night time I went home to be with my friends and I wanted to bridge the gap between them. The church world and my friends world and I thought that it could be done and I wondered why no-one was working on that so that was the impetus for it. It didn't get authorised in Chicago obviously, the church structure there basically just didn't think that was something that they wanted to pursue in Chicago so I had to take the vision to apply it elsewhere

**Questioner: So what happened here then that enabled you to move forward?**

**Speaker 1:** A Bishop here listened to the vision and thought it was valid enough to authorise.

**Questioner: What kind of Bishop was that?**

**Speaker 1:** Actually it was the Lutheran Bishop here at first who soon went to the Episcopal Bishop and asked him to join in. I was following my vision I was shopping for a Bishop basically that would let me do it.

**Questioner: From the earliest time it was an ecumenical partnership?**

**Speaker 1:** Yes

**Questioner: You talked about the gap between friends and church what was your vision of how you were to overcome that?**

**Speaker 1** Basically to try to do church in a way that was culturally resonant with my friends in a language that they spoke and understood. By language I mean the whole complex of culture ethos or thought processes everything and that's basically a very traditional Lutheran and Anglican language by putting the gospel in a language of the people. That was what Luther did and what we are supposed to be doing and so why isn't that the language of my friends and culture and it should be. Seems very simple to me.

**Questioner: friends are a network so is it about the fact that you wanted some form of church that related to a network where being church rather than geography or what is it?**

**Speaker 1:** Not necessarily it wasn't even about methodologies I wasn't thinking that precisely I was thinking about them and wanting them to connect them to the

story of Jesus the way I was connected to it and wanting them to be a church that would allow them connect to the story of Christ. It wasn't about a net work church versus a house church I was thinking about them and Christ and how they could meet up and how a church could help contextually that in what ever form that took. It was later that we engaged with network house or café.

**Questioner: Bringing it up to date, if you want to add anything here about the vision. You have heard what 'Person 1' said, do you have anything to add?**

**Speaker 2:** My thinking on this has really shifted over the last few years and it is still moving but my sort of starting place in thinking about the Church of the Apostles is thinking about authenticity rather than about targeting so it started as a community of people doing things in their own vernacular and maybe there is a difference between celebrating the liturgy and preaching the gospel and there is a tremendous overlap but something like lets articulate the gospel in the language of the people in the community. You have got the community and some sort of community that's good period, but then having sort of called them into our community having opened the doors to them to join our community then the job is not for us the staff – the church – to figure out what they want or what makes sense to them, we need to encourage them to be a member of the community and their involvement will then contribute to the direction and just the whole feel resonance of the community.

**Speaker 3:** I always think about it, in my head, that church must be bottom up and instead of from the top down and I have never run that by anyone else to see if that sounds right but the idea that it is not some administrators who say oh well this seems to be what the kids are into these days lets give that a try. Its more about people wanting something and seeking something, having gifts and stories to share that haven't really been able to be fully used before, so it just gets to the point when you cant get keep that in any more and you say can we do this together you know and it starts from the ground floor up instead of the other way around

**Speaker 1:** Another way I like to look at it is kind of church kind of an open source computer platform of the gospel rather than a Microsoft product. By that I mean what we do church together, we take the source code as the gospel but around that code, everyone has a particular part to play, equally in making this kingdom system work and so therefore there isn't any kind of like expert padre that says well we are issuing version 205 and you people just gather into its systems and everybody makes the update. Everyone and everybody contributes as Person 3 says offers their gifts and every time a new person comes into the community the DNA changes it never stays the same its not static its not issued in a box-version 2.0 you know you just take that, open it but you are part of it you are making it what it is

**Questioner: Fluidity is quite important. Tell me if this is right. Your community reflects the interests and passions of people involved in it, which will shift as new people join it?**

**Speaker 1:** Two years of language that my friend in Orkney Andrew stated - basically a gift economy that's another way of saying a re-mix where what people bring is what we have, what's served for dinner depends on what people bring so its not a set menu that someone else has determined. The other is an incarnational understanding of hospitality as being church.

**Questioner: So it is a way of being church to relate to "a post modern" context?**

**Speaker 1:** Yes

**Speaker 2:** Why is this appropriate for that than for any other context?

**Questioner: Why is there a need for this kind of church amongst other types of other churches? That's the question we have to ask. Why is this needed and that's the question?**

**Speaker 1:** It is a cultural shift, the traditional church doesn't reflect the culture and that's why our people are not relating to the church they are just turning off. It is so called spiritual but not religious and hence we need to engage with the idea of Christian spirituality. I was just reading an article that my friend Renee Grasco who was saying, I love this image that says, well, people in today's culture know they want to see behind the curtain where the wizard used to be, we want to get rid of the curtain so that we can experience what it is like to be involved in a religious life and not have praying, paying and obeying. What we are doing is shifting from being a kind of consumers of church to producers of contextual forms of Church

**Questioner: Anything you want to add?**

**Speaker 2:** I am thinking of engagement with culture where does that take place. I don't think that the point is in the liturgy I am going to say this in half a dozen different ways as we go through this. It's not in the liturgy to say that that happens - its out in the world that that happens so I am someone who engages with culture personally. I am someone who makes music and whatever and talks to people about stuff, and those engagements that have shaped me personally and I kind of offer myself in this church so its not that I go out to art galleries to learn what's in vogue so that I can bring that here I would rather go out to art galleries to be an engaged person to really let it be what it is supposed to be and I then come that's what everyone is doing and whether that is in our passions to we have a woman in the foundation who works with women in prisons and that is something that we want to attend to because that is sort of personal.

**Speaker 3:** It really does come down to, I think it so strongly, about individuals and what you are saying is that individually about me having to go out into the world and be myself and be shaped and come to church and be shaped in like you know its and then its not only about individuals its also about the community that we are all together and that joins all our voices as a voice as a community in worship

**Speaker 1:** The words Holy Spirit, Incarnation, The Godhead Trinity as Community, we always take that extremely seriously.

**Speaker 2:** I don't see this as being a model that our culture calls on for us to have. We are a post-modern model for church, but that is not the language that I would choose to use. It seems to me that this is just part of the unfolding life of the church in the world.

**Questioner: So when you started you kind of started meeting at St Johns Church in speaker 1s house. Was it a fight to be able to start meeting at your house. I am aware that you were talked about having to take on Bishops and things**

**Speaker 1:** Once we go out the local Bishops were supportive. It was great we had permission to start and it started in my house. We relate to the Episcopalians like our Mother and the Lutherans as our strict father. We love having our mother around.

Our Episcopalian suffrogon Bishop is great and very supportive, and really works with us.

**Questioner: So you started in your house. What sort of things were you doing when you started?**

**Speaker 1:** Studying the scriptures. Eating food

**Questioner: Bible studies**

**Speaker 1:** Not necessarily. I don't like the word bible studies I am so pedantic and reflecting on the Book of Acts primarily together as a community the thesis being that we were not the first persons in the world to start a Christian community, a lot of people had done that thousands of years ago and we should reflect on what they did as we began our process of trying to do that in our own culture.

**Questioner: So you started meeting in your house. Was that trying to build community? Please say a bit more about how that grew and what happens and what sort of activity you started doing**

**Speaker 1:** Meeting in the house weekly we were praying, working on the Book of Acts together particularly that was the kind of a genesis that grew, we ate together with potluck food, and built community over 6 months.

**Questioner: So foods been quite important from the beginning?**

**Speaker 1:** Yes absolutely

**Questioner: Was that deliberate**

**Speaker 1:** Yes I mean it's a cultural thing to many. My friends in Chicago they started out meeting together in a pub because there was a food night international dinner night and that's how we all got back together and eat together and talked about life and God about spirituality always over food and drink included

**Questioner: OK How did you get to where you are now where you are sitting in a café that is a living room you have workers doing various things and you are doing all sorts of different activities**

**Speaker 1:** The Holy Spirit I suppose. We eventually broke up from church-in-on-house into other three house groups, so we stopped meeting in my house with about 12 or so people in total.

**Questioner: So shall we go back right up to the present I think that might be easier? So you have this café do you want to say a bit more about what this is for including everybody not just Karen. Why have you a café and what is the vision for it what are you trying to do with it**

**Speaker 1:** Place to do life together in our community and the way for the church to be not just a place people go to on a Sunday morning but just kind 24/7 approach to being available to our community. In Seattle cafes are where people hang out and the home of Starbucks everybody is in a coffee house or café of some sort here and there are more people in cafes than there are in churches so for us it was kind of well that's a good kind of place to start its culturally attuned to this city which is the home of café

culture. We were poor we couldn't afford an espresso machine, but slowly we built things up.

**Speaker 3:** Its nice because we are part of the neighbourhood its supports we are not in competition with other local coffee stores. We are just here and to be another part of the community without prejudice.

**Questioner: But you are engaging with a consumer society like engaging in a service in terms of giving permission to be culturally relevant so there is obviously some sort of competition .....**

**Speaker 1:** I don't buy into consumer culture actually our living room is kind of like not into I mean we are like people here to come and make community happen with us here. This is the same kind of open store experience there is no scheduling for the living room, what people bring is what happens here so if somebody walks in and says I am an artist I say great if you would like to show your art here or I am a musician I want to do a jazz show so we have a jazz show so if we want to have a jazz show lets go find some jazz musicians we want to have a jazz show but we don't have any predetermined concept.

**Speaker 3:** We would never say well jazz is popular right now.

**Speaker 1:** Its not about my preferences this is what the community wants to do here so we are curates for what the community like in this respect

**Questioner: So the activities you are doing are quite arts based. So what is the vision for of using art? Is that to form relationships with people? Why use art?**

**Speaker 1:** It's an expression of our character, 'the church of the apostles' we have a lot of artistic people in our core community, musicians, poets and writers all sorts of character of our neighbourhood, which is known as an artist enclave in the city so it is totally natural of our ethos and surrounding community so it is just a natural thing. In another neighbourhood we might be might doing something different but this is Fremont and is an artists enclave. Art is how people express their spirituality and their church.

**Speaker 2:** We need people to buy tea if they don't buy tea or other stuff we have trouble so you are pointing out like the whole consumer bit and we don't just grow the stuff for people for free so is there a tension there? I'm not sure

**Speaker 3:** For non-profit I mean.

**Speaker 2:** That's the way it is. A couple of things I think are notable the name of this place is not arbitrary people come in here with food from next-door and elsewhere and its not until I go to a different establishment that I realise I have actually had a coffee.

**Speaker 1:** Drink and pour out soda – you have to go to the hot water tank and pour your own water

**Speaker 2:** We don't charge anything to use the wifi or the computers.

**Speaker 3:** In fact we have people come in here and work from the living room and don't buy anything

**Speaker 2:** I feel sort of rude doing that somewhere else like hoping they wont notice me but here it is sort of expected.

**Speaker 3:** It's a living room for the community.

**Speaker 2:** The other thing I wont to say was the walls are red why are they red because we felt that would be nice and warm and its also the way that the place is coloured and that's so important if it is going to reflect a community.

**Questioner: So does the art and the tea create a medium of connection with local people with friends is that what its for. I am trying to get to the heart of why you do what you do there is a reason for it isn't there its not just because you are passionate about it?**

**Speaker 1:** Tea we can afford to do it it's a soothing beverage its healthy you have to have some form of beverage.

**Speaker 2:** Originally I had a strong sense of I sort of heard rumours oh we are going to get this place started as a tea bar for me it has been totally retrospect I wasn't part of the planning process at all but it has become a place for our regulars, its just really cool that its kind of sweet regulars buy our stuff its just like hey we are getting to know these people and that's really cool so I found it the third place like the place of government, and the place of work and then there's the third place community space so that's what this is has become its become a community for a lot of people who walk

**Questioner: The public space is shrinking and suddenly you are creating a public space is that quite important?**

**Speaker 2:** In retrospect that's what has happened.

**Speaker 1:** The Holy Spirit needs room to move and God needs to speak and God speaks and people interact with one another.

**Speaker 2:** It's personal

**Speaker 1:** Relational. Space for relationality to happen

**Speaker 2:** It isn't a programme for getting people to the church. It's a space for relationships to happen.

**Questioner:** Which is incarnational. That word keeps coming back doesn't it?

**Speaker 1:** If you want to get even deeper in this whole place is basically our way of putting ourselves into the rublev icon of the whole church – it models what we as community should be to reflect the Godhead.

**Questioner: Just before we go off this subject is there also a sense of presence that somehow what you are doing here is a Christian presence in a locality is that the idea is that something comes up in your thoughts about having a presence amongst people**

**Speaker 3:** I think a presence yes and I don't know that everybody knows that there is a Christian orientation. There I think it is a positive presence. When I ask

people who know that we are a church related and we are not going to hide it from anybody but its interesting that because I would say it is a positive

**Speaker 1:** We are living our lives and we are doing it in a way that's positive. We are not doing it for other people or denominations, we are being church. We are living our lives and when people ask us how or why we live this way we will engage them in that context.

**Speaker 2:** When I hear that language it sounds subversive to me, like we are going to infiltrate whatever and I don't think it has to be seen that way but that is the way I sort of

**Questioner: So what is the main theme for doing Café Church?**

**Speaker 2:** I would say the presence of welcome of hospitality

**Speaker 1:** It describes well. You don't have to tell them that but we know that we try to live that welcome as we welcome so its not our welcome that there here.

**Questioner: That's really clear – thank you**

**I just need to explain this question because you wont have heard of this report but there is basically within the what is the Episcopal Church within England the United Kingdom there has been a report that looks at various forms of what they call fresh expression of church which is like things like this. I just want to explain to you some of the labels of that so if any of those resonate with what this is. I will just go through them. For example in England one of these might relate to what they are doing or several might relate to what you are doing so I will just go through them.**

**First one** is alternative worship community that's the idea of using creativity, very participative media and alternative worship so the idea of a community associated with that form of worship

**Second one** is the idea of a net work church that's the idea that is not actually tied in to a locality or geography but is related to a series of relationships that is actually about friendships focused or it could be in the context of work – it relates to some meeting place which could be sport arts or just friends. That's network church

**Third one** is the idea of café church, which is the idea of a place that is engaging with the consumer society as a way of building relationships and presence

**Fourth one** is liberation theology community which is about justice is about restorative justice approach which is about social action and other words like youth fellowship which is aimed at young people post youth club sort of thing.

**There are many more but those are just a summary. Does any sound like they resonate with what you are doing. All of them? So you do alternative worship so the word alternative worship community relates to what you are doing**

**Speaker 1:** Let me explain we don't use that kind of expression, but yes it does relate to your use of that term.

**Questioner:** Do you use café church (YES) – net work church (YES) so its quite relational (YES) The one I missed out was .....church. That's the idea that people use their own houses (Not now).

**Speaker 1:** In some ways we are not that self conscious .....we have lots of group that meet in all kinds of places like a cell church model we have aspects of all of these its not like this is a self church for future café churches aspects of all this

**Speaker 1:** Our focus is the teachings of Christ not to be anti or pro any particular political stand. Sometimes it is and some times it isn't but without setting out to be political setting out to be Christian sometimes have implications

**Speaker 2:** I can't stress enough however refreshing that is in Seattle to be christocentric, to not be essentially partisan so I think we are about revelation about the core lets get involved within the community that's going to be a little messy so we might have to make some compromise we might have to say look there is going to be a disagreement here that might be tension here we got a hedegeronis community we got agendas that we are interested in hopefully we can merge them by making them personal like we can say you care about that we want to help you with that and not make it like a corporate agenda which is a sort of culture of Seattle

**Questioner: So in terms of the way you do it there isn't actually a formal model that you are trying to follow each day ?**

**Speaker 1:** No it's an organic community there is no recipe for sale somebody .....that we are following

**Speaker 2:** The anti movement.....

**Speaker 1:** We are following Christ and that will cause us to shift our approaches.

**Speaker 1:** I mean I have to say something it would be trinity, heterogeneous community or whatever you want to call that. The Trinity is an inclusive community that is relational – we aspire to this vision of God in the way we want to be Church.

**Speaker 2:** There is a deep angst here that folks that want to talk about doing the church in the post modern way so often insist on having a model which seems to be is as hyper analytical type of modernism that you can get. There are things we value I think that is as close to having a model as we can, but there is no blue print for the building and then it gets built based on the stones themselves as they come

**Questioner:** What you are saying that there is a driving vision behind what you are doing. You have not done a café as some kind of coincidence you haven't done this whole inclusion thing as a coincidence there is an understanding about when you unpack it you have got some form of vision about what you think being Christian is about and you have got something that defines what you would like to see in terms of Christian community so this question is trying to unpack what it is. I am just aware that Karen earlier talked about Rublev's icon

**Speaker 1:** It was responding to our culture and the café aspect came out of responding to Seattle culture if we are in another neighbourhood in the suburbs we may be running a health club or gymnasium

**Questioner: There is something underneath that?**

**Speaker 1:** The community aspect

**Questioner:** **There is something there in the way you see being 'Christian' is what I am trying to pick out. You are not just making it up as you go along (NO) there is something that is driving you (YES) that is what I am trying to get at.**

**Speaker 3:** I am just going to say my personal opinion – definitely takes us back to the trinity and if you want to call it model then fine but I don't think of God as a model yes I do think of him as a model anyways put that aside for now because the word is tripping us up. The whole idea of what Karen is saying about being a café was not some model that we are after we are after relationships and community in action involvement in other peoples lives and knowing people and being part of individuals lives and that comes from our desire to participate and so what the trinity has to offer us and that "model" is all about so I am not afraid

**Speaker 1:** I think that is a really good thing – not having a model but a fluid understanding of a relational community.

**Questioner:** **Continuing on a theme about Christian content of what you are doing particularly about your worship and what drives what you do are they favourite metaphors phrases ways of understanding Christianity that you use say trinity**

**Speaker 1:** Yes – drawing on the ancient faith for future church. Using the Palms and Wisdom literature as worship.

**Questioner:** **So you understand that as participating in the Gospels (YES)**

**Speaker 2:** We don't have sermons we have play group and so when we get into that is that its texts stories or not resonate with the speaker in a certain way and that person puts that out there in the community. Its not so much about community propositions as it is about letting the gospel resonate

**Questioner:** **In other words particularly about both trying to articulate an understanding with God**

**Speaker 1:** In kinds of worship

**Questioner:** Some groups don't use the concept of journey with God this idea of life as a journey – what do you think?

**Speaker 2:** Yes, there is the idea of us hanging out together like on the Road to Emmaus.

**Speaker 3:** I think we think of life as a journey – and as Christians we are therefore living the journey together.

**Speaker 1:** Some stories of the bible...living out the parables...keeping parables, that I always think about the apostles at the wedding at Cana and the parables.....

**Speaker 3:** I think welcome is another big one I think of that word all the time I don't know if it is entirely intentional or what but it is a part of how we understand COTA as part of Gods welcome

**Questioner: Moving on a bit now thinking about what you do, how much of it is inherited and how much have you created. I think you will find it interesting fusion you have already used the word liturgy in this interview so is there a sense of fusion or something in the pastoral context or are you making it up completely new (YES) its rather like**

**Speaker 1:** Yes we are definately innovating out of tradition we have a source and ingredient to what we are doing

**Questioner: Do you use Anglican or Episcopalian resources from prayer books?**

**Speaker 1:** At times we use resources from authorised tribes and beyond and when we are limited by tribalism we go beyond into the great traditions of the church.

**Questioner: So you use 2000 years of resources?**

**Speaker 1:** Exactly

**Questioner: Do you recontextualise them or do you leave them as you found them**

**Speaker 1:** Both and, we kind of modify them and whatever communicates the gospel best we think we will use.

**Speaker 3:** For instance Mauday Thursday we have foot washing and then some soaping and it was a day spa and serving each other tea and giving each other a hand massage but soaking its was not only something traditional that goes way way back it was also put in the context that makes sense about what hospitality's all about.

**Speaker 2:** I remember using it extensively as preparing a worship services literacy and I was extensively I was looking at stuff at resources from Iona and from a book called the Turn of Worship and sometimes I direct with this stuff more often I found myself just needing a littern of some sort and sort of query composing it sort of a same kind of feel as these other resources so

**Speaker 1:** Technically in Anglican structures, we are a mission – and not a church. This is being discussed at the moment, we are in the process of becoming a church – which will be sorted out in our new premises.