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Interviewer: So, thank you for agreeing to be interviewed today as part of the project. I wondered if we might just start at the very beginning really, about your childhood and where you grew up?

Respondent: Well, I grew up in Birmingham and I think knew myself from a very early age to be different. So, I am not entirely sympathetic with the idea that some experience happens in later life or in the teen period which makes you aware that you are gay. I think I was aware I was gay from childhood, really. I even had crushes on my elder cousins, who were then doing voluntary military service training. But, through all my school career and the university career, this remained dormant and repressed, with the difficulties you can imagine that would raise psychologically. It wasn't until theological college I had my first sexual experience, which perhaps won't surprise some people. So, that was when I was about 24 so I was a very late developer, but that obviously was a bit of a release and to discover one or two other people I could talk to and be with. And, then I was ordained, this was after having spent two years as a teacher and went to Manchester, and again my curacy was a time of repression. I was aware at that time of the Campaign for Homosexual Equality which had come into being about the time of the Wolfenden report.

Interviewer: And, whereabouts in your own life would that have been? I am trying to just get a sense on the Matheson grade. The Wolfenden report and decriminalisation you would have been how old?

Respondent: About the 1960s, the mid 1960s.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: And, I was ordained in 1969, so it was all really relatively recent and it is hard I think for people today to realise that at that stage, we didn't feel we could talk about who we were. In fact, any contact could mean even criminal liability. The Campaign for Homosexual Equality was one of the organisations that had I think impressed the Wolfenden committee and continued then to press for gay rights after that report. And, I went to one or two meetings in Manchester, but even in those days you got the feeling you were in a meeting of grandees, of people who had been warriors for a long time and you didn't really feel as a younger person very much part of that, but were very respectful of what they had achieved and the effort that they had made. When I came out rather more, which happened as a result in part of going to be a student chaplain in Bolton, Lancashire and walking one night into a pub in full regalia with my cassock and cloak and realising at once that it was a gay pub. My first inclination was to walk out, but then I noticed there was someone from my previous parish in there who recognised me as I recognised him, so that was that. And, after that I felt very easy about going to the gay pubs in Bolton. And, thinking after all that if the bishop got to know about this the bishop must be on some sort of gay grapevine which meant it wouldn't matter very much.

Interviewer: So, was it an issue as you came through preparing for ordination? You said you had an experience while you were at theological college, but in terms of your selection, your training, was it an issue people talked about?

Respondent: In those days, it was never mentioned, sexuality was one of those issues it was really not discussed. I remember a cartoon in a newspaper which had a little boy praying by the side of the bed and he was saying we pray for mummy and daddy and the cat and

the dog and uncle Jack who we are not supposed to talk about. It was like that very much.

Interviewer: So, despite the public debate around Wolfenden, people knew it was out there but they weren't really wanting to talk about it?

Respondent: That is right, and I think people have probably always known it in the church as being a high degree of homosexuality, partly because the church over the centuries has perhaps been a ... monasteries and clergy in particular have been a safe haven for people of sexual difference. But, people preferred I think to leave it like that as an unspoken and grey area up until this point in time, which I had been lucky enough to live through, really. And, after that experience in the pub and after I had been outed by philosophy and psychology students after a meeting in my flat in Bolton, I was much more relaxed and when I moved to my first parish in sole charge in Manchester the ... what did I call this organisation?

[0:04:58]

Interviewer: CHE?

Respondent: No, the Gay Liberation Front, sorry I lost it for a minute. The Gay Liberation Front which was a sort of young person much more activist movement that came in the wake of CHE. I had many meetings in my rectory and I felt relaxed enough about that and I had a church in a student area which had gay couples and so things became much more relaxed for me. And, I became involved in a small way I suppose in gay politics in Manchester and with the Manchester Christian Group which was really a forerunner of the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement in Manchester.

Interviewer: At that point, was Manchester quite a magnet for people who were exploring their sexuality, maybe felt that it was a place they would meet other people? You hear of London and Manchester being the two centres if you like?

Respondent: I think it was, because there were some very impressive people in what was then called the Manchester Gay Centre, which I think still exists. And, Paul Fairweather who is still there did a marvellous job at making that centre a home really for people who felt isolated and maybe were having troubles with the law or with parents or whoever. They could drop in there and a marvellous person called John Shires who many people will remember who has since sadly died, did a marvellous job at the Gay Centre in Manchester, and I did work a lot with them.

Interviewer: So, it was a healthy, good place to be for you?

Respondent: Indeed.

Interviewer: You were able to integrate who you were with the way you ... did the institution, did the hierarchy give you any difficulties?

Respondent: I was very lucky living in Manchester because one of the assistant bishops Ted Wickham, the bishop of Middleton, and Alfred Jared the dean of the cathedral had both been founder members of the Campaign for Homosexual Equality so they were very supportive. And, so was my bishop Stanley Booth-Clibborn who was a marvellous man, very much concerned with the movement for the ordination of women. In fact, he was the moderator for the movement for the ordination of women. And, we used to have this rather amusing in a way, a meeting every - I could never convince him that the Movement for Homosexual Equality was in a sense equivalent to the movement for the liberation of women. And, he could never feel it though he had some intellectual

appreciation of it. And, we started meeting once a year and we had an evening in his office over sherry in which I tried to convince him of the importance of supporting the Movement for Homosexual Equality in the church. And, although he couldn't really come to an intellectual ... he couldn't go as far as actually supporting it publicly, he gave me the permission to do gay blessings.

Interviewer: Tell me a bit about that, that is fascinating.

Respondent: This was the 1970s, I was in my parish in Manchester in 1975 to 80, so this was long before really many places were doing gay blessings. And, here was a bishop who trusted me enough to say - he even said to me don't ask me permission because I can't give it, but I trust you if you think that couples need to have a blessing then they should have it.

Interviewer: There was no prayers with, it was quite clear that this was a blessing?

[0:08:17]

Respondent: Yes, and I had to make this clear to people, this had no legal weight, a blessing is a blessing but it was in that sense private in the sense that it didn't have any public support as it were, public weight. We often used to do these blessings in people's houses but sometimes because I was challenged when they asked for it in church but luckily my church in Manchester, St John (inaudible 0:08:45) which is still a great supporter of gay issues under its present vicary in domicile. The congregation was easy enough for me to be able to do occasional gay blessings in the church itself. And, what I used in conversation with David Melling who was then the dean of humanities at Manchester Polytechnic and a Greek orthodox by adoption, and had a tremendous breadth of philosophical outlook and was a great influence on me. We looked at - the Orthodox have a tradition of blessings of friendships and we were able to adapt these which I still use when I am asked to do this, although many other orders of gay blessings have come out since, not least from Jim Cotter of course. Yes, the great Jim Cotter who we miss so much. But, I still use these because there are some beautiful prayers in the Orthodox tradition and in fact it has been clear I think from the work of John Boswell, the American historian who sadly also has since died, that there was a great history of gay blessings within the church, and particularly within the Orthodox tradition. And, the poet Byron witnessed the gay blessing in an Albanian church in the 19th century. And, so I was happy doing that and I continued this, I was never asked to do a gay blessing in Africa, where I worked later. But, I was in the United States where I worked later still, so I feel very privileged that throughout my life I have been able to help people in this way and show them that the church, at least unofficially, could give them some sort of support.

Interviewer: And, were these - I guess it is hard to generalise but were these people who were part of the church community and saw this as part of the expression of their love for one another in a church context? Or, were they quite often people on the fringes of church, who felt that they were nevertheless seeking something in the way of affirmation of their relationship? Or, a bit of both?

Respondent: Always people on the fringe of the church who I had met maybe through even in a club or through one of the gay organisations, like the gay centre in Manchester. Or, they had been referred to me by people or they had come to know that I was sympathetic. And, I think they were often people who thought they could never find the church would be sympathetic or do anything for them, and saw this is a window. I think often people who are religious but not church goers find that these key moments in their lives, a blessing or some sort of recognition of their partnership in a spiritual capacity is something that is very helpful to them.

Interviewer: And, important?

Respondent: So, it was important to help them and many of them kept in touch for some time afterwards, though none of them that I can think of then became regular church members. Well, that is not true, not of my church but some of them did go regularly to other local churches, yes.

Interviewer: But, somehow there was a kind of underground railway by which they would find their way to you?

Respondent: That is right, yes. That is a good way of putting it, yes.

Interviewer: Were there other people around Manchester who were sympathetic to what you were doing? Were there other churches that were supportive?

Respondent: It seems a long time ago now. I don't think many other churches. I mean certainly clergy – we had a fair amount of gay clergy in Manchester, as of course is true of most large diocese. But, all of us are usually known to each other but often not able to feel we could publicly come out. The thing that I suppose annoyed me most was there was also clergy who were gay but – and this happens in various walks of life but who were rather against any form of liberation, I think partly because it threatened their own security of being anonymous but also they preferred things as arguably many bishops have done to remain a rather curtained-off area. It was just there but it was simpler not to face up to it or –

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Interviewer: Why do you think that is? Do you think people just become so conditioned to living like that, that the change to something new is something they can't envision?

Respondent: I would say it was a security, it was the fact that they felt secure being hidden as it were. Whereas people couldn't face what might be required of them if they actually came out.

Interviewer: What do you think that they imagine? It is difficult to imagine what other people imagine isn't it, but what do you think they thought might be imagined of them or expected of them?

Respondent: Because as clergy, it might put you in positions of difficulty as we have seen recently in the press, it still can in positions of your job, your employment. Also, the fear I think of reaction from your parishioners and people who were quite close to you and the feeling of rejection. And, I think we all felt that to some extent. It was a question of whether you had the courage to say well this is a situation which really can't go on.

Interviewer: So, what were the choices that you made around all of that? How did you handle that?

Respondent: I suppose I was lucky being in Manchester in that after the very modest outing I had by students in Bolton it was easy to be myself without feeling the necessity to cover up too much. But, I suppose the big decision I made was when for various reasons I moved to Africa after 20 years in Manchester I decided I would tell the Missionary Society that I was gay and I wasn't going to be in any degree secretive about this anymore.

Interviewer: So, give me a bit of a timeline on that, when would that have been?

Respondent: I would imagine it is almost about 18 years, so we are talking about I went to Africa, well the process started in 1987 and I started in Africa at the end of 1987. And, to give credit to the Missionary Society USPG they accepted me but they took a long time to decide compared with other candidates who went for interview at the same time. And, they suggested that I saw their psychiatrist.

Interviewer: How did that go?

Respondent: Well, it was extremely funny because the psychiatrist looked a bit like Jean Marple in the Agatha Christie novels, an elderly retired missionary from India who couldn't bring herself to actually ask any direct questions.

Interviewer: It is going to be an awkward assessment, then?

Respondent: And, talked to me about the problems of working alone in a foreign area and suggesting I might need a hobby to occupy myself.

Interviewer: Did she have any thoughts about a suitable hobby for such a gentleman?

Respondent: She did, she suggested bird watching which could be done at any time of the day and the night, as she put it. And, so before I went I requested from USPG a pair of binoculars which I am afraid were not granted.

Interviewer: Did you explain to them why you thought you might need binoculars?

Respondent: Well, I said the psychiatrist thought that bird watching might be a good idea, but they obviously didn't go that far.

Interviewer: I wonder who else they ever sent to her?

Respondent: I don't know!

[0:15:59]

Interviewer: I don't like to think. So, you found yourself in Africa - what was that like?

Respondent: Well, from the point of view of a fairly recent as it were reconciled gay man in terms of coming out and so on, it was marvellous because I was in a little country called Lesotho as the principle of the theological college there. And, in Lesotho I found that really people, Africans generally at least in the south, are very relaxed physically. And, so to be with a people who regularly held hands with you while talking or while you were walking and were very physically affectionate it was a tremendous and relaxing experience really. But, I also found I had one or two serious relationships in Lesotho and I found that this was really a very important discovery to discover that people in different cultures perceive sexuality differently. I had what we would call at two different times in Lesotho a gay relationship. But, the people concerned would not have considered themselves gay and if I had used that sort of language they would have been rather horrified. And, I discovered that Lesotho really regard what we would call homosexuality as a sort of deep expression of friendship, they saw it in friendship terms rather than sexual terms. So, even if a person had a sexual expression of a friendship it wouldn't be thought of as sexual primarily or conceptualised as such, but as friendship. So, this enabled for instance although this wasn't true of my own experience but for married men to have sexual relationships with other men are considered friendship and not in any sense offending their immaculate image of themselves or being a threat to their marriage, as they saw it.

Interviewer: That is a different concept of marriage as well then, on those terms?

Respondent: Well, I am afraid yes because there is a downside to this as well – not only one suspects the Besotho women realise that their husbands sometimes behaved like this, but also it was quite common for husbands to wander after the first child came along. This was more than once justified to me on the fact they eventually years later would come back to their wife as though this justified it.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: So, there was a much I suppose freer attitude to institutionalised relationships altogether, perhaps.

Interviewer: A sort of responsibility, you think?

Respondent: Well no, that is a sharper way of putting it!

Interviewer: Sorry to be sharp!

Respondent: That is alright.

Interviewer: I am just thinking of the woman's perspective there!

Respondent: But, it did strike me in relation to how debates are conducted in the west that if we thought that other cultures define sexuality differently and that I was later to discover when I worked in north America that there are native American groups who think in terms of more than two sexualities, for instance. Navajo would think in terms of six sexualities. But, this puts the whole debate in a quite different context and also through meeting John Boswell the American historian I mentioned earlier and reading his books, to understand which I only really came to terms with at this time, trying to understand the history of the church in this matter was quite different from what one had assumed. One had always assumed the church says marriage or nothing, or celibacy. As though celibacy for homosexuals must be something imposed rather than a chosen vocation. Here, one discovered through reading Boswell that in fact for the first century, the first millennium of the church's existence there had been so serious problems about sexual difference, and indeed in the 13th century at the height of the idea of Christendom the church had been remarkably relaxed about relationships between monks and monks, nuns and nuns, bishops and bishops. And, indeed there seemed to have been communities in the Orthodox church of the east of remembering homosexual couples in their prayers, with the prayers for the dead. And, so it wasn't until the middle ages started to decline with the rise of nationalism and so on and the church looked for scapegoats to explain why its position seemed to be weakening that you get real antagonism against women in particular but also witches, (inaudible 0:21:00), homosexuals, gypsies, who become the scapegoat groups. And, this was reinforced very much by the Reformation, but to think that the first millennium of the church, the church was much more in the position it is becoming into now than what we are used to. And, it has always disappointed me that Rowan Williams who I respect enormously didn't bring in these wider arguments which would have made I think the discussion of sexuality in the church more complicated but also more honest in the sense that we would have had to look at things as a fuller picture of how sexuality is perceived in the world as distinct from many western European traditions.

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Interviewer: I wonder if we are in an age where we value simplicity, not complexity? Life is complicated so if there are sections of our human experience that people can simplify for us, we will go for that.

Respondent: It could be. I find it very interesting now that in the cities I think the term coined has been metrosexual, there have been some interesting studies recently of how young people now seem to find it quite acceptable and I suppose we are talking probably about young educated people of all groups find it quite easy to think of having sexual relationships with their own sex or the opposite sex. That has become increasingly common. And, I mean it suggests there is a greater sexual fluidity than we thought, that some of us would have thought there was once. But, also it chimes with my experience in other cultures, that indeed does exist. But, it makes it more difficult for young people today I think to realise the difficulties some of us had in western societies in times past and very recent past.

Interviewer: Very recent, yes.

Respondent: Where we needed gay clubs and things when we discovered they existed to go to, just to be with gay people at all. It all had to be very secretive and furtive, particularly if you were in sensitive occupations.

Interviewer: I am quite interested in you talking about what Manchester and Bolton were like. I am interested in you saying that Bolton has multiple gay clubs, that is interesting. But, I was also wondering how it felt being in Africa – did that feel like a relatively safe space? Although I am also aware of the political climate more generally when you were in Lesotho. How did that feel as a gay person, as a gay man?

Respondent: Lesotho felt very safe, but I mean I am speaking because I was there in the late 80s, early 90s and society there has suffered a lot since because of its economic impoverishment. And, I am not sure it would be such an easy place today. It was really my Eden period really, the period I feel in exile from, this staggeringly beautiful country, staggeringly beautiful people with this very relaxed attitude is I think not just in my imagination, it was like that. but, I think it is less like it now. But, when I moved after that to Zimbabwe I only survived a year before being deported and certainly the Shona attitude was very different, partly because sexuality was something you couldn't really talk about at all. And, certainly no one would have ever admitted to being gay and the official opinion was in the church that homosexuality didn't exist in Zimbabwe but was a western import.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: And, that is very much the attitude of President Mugabe for instance. And, we are not sure why I was deported from Zimbabwe because I was never given a reason, incredibly enough! It could well have been because one of my jobs was the training of youth leaders and youth being youth they were quite radical and the church in Mashonaland, northern Zimbabwe, was quite conservative and I don't think I thought this through carefully enough, but clearly there was going to be a clash between my organising radical youth workers with the establishment. But, also it could have been because I was not ... although I didn't proclaim my sexuality from the rooftops, nor did I conceal it, it could well have been that my sexuality was discovered. I was in a relationship in Zimbabwe, I am quite sure that wasn't known because it was a relationship with a man in a remote rural area. But, because of either something I had said or someone else had said, I think of course most people must have assumed that was the reason for my dismissal, I am not sure still. But, it was very likely it was. So, that was a very different sort of African society, but of course I got to know people in Zimbabwe who were certainly as we would define it in our culture who were gay. Young men who needed to

talk these things through. I didn't come across any women I have to say in either Lesotho or Zimbabwe who admitted to being what we would call gay, but they certainly existed.

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Interviewer: Was it possible for people in those countries to be in contact with one another at that point, or was even that assembling and organising was dangerous?

Respondent: In some ways it was easier having a foreigner coming in who could afford to be a bit more open, for people to talk to and then maybe discover themselves, because they had both spoken to me at times.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: Otherwise in Lesotho it was easier because things were more relaxed and people in villages certainly knew of other people, yes. In Zimbabwe it would have been much more difficult for people to have been brave enough and of course as you know since President Mugabe, if you are openly gay in Zimbabwe you take very real risks of being physically attacked and even imprisoned.

Interviewer: And, would you sense that that has got much worse since you were there?

Respondent: Much worse.

Interviewer: In the time since you were there? So, after you were deported from Zimbabwe what happened next?

Respondent: Well, I had a marvellous archbishop, the archbishop of Central Africa was the Bishop of Botswana who gave me every backing and because I had not been accused of anything he fully supported me in law and so on, and took me on in Botswana as a similar lay training job. I was there for two years. Botswana is much more relaxed, it is the only - well not the only but it is probably the most successful parliamentary democracy on the British model in Africa and a very peaceful country. I certainly met people who had an ambivalent if not exclusively homosexuality while I was there, we got to know each other. But, homosexuality is illegal in Botswana even though it is very rare for any cases to be brought and there are people fighting for its legalisation, of course. But, they can do that in Botswana without having to be afraid of being imprisoned or beaten up or whatever.

Interviewer: So much safer, more of a democracy there.

Respondent: From Botswana I moved into South Africa before I became ill and had to come out of Africa, and of course in South Africa by then, this was the late 90s, South Africa is the only country in the world to have gay rights enshrined in the constitution. Partly it has caused some problems particularly under the present more traditionally Africanised nature of the presidency in South Africa at the moment, there has been some desire to remove this but I don't think that will ever happen, because it did reflect the fact that lots of the leaders of the ANC had been educated in western universities and so on. And, had picked up, had been able to make the connection between different sorts of empowerment and freedom that needed to be exercised. And, so one of my happiest memories of before I left Africa altogether was going on a boat out to see Robben Island where Nelson Mandela had been in prison and coming back in were two young men holding each other in the prow of the boat as we went into Cape Town and seeing the national flag flying over the government buildings in Cape Town. It seemed a very marvellous picture of a new South Africa, really.

Interviewer: Yes, it is! It is a lovely picture, and so much change in a relatively short period of time since then?

Respondent: Yes, well I mean everywhere, I suppose that is one of the marvellous things in my lifetime things have changed so extraordinarily quickly. And, one of the greatest is being in Ireland, because I came back from Africa, was off work with ME for two years. The hope was I would then go to north America because the Canadian church had helped me very much in my work in Africa where I worked furtively for the ANC in moving refugees.

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Interviewer: Can you tell me a little bit more about that? You say that so casually but I mean as someone who can remember that period at least from a very long distance that doesn't sound undramatic to me!

Respondent: Well, once I had been appointed it was pointed out to me by my contact in Lesotho that I really needed to belong to the ANC, because the struggle against apartheid was still going on and Lesotho being an independent country surrounded by South Africa was of course a very useful base for the ANC and if I didn't join I would be in the way. So, I was interviewed by the ANC in England before I went out there, and they were very nervous because their office in London had been infiltrated by the South African secret police. And, I was met in a car and blindfolded and taken to a secret location, which was all a bit scary at the time!

Interviewer: Yes!

Respondent: But, my task was really to help move refugees, so if they came into the country through the very poorest borders of Lesotho, they needed to be moved out because at that point Lesotho had a military dictatorship imposed by South Africa. So, although it was safe for them being in South Africa it wasn't ultimately safe. And, so my job would be to deal with embassies who could help with passports and money and so on, and get people out of the country either by flights with some risk they might be intercepted or getting them back across borders which often meant taking them by truck at night to some river crossing or mountain pass where they could fairly safely evade the South African authorities. And, there was some little risk to me. My passport was marked every time I crossed the border back into South Africa and I was held up, detained, going through border posts. But, also I wasn't having any of the risks the people I was helping were having.

Interviewer: Did you realise when you went out there that that was what this might entail?

Respondent: Not when I was originally was offered the job of the board of the seminary but -

Interviewer: Because the board of the seminary sounds so sedate?

Respondent: Well, that is why I thought it was a very good cover, you see. They were very wise to that. But, now I had of course envisaged going out and being supportive and sympathetic, empathetic. But, not that I should be ... but I could understand the point that there was no point in going out if I was going to be in the way of liberation and so to work with them in a more formal way was I could see important.

Interviewer: Do you think your employers knew in appointing you that that would be likely to be -

Respondent: Nobody was able to. Obviously, people guessed I am sure. I mean Desmond Tutu always used to – he was my archbishop of course, and I used to see him a lot. Luckily I am still in touch with him and a great supporter of course of gay liberation. He used to tell us all not to belong to any political party, knowing full well that nearly all the black African clergy in Africa belong to or are supporters of the ANC or PHC. In my very modest way, it was a great thing to be part of this great liberation and to be there when it came to fruition, because of course when I went out there we thought there were still many years of struggle ahead and as soon as Nelson Mandela was released really, before anything else happened, the whole structure began to crumble.

Interviewer: Were you out there for the first elections? Or, were you back here?

Respondent: No, I was back here then but was there when Mandela was actually released.

Interviewer: What was that like, as a day?

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Respondent: Well it was electric, and the great thing I suppose and one of the proudest moments of my life when he was released, political gatherings were still forbidden in Lesotho, this was the military government reacting to South African pressure. And, the Trade Union Congress in Lesotho they decided to organise a demonstration to celebrate Mandela's release, to test the government's resolve in Lesotho. And, the seminary we were asked to lead the procession. I cynically thought this was perhaps because if they saw a clergyman and ordinands in cassocks that the police or the army would be less likely to open fire or be very violent. But, anyway we had this enormous honour of leading the procession through the streets, which began very timidly and then people watching from a distance then gradually people joined in and people were crying. It was huge, thousands of people in the end gathered to hear Chris Hani speak in the stadium in Maseru. He of course became a minister in the Lesotho government and was shot by an apartheid supporter, soon afterwards. But, that was a very special moment yes, to be chosen to be part of that demonstration of freedom in Lesotho, and of course the government didn't intervene at all. And, it was good to see for myself the connection between liberation movements of different sorts, to be part of it. But, from the point of the gay rights issue, the most extraordinary development has been in Ireland where after I had been ill I worked in Ireland for a time before I went to north America, as the dean of the cathedral of Tuam which is near Galway on the west coast. And, it was the ancient capital of Ireland with a glorious Romanesque choir part of the present cathedral. And, I had written a briefing paper for the notorious 1998 Lambeth conference of Anglican bishops, in which George Carey made the great mistake, the then archbishop, of demanding a vote. I think if that vote hadn't been demanded we wouldn't be in some of the problems we have been in since. And, I had written a briefing paper, merely arguing that it was possible to be Christian and gay. Not dealing with any of the issues like gay marriage or gay ordination, knowing there was going to be this vast spectrum of opinion among Anglican bishops worldwide.

Interviewer: Who was that briefing paper aimed at? Was that coming out of your context in Africa and contexts like that?

Respondent: Not really, though it enabled me to mention Desmond Tutu's support very specifically of course, and so helped me write a paper that attempted to bridge divides of opinion and culture. But, in a report for the Irish Sunday Times noticed this and it became a second page headline for the Irish Sunday Times, the dean of Tuam says you can be Christian and gay, as though this was a revelation. But, it was in a sense for the church of Ireland, which reacted very badly to it. I lost a considerable portion of the cathedral congregation, one of my church wardens, another church petitioned the bishop for my

removal. And, I had really no support. The archbishop of Armagh Robin Eames who ironically became chairman of the Windsor report, the church's moderate response to this sort of issue, was really hostile. And, the new bishop of Tuam who had arrived just before this was the youngest bishop in the church of Ireland, we called him the boy bishop because he looked well under 39 years, he actually was. He didn't really know how to react, and so I felt I had to resign as there was no support. Although there was immense support from the Catholic church and society generally in the press, I got very good press coverage. Letters from all over Ireland about people who had no idea the church could possibly support them, parents of gay people, gay people themselves. And, support from the president of Ireland and the members of the senate, that I should stay and fight this. But, I felt as I was employed by the church to do a job which clearly the church was not happy with me doing, I had no choice. But, the great thing has been that since then, there has been this sea change in Ireland in attitudes, and including within the church of Ireland where now there is a dean of a cathedral in ... in a civil union with his partner and bishops are now supporting gay ordination and so on. And, where of course that civil societies are adopting gay marriage. So, it has been tremendously exciting and encouraging to see how societies can change and how actually underneath most people are very sympathetic to people being themselves and loving one another. And, can see rather more easily it seems than through institutions, particularly religious institutions sadly, of the reality we are dealing with which is human beings in love and receiving the love of God through their relationship.

Interviewer: You have seen a massive amount of change, then? A huge amount of change?

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Respondent: It is extraordinary looking back, yes. I am now 74, and was ordained 40 odd years ago. Yes, it is not a long time in the span of human history, but what has happened has been extraordinary.

Interviewer: And, that the change hasn't always come when people might have expected it?

Respondent: That is right, and of course then we must remember here that the change hasn't come at all for very many countries in the world, not least in Africa and Asia. And, where it is still possible in countries like Russia which aims to have equality for it to be very dangerous to be gay.

Interviewer: The amount of travel and the contexts within which you have worked, how have they shaped your understanding of both the complexity but also the size of hope where perhaps you wouldn't have thought you would find them? Particularly in Africa I am thinking a lot of people I guess haven't had that experience.

Respondent: No, I think what has been proved true to me is something I read in a novel that now nobody remembers, by a Romanian author called Dumitriu, it is called Incognito which came out in the 60s in the time at the height of the cold war. And, it spoke of Christians in countries like Romania where often it was dangerous to be a Christian in those times, certainly trying to attend church. And, he saw isolated Christians, like Christian cells like little lights shining in the darkness like stars in the sky, and had been signs of hope. And, I suppose my experience as things began to develop in Manchester and then finding people who had the courage to be themselves in Africa and even in places like Zimbabwe, it gives you the confidence to think that this image is a very real one and the lights will gradually ... if you thought of the lights as being little fires I suppose, they will catch light from each other and the conflation will grow and liberty will come. So, although you experience lots of reverses and people's lives being shattered, in the end you feel - I mean I do feel yes there is genuine hope that things will get better in the

end and that people of faith, not least in Africa, have paid a large part in this. And, although the church, certainly the church of England in recent times, has been a disaster in this area really, it is worth remembering that those people in Manchester who I mentioned earlier who were founder members of CHE in many ways church members individually, often rank and file church members who nobody will remember in the annals of history have been key catalysts for change and have been brave enough to carry on.

Interviewer: That is what I found very moving about what you talked about in terms of your time in Lesotho, was that people of faith were seen as being absolutely critical to the struggle and that I don't know, I don't want to put words into your mouth but that the gospel imperative is around justice.

Respondent: That is right, yes.

Interviewer: And, that all of those things are connected. I was interested in what you were saying earlier about Booth-Clibborn just not quite getting it, that sexuality was the same as women and that actually if we are in for one, we are in for all of those things. But, that is a massive amount to take on as well, and actually maybe we are each called to do the thing that we can do in the context where we are, and that is the thing you talked about, the lights joining together. You have written about your life, you have written a book fairly recently. Tell me about how that was, and why that was. And, tell me how that has been received.

Respondent: Well, the book is called ... what is it called? I have forgotten! Oh, 'A Disreputable Priest', that is right. 'A Disreputable Priest' because it comes from something a student said to me in Manchester, he said you are a disreputable priest but went on to say only disreputable priests can help me, which is interesting.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: I was struggling for a title for the book, some writers in know in America I mentioned that story and they said to me well there is your title! And, yes it sort of gives an account of some of the things we have talked about today and some of the ideas that have influenced me and I have developed from those experiences, so the things I have written about particularly the church and gay issues in the book. I contributed to chapters in other books that have been written elsewhere, including a marvellous book I want to mention from South Africa, edited by Steve De Gruchy who is a great friend of mine who tragically died in a bathing accident called 'Aliens in the Household of God', which is one of the best books I think about the church and homosexuality that I know. I have only got one chapter in it by the way, I am not praising my own work! But, yes I first started writing the book because people who haven't had your experiences think they have been rather exotic and I should write about them, because obviously I have done nothing more than many, many people have done and done much better. But, I thought well maybe for my family, maybe for friends who don't know all my life because it has been lived in different places.

[0:45:27]

Interviewer: It has.

Respondent: My own account, but then it became more personal. I could see the point of trying to write and bringing various friends in your life together and trying to make some sense of your life, because I think I am the sort of person who has always believed that if a thing is worth doing, it is worth doing badly. You have a go at it, but I have always been in the situation of taking too much on and in fact never doing things really well, so I am very

conscious of having done a lot badly. And, I probably wanted partly to reassure myself that in all the things I had done badly there was a bit of good, that some things were worthwhile. And, the book helped me do that, I think. And, it has gone through various forms, helped by people, it was largely written in America before I left. And, then I found this marvellous publisher, Gilead books, where Chris Hayes, I don't know how he makes a living, believes that he should publish books which have very little commercial value but he thinks people ought to read. And, it has had a critical but fair review in the Church Times, it has had various reviews elsewhere but we have not been able to get it in the national media in any big way. But, it has sold about 500 copies which I am told so far is quite good in the first six months for a book by an unknown author. And, the main thing it has been very well received, including I live in this retirement community here, and I wondered how it would go down here. Well, I mean it was bought with the same alacrity as some of the ladies who organised an outing to see 50 Shades of Grey! I don't know whether they were expecting my book to be the same sort of thing, but the amazing thing is and the encouraging thing is here people, elderly people, without much experience of things like this, had just accepted it without batting an eyelid! I expected maybe some people to stop talking to me or I would have to do a conversation. Not at all, people were discussing it with me from time to time, and various people I have known in other institutions or organisations have been unflinchingly supportive. I expected some hostile comeback, but so far it hasn't happened.

Interviewer: It has been fine. It is interesting, it is a full circle from when you talked about when you were growing up, we all knew it was there but nobody talked about this stuff. But, then on some level maybe people have internalised changes or perhaps just worked out what is worth kicking up a fuss over, and sexuality for many, many people just isn't anymore. Because these are all people of your generation and considerably older, and they don't bat an eyelid, they think it is just fine.

Respondent: There is one sad thing - as with Africans who have to make decisions in this area against a background of much more difficult social background than ours, I think if you trust people, they actually see the light and the love comes through even when all the institutions and other things might be telling them otherwise. So, I find trusting people has always been immensely important when you enter new situations. Don't go with too many of your own preconceptions, but trust that you will be supported.

Interviewer: Trust that things will be there? You talked about your book was a way of drawing your life together and identifying some threads - can you tell me what the threads were, if you had to pick some threads or themes?

Respondent: The big thing for me at the moment would be my own sexual journey from a vague awareness. Now, of course having to become aware of yourself without being able to discuss it with anybody, I think is very difficult. And, then going through ... because I have always tended to put work in inverted commas first I have never contracted any really lasting relationship myself. Until in my 70s when believe it or not on my 70th birthday I met a marvellous French person who I was with for two years until he relocated and there were too many difficulties to overcome. And, now I have met another friend who has become a partner and it is marvellous to realise. I remember Olivier my French friend saying whatever happens to us, if I have taught you one thing there is life after 70, so I say to all older listeners to this tape, it is never too late! So, that has been ... to watch that journey has been interesting, to see the journey of society at large at least in the west, to this greater sense of freedom and openness, and I think one has been a very little part of that process. So, above all I think the people whose stories I have shared who we haven't talked about, people like Paul Fairweather and John Shires who I mentioned from the Manchester gay centre and others who have had far more heroic lives and suffered far more than I have and have achieved much more. But, really the most lovely and they did because they were the most lovely, loving

and fully integrated and fully formed people. And, to think I have met so many people like that - Desmond Tutu obviously being the most famous but I mean lots of other people who have become such an important part of my life. When you look back, it is just really despite any difficulties I have had it has been a privilege to have lived I think in this time and knowing the people I have had who so enriched me, and I just feel as though I have been a ... a tiny presence among giants really, in the struggles I have been involved in.

[0:51:14]

Interviewer: That is a really nice place to stop, if that is okay with you?

Respondent: Indeed, thank you.

Interviewer: Thank you very much indeed Ian, thank you.

[End of Transcript]