



## COMMON AWARDS SUBMISSION COVER SHEET

<b>MODULE CODE</b>	TMM42360	<b>STUDENT ID</b>	000696139
<b>MODULE TITLE</b>	MA Dissertation		
<b>ASSESSMENT TYPE</b>	Dissertation		
<b>ASSIGNMENT TITLE</b>	All Are Welcome Here: the local church and radical hospitality in a multi-faith community		
<b>WORD COUNT</b>	16,463		
<b>SUBMISSION DEADLINE</b>	9 <sup>th</sup> July 2019		
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### **STUDENT DECLARATION**

*This assignment is entirely my own work, and has not been submitted for another validated HE module. All material from the work of others not involved in the assessment is acknowledged, and quotations and paraphrases are suitably indicated.*

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**Date of submission:** 8<sup>th</sup> July 2019

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# All Are Welcome Here:

the local church and radical hospitality in  
a multi-faith community



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# Chapter 1: Overview

## Introduction

The aim of this research is to explore the role of the local church in welcome, hospitality, and witness in a diverse multi-faith community. It will use a case-study approach to look in-depth at one model of church community, The Table, that has attracted people from other faith backgrounds, and explore how this setting is encouraging people in their faith journeys, and whether this involves moving toward Jesus. The reciprocal aspect of the host, guest, stranger relationship will be explored, and the gifts that those from other faith backgrounds bring the church will be considered.

During the research process, the following research questions have emerged:

- What is the role of the local church in a multi-faith community?
- Why are members of Sikh, Hindu and Muslim communities becoming part of The Table?

During this study, these research questions will be explored within the field of Practical Theology. Practical Theology has been explained simply as: ‘the theological study of practice’,<sup>1</sup> which is elaborated by Swinton & Mowat: ‘Practical Theology is critical, theological reflection on the practices of the Church as they interact with the practices of the world, with a view to ensuring and enabling faithful participation in God’s redemptive practices in, to and for the world’.<sup>2</sup> Ward favours St Anselm’s definition of theology as ‘faith seeking understanding’, because it combines the practice of faith, including spiritual practices, with theological reasoning.<sup>3</sup>

The Pastoral Cycle is the normative method for reflecting on Practical Theology,<sup>4</sup> and I will use this as a framework for considering the research questions above. The Pastoral Cycle has

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<sup>1</sup> Helen Cameron and Catherine Duce, *Researching Practice in Ministry and Mission: A Companion* (London: SCM Press, 2013), p. 12.

<sup>2</sup> John Swinton and Harriet Mowatt, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, Second edition (London: SCM Press, 2016), p. 7.

<sup>3</sup> Pete Ward, *Introducing Practical Theology: Mission, Ministry, and the Life of the Church* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2017), pp. 27–28.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96.

been articulated by Laurie Green, deriving through Liberation Theologians in Latin America,<sup>5</sup> and is unique in that reflection begins with the experience being studied. Once clarified, the experience is explored, and a thick description analysis created, described as *complexifying* the situation.<sup>6</sup> For this research study, the setting of The Table will be presented below, and a thick description of the context explored, with reference to anthropology and sociology. Using the cycle, theological reflection is then applied: searching for related material within Scripture, practice or Christian tradition. This will be presented in Chapter 2. At this stage, Van der Ven<sup>7</sup> adds in two steps: data gathering, here described as Research Design in Chapter 3; and data reporting and analysis, presented in Chapters 4 & 5. Finally, the ‘so what?’ question is asked: how should we respond in light of what has been discovered; where will transformation occur through the Holy Spirit. These conclusions will be presented in Chapters 5 & 6. As Swinton and Mowatt sum-up: ‘The aim of Practical Theology is therefore not simply to understand the world but also to change it ... [through] critical discernment’.<sup>8</sup>

## The Setting

The Table was launched as a fresh-expression congregation of St John’s Church, Southall in March 2017. The vision was:

To create a Christ-centred community, where people of all backgrounds are welcome, and have freedom to creatively explore and experience knowing, following and serving God. We long to see people’s lives and our neighbourhood transformed by Christ’s love.<sup>9</sup>

The congregation meets monthly, in the parish-centre rather than within the church itself, as an informal worship space. Those who attend are from a wide-range of communities within Southall: Christian, Sikh, Muslim, Hindu, South-Asian, Iranian, African, Caucasian, asylum-seekers, migrants and indigenous Southall residents. The diversity of this congregation is exciting, and potentially unique in an Anglican church setting, which gives an opportunity to

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<sup>5</sup> Laurie Green, *Let’s Do Theology: Resources for Contextual Theology* (London ; New York: Mowbray, 2009), p. 18.

<sup>6</sup> Swinton and Mowatt, *Practical Theology*, pp. 13–15.

<sup>7</sup> Johannes Van der Ven, *Practical Theology: An Empirical Approach* (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1993), p. 120.

<sup>8</sup> Swinton and Mowatt, *Practical Theology*, p. 26.

<sup>9</sup> Idina Dunmore, ‘Southall Green New Worshipping Community: “The Table” Strategic Plan’ (St John’s Church, Southall Green, 2017).

research why these residents from a variety of faith and cultural backgrounds feel comfortable to enter into a church setting for a Christian service of worship.

The creation of The Table was built on ten years of connecting with the local community, through incarnational ministry of an intentional missional community,<sup>10</sup> and missional activities run at St John's Church, such as Messy Church, a parent-and-toddler group, and a night-shelter for local street-homeless, all of which sought to build bridges between the church and the local community. As a leadership team gathered, the vision emerged of providing a space for those we had met through these activities, tailored for those on the margins of our local community (whether socially, culturally, economically or linguistically), and those not confident to engage with traditional church services. This new congregation would worship together, pray, hear the gospel and be disciplined in a safe, familiar and accessible place, and create a supportive community through eating and sharing together, and pastoral and practical care could be provided. The group was to be intentionally multi-cultural, reflecting our neighbourhood, and firmly Jesus-centred.

The Table was named through a suggestion from a church member, and it resonated with the God-given image of a table presented by Bishop Paul Bayes in his inaugural sermon at Liverpool Cathedral:<sup>11</sup>

I invited myself and all my companions to come to this table, to the table of the wounded Christ, and to be seated beside him, beside the poor carpenter. Sitting there we meet him and are fed by him, and we are called by him to pray, and read, and learn at the holy table, and we are sent by him to tell, and serve, and give from the open table.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> 'Southall Team - Servants To Asia's Urban Poor' <<http://servantsasia.org/countries/united-kingdom/>> [accessed 29 May 2019].

<sup>11</sup> See Appendix, page 56

<sup>12</sup> Paul Bayes, *The Table: Knowing Jesus, Prayer, Friendship, Justice* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2019), p. 11.

## The Context

Southall is a neighbourhood within the outer west London Borough of Ealing, five miles from Heathrow Airport. The most dominant characteristic of this locality is that it has 94% ethnic diversity, making it one of the most culturally diverse areas in the UK. The ethnic breakdown on the 2011 Census was: White British: 6%; Asian: 68%; African: 8%; with 61% people born outside the UK.<sup>13</sup> Southall has been a destination for migrants for almost a century; initially attracting workers from Wales, then subsequently from India, with other populations from South Asia and the Caribbean following. Somali and Afghan refugees have settled in Southall more recently, as well as migrants from Eastern Europe and the Middle East.<sup>14</sup>

The largest religious groups in the area are Sikhs, who comprise 37% of the population, and Muslims with 26%, and expected to increase at the next census. Christians are in a large minority at 16% of the population, as are Hindus with 13%.<sup>15</sup> Areas of Southall are also within the 10% most deprived localities nationally. However, Southall is also well-known for its vibrancy, especially in relation to religious communities and ethnic retail and food outlets.<sup>16</sup> Mark Poulson describes: 'it overwhelms the senses with fragrance and colour; and it overwhelms the mind with choices and possibilities'.<sup>17</sup>

Michael Barnes, a Jesuit Professor, wrote from Southall in 2002:

Difference and otherness is very definitely the context of everyday life. Over the last quarter of a century, immigration, mainly from the sub-continent of India, has dramatically changed the religious and cultural profile of this part of the capital city. There is a flourishing mosque five minutes away at the end of my street; the biggest Sikh gurdwara outside Punjab is being built close by; between them sit two Hindu temples and a Buddhist vihara. There are, according to some estimates, more than fifty communities or groups of faith within a mile's radius of the railway station – itself remarkable for having signs written in English and Punjabi. More recently the influx

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<sup>13</sup> '2011 Census - Office for National Statistics' <<https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/2011census>> [accessed 20 April 2017].

<sup>14</sup> Greater London Authority Ealing Council, 'Draft Southall Opportunity Area Planning Framework.', 2013.

<sup>15</sup> '2011 Census - Office for National Statistics'.

<sup>16</sup> 'Servants to Asia's Urban Poor - (United Kingdom)' <<http://m.servantsasia.org/app/united-kingdom/2163340/36/>> [accessed 28 May 2019].

<sup>17</sup> Mark Poulson, 'Being With: A Personal Reflection on Christian Presence and Other Faiths in Southall, West London' in *Missional Conversations: A Dialogue between Theory and Praxis in World Mission*, ed. by Cathy Ross and Colin Graham Smith (London: SCM Press, 2018), p. 46.

of refugees and asylum-seekers, from parts of Africa and from Eastern Europe, has added an extra layer of multi-cultural complication. This is a world unimaginable just a generation ago, a world in which the ancient stereotypes of East and West no longer apply ... In the middle of such a chaos of human religiosity, the mainstream Christian churches can be forgiven for feeling overwhelmed.<sup>18</sup>

As Barnes points out, this intense multi-ethnic and multi-faith mix in the cities of the UK is a new phenomenon.

## A Background of Interfaith and Intercultural Engagement in Britain

Christianity has been present in Britain since the 1<sup>st</sup> Century when the story of Jesus was spread by Roman artisans and traders arriving in Britain, and was reintroduced by Augustine in 597AD when he was sent to England by the Pope in Rome.<sup>19</sup> From the late Anglo-Saxon period to the time of the Reformation, England was almost universally Christian. During the first two hundred years of Protestantism in England, there was very little missionary activity, due to the predominance of Christendom and internal church restructuring.<sup>20</sup>

Driven by spirit of the Enlightenment, the end of the seventeenth century onwards saw the birth of voluntary missionary societies<sup>21</sup> focussing on Christian education and overseas missionary work.<sup>22</sup> This coincided with the Great European Migration, in which:

millions of people left Europe for the lands beyond Europe. Some went under compulsion, as refugees, indentured labourers, or convicts, some under their conditions of employment as soldiers or officials, some from lust of wealth or power. Most, however, were simply seeking a better life or a more just society than they found in Europe.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Michael Barnes, *Theology and the Dialogue of Religions*, Cambridge Studies in Christian Doctrine (Cambridge, U.K. ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 4.

<sup>19</sup> 'BBC - Religions - Christianity: Christianity in Britain'

<[http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/christianity/history/uk\\_1.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/christianity/history/uk_1.shtml)> [accessed 4 May 2019].

<sup>20</sup> Stephen B. Bevans and Roger Schroeder, *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today* (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 2004), p. 195.

<sup>21</sup> David Jacobus Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 1991), p. 328.

<sup>22</sup> Rowan Williams, 'Sharing the Gospel of Salvation', 2010, p. 5.

<sup>23</sup> Andrew Walls, 'Christian Mission in a Five-hundred-year Context' in *Mission in the Twenty-First Century: Exploring the Five Marks of Global Mission*, ed. by Andrew F. Walls and Cathy Ross (London: Darton Longman + Todd, 2010), p. 193.



Much of this migration was driven by economic values, leading to political expansion. In this process the sharing of the Christian faith was marginalised, especially in British colonies, requiring the ‘Christian radicals’ of the missionary societies to proclaim the gospel of Christ.<sup>24</sup> Inevitably, however, the relation between colonialism and mission created a mixed message and used coercive, unhealthy methods. The World Missionary Conference of 1910 in Edinburgh was seen by many as the ‘high water mark of the missionary movement’.<sup>25</sup> The delegates were European and American missionaries, a small number from Asia were included, but there was no African representation. The tone of the conference was positive, leading Mott to state that ‘the whole world was now open to the church, thanks to the ‘marvellous orderings of Providence during the nineteenth century’.<sup>26</sup> As Walls states, ‘the vision that was granted at Edinburgh, the vision of a world-wide church and a world-wide spread of the Gospel – that was a true vision’.<sup>27</sup> However, the First and Second World Wars changed the landscape of Europe, dramatically changing the mode of this spread from the predicted trajectory at that time.

A significant report released by the Church of England in 1945 failed to challenge the ethnic homogeneity of Britain, or to predict the demographic changes that lay ahead.<sup>28</sup> In the decades following, participation in organised Christianity declined in Britain, leading to a declaration in 1963: ‘a formerly religious people have entirely forsaken Christianity in a sudden plunge into a truly secular condition’.<sup>29</sup> However, concurrently to European societies losing the privileging of Christianity in both public and private settings,<sup>30</sup> a reverse tide of migration has occurred as a consequence of importation of labour from the global South for rebuilding after the World Wars, and the continuing need for immigrants to sustain our economies, as well as those fleeing persecution and violence worldwide.<sup>31</sup> These new arrivals have brought different religious traditions to become embedded within our Western societies: Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism and Sikhism. Simultaneously, many nations within

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 196.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 199.

<sup>26</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, p. 328.

<sup>27</sup> Walls and Ross, *Mission in the Twenty-First Century*, p. 200.

<sup>28</sup> Church of England Commission on Evangelism, ‘Towards the Conversion of England’, 1945, para. 79.

<sup>29</sup> Callum G. Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain: Understanding Secularisation, 1800-2000*, Christianity and Society in the Modern World (London ; New York: Routledge, 2001), p. 1.

<sup>30</sup> Ray Gaston, *Faith, Hope and Love: Interfaith Engagement as Practical Theology*, 2017, p. vii.

<sup>31</sup> Harvey Kwiyani, ‘Blessed Reflex: African Christians in Europe’, *Missio Africanus: The Journal of African Missiology*, 3.1 (2017), 41–48 (p. 43).

Africa, Asia and South America have become more strongly and outspokenly Christian, and the many Christians migrating from these nations to Europe, is named by Kwiyani, citing Ross, 'the blessed reflex'.<sup>32</sup> These passionate African and Asian Christians, spiritual descendants of Western missionaries, are reviving Western Christianity through expertise in evangelism, contextual theology, engaging other faiths, and community-building.<sup>33</sup> In response Hollenweger writes, 'Christians in Britain prayed for many years for revival, and when it came they did not recognise it because it was black. Nevertheless, it produced a religious, social and intellectual vitality which is astonishing'.<sup>34</sup>

Ross wrote in 2003, 'Certainly it would stand out as one of God's surprises if today's asylum-seekers were to prove to be the agents of renewal for faith and life in the West!'<sup>35</sup> As fifteen years later, Kwiyani tells us that sixty percent of weekly church attendance in London is made up of people of African descent,<sup>36</sup> and the 2011 census shows us that nationally in a decade the number of black Christians increased by 58% and Asian Christians by 390%,<sup>37</sup> we can be sure that God has surprised us, but perhaps the mainline churches in UK still remain relatively unaware of this blessing. In this dissertation, I would like to suggest that this 'blessed reflex' comes, not only from Christian migrants, but also from those of other religions, 'because encounter with other faiths and interfaith engagement can be a *means of grace* by which the Christian disciple is renewed and encouraged in her won faith and the Church can recover its vocation'.<sup>38</sup> This vocation, I will propose, is as a place of dialogical hospitality.

Corrie describes this perspective, where mission is 'from everywhere to everywhere', as *intercultural* mission.<sup>39</sup> He differentiates this from *cross-cultural*, because *intercultural* presumes cultural and relational equality and mutuality, which precludes acting out of prejudices or power dynamics, in order to be 'as open to our own spiritual and cultural

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<sup>32</sup> Kwiyani; Kenneth R. Ross, "'Blessed Reflex": Mission as God's Spiral of Renewal', 27.4 (2003), 162–68.

<sup>33</sup> Kwiyani, 'Blessed Reflex', pp. 46–48.

<sup>34</sup> Walter J. Hollenweger, forward to Roswith I. H Gerloff, *A Plea for British Black Theologies: The Black Church Movement in Britain in Its Transatlantic Cultural and Theological Interaction* (Eugene, Or.: Wipf & Stock, 2010), p. ix.

<sup>35</sup> Ross, 'Blessed Reflex', p. 166.

<sup>36</sup> Kwiyani, 'Blessed Reflex', p. 45.

<sup>37</sup> 'Church of England Failing to Promote Minority Ethnic Clergy, Says Bishop | World News | The Guardian' <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jul/13/church-of-england-failing-to-promote-minority-ethnic-clergy-says-bishop>> [accessed 29 May 2019].

<sup>38</sup> Gaston, *Faith, Hope and Love*, p. ix.

<sup>39</sup> John Corrie, 'The Promise of Intercultural Mission', *Transformation*, 31.4 (2014), 291–302.

transformation as to that of others'.<sup>40</sup> While building on the pluralist work of Werner Ustorf,<sup>41</sup> Corrie recovers an evangelical perspective, which is helpful in considering The Table, which is situated within an open-evangelical parish church. He states, 'intercultural mission does not require us to compromise our understanding of the gospel, or our commitment to making Christ known'.<sup>42</sup> Drawing on the concept of *missio Dei*, Corrie redefines *mission as proclamation* by God, both to ourselves as well as to others: 'We have a gospel to proclaim, but when we do it interculturally it also speaks to ourselves'.<sup>43</sup> Another important aspect of intercultural mission is that the *other* remains *other*, because difference creates mutual enrichment, and any transformation occurs through the work of the Holy Spirit.<sup>44</sup> Mission thus becomes 'to give the other a different, maybe new, perspective which may be transformative, but which is left open'.<sup>45</sup> This is true mutuality, and allows us to learn together how to follow Christ. Corrie concludes:

There was a time when evangelism was conducted through *crusades*. That gave way to evangelism through *courses*, notably Alpha. Maybe we are into a time when evangelism is best done through *conversation*.<sup>46</sup>

The following chapter will reflect further on these themes of dialogue, hospitality and mutuality, expressed in interfaith interactions. The changing demographics of British society over the last 60 years, as presented above, inform the urgency and importance for the church to reflect on these themes at this time.

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 293.

<sup>41</sup> Werner Ustorf, 'The Cultural Origins of Intercultural Theology', *Mission Studies*, 25 (2008), 229–51.

<sup>42</sup> Corrie, 'The Promise of Intercultural Mission', p. 301.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 297.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 298.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 301.

## Chapter 2: Theological Reflection

This reflection stage of the Pastoral Cycle presents a literature review and theological reflection, which will focus on three aspects of mission: dialogue, hospitality and reciprocity.

### Dialogue

In the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, Erasmus retranslated the first lines of the Gospel of John: ‘In the beginning was the conversation’, expressing the idea of dialogue. This controversial but well supported interpretation<sup>47</sup> captures the fundamental dialogical nature of the Trinity, the *missio Dei*. The Catholic Church describes this beautifully: ‘God in an age-long dialogue, has offered and continues to offer salvation to humankind ... in faithfulness to the divine initiative, the Church must enter into a dialogue of salvation with all men and women’.<sup>48</sup>

*Missio Dei* reveals mission as an attribute of God, and that God is already at work in the world,<sup>49</sup> so that ‘we go expecting to meet the God who has preceded us and has been preparing people within the context of their own cultures and convictions’.<sup>50</sup> While the church is an active participant, God has been at work in the world through the Spirit throughout human history accomplishing the *missio Dei*.<sup>51</sup>

Dialogue is in essence a two-way communication, that involves both listening and speaking. An advisory document to the Church of England Synod states, ‘In dialogue we listen and speak and search together, believing that each has something to communicate’.<sup>52</sup> This reciprocity will be discussed further later in this chapter, and it requires an attitude of bold humility,<sup>53</sup> vulnerability<sup>54</sup> and ‘a manner of acting, an attitude and a spirit ... [which] implies concern,

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<sup>47</sup> C.A.L. Jarrott, ‘Erasmus’ “In Principio Erat Sermo”: A Controversial Translation’, *Studies in Philology*, 61.1 (1964), 35–50 (pp. 35–37).

<sup>48</sup> Pontifical Council For Inter-Religious Dialogue, ‘Dialogue and Proclamation’ (Rome, 1991).

<sup>49</sup> Anna Ruddick, ‘From the Ground Up: Creating Community Cohesion through Incarnational Mission’, *Temple Tracts: Issue 1, Volume 3*, 3.1 (2017), p. 17.

<sup>50</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, p. 484.

<sup>51</sup> Ruddick, ‘From the Ground Up’, pp. 16–17.

<sup>52</sup> Anglican Consultative Council, *Towards a Theology for Inter-Faith Dialogue*. (London: Published for the Anglican Consultative Council, 1986) Para. 66.

<sup>53</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, p. 484.

<sup>54</sup> Stephen B. Bevans and Roger Schroeder, *Prophetic Dialogue: Reflections on Christian Mission Today* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011), p. 22.

respect and hospitality towards the other'.<sup>55</sup> Smith describes this mutuality as 'a meeting of equals who seek to understand the other person and to be transformed through the encounter'.<sup>56</sup> Thus, dialogue also has a transformative purpose, as we discover new dimensions in oneself through discerning God's activity in the life of the other person. But both dialogue and mission manifest themselves in meeting of hearts rather than minds: the mysterious work of God.<sup>57</sup>

This is a shift in understanding, towards mission as encounter.<sup>58</sup> Church of England guidelines on inter-faith dialogue, composed nearly 40 years ago, state the obvious: 'Dialogue begins when people meet each other'.<sup>59</sup> Thus, dialogue becomes the 'outworking of the command to love God and to love our neighbour'.<sup>60</sup> Bevans & Schroeder choose to describe contemporary mission as *prophetic dialogue*. Kritzinger defines this: '*dialogue* means embracing and identifying with people, while *prophetic* means to communicate with people in a way that both unmasks evil and imagines hopeful alternatives'.<sup>61</sup> Bevans & Schroeder suggest this can be practiced in three ways: sharing the life of the poor and speaking up for justice; defending and critiquing human culture and diversity; and 'to engage the truth of other religions while maintaining the conviction that Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life (Jn 14:6)'.<sup>62</sup> In my experience, Practical Theology in Britain appears to be focussing on the first two aspects of prophetic dialogue, while I have explained in Chapter 1 the increasing necessity of practicing interfaith dialogue at this time.

Interfaith dialogue means 'reasoning across worlds of religious difference',<sup>63</sup> stemming from the Greek words *dia* (across) and *logos* (reasoning). In response to the influx of people of other faiths into our neighbourhoods, Barnes suggests the church has three possible responses:<sup>64</sup> firstly to retreat and create safe ghettos, which allows only internal

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<sup>55</sup> Secretariat for Non-Christians, 'The Attitude of the Church towards the Followers of Other Religions', *The Furrow*, 36.7, 453–57 para. 29.

<sup>56</sup> Andrew Smith, *Vibrant Christianity in Multifaith Britain: Equipping the Church for a Faithful Engagement with People of Different Faiths* (Abingdon: Bible Reading Fellowship, 2018), pp. 69–70.

<sup>57</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, p. 483.

<sup>58</sup> Bevans and Schroeder, *Prophetic Dialogue*, p. 20.

<sup>59</sup> Anglican Consultative Council, *Towards a Theology for Inter-Faith Dialogue*, p. 27.

<sup>60</sup> Smith, *Vibrant Christianity*, p. 77.

<sup>61</sup> JNJ Kritzinger, 'Mission in Prophetic Dialogue', *Missiology: An International Review*, 41 (2013), p. 6.

<sup>62</sup> Bevans and Schroeder, *Constants in Context*, p. 349.

<sup>63</sup> Hedges and Race, *Christian Approaches*, p. 155.

<sup>64</sup> Barnes, *Theology and the Dialogue of Religions*, p. 4.

conversation; secondly to assert comparable prominence, which becomes a cycle of hostile rhetoric; or thirdly and more hopefully, ‘a vision of a Church committed to mediation and the building of bridges between communities’<sup>65</sup> which is the dialogical approach.

Sharing the Gospel of Salvation report was presented at The Church of England General Synod in April 2010, with an aim to create ‘understanding of the uniqueness of Christ in the context of Britain’s multifaith society, and offer examples and commendations of good practice in sharing the gospel of salvation through Christ alone with people of all faiths and none’.<sup>66</sup> It presents a fourfold classification of dialogue:

- the dialogue of daily life, e.g. as neighbours or work colleagues
- the dialogue of common good, e.g. working together on community projects
- the dialogue of mutual understanding, e.g. Meetings for Better Understanding
- and the dialogue of spiritual life, e.g. coming together to pray or learn about each other’s practices.<sup>67</sup>

As these dialogues are practiced a mutual learning and refining occurs. This will be discussed further below. Gaston discusses the ‘mission tension’ that enables growth through creative dialogue and witness: ‘The missional task is ... to take the risk, through encounter, that our understanding of our faith may change and that our relationships with our interfaith neighbours need to engage creatively with real difference’.<sup>68</sup>

Interfaith responses have been critiqued on several levels,<sup>69</sup> with the greatest concern centring around the fear of fundamental beliefs being compromised through pluralistic thinking. Historically there has been a divide in the church between evangelicals, who engaged people of other faiths through mission, and liberals who took a greater interest in interfaith dialogue.<sup>70</sup> As Wright wrote in a response to the Church of England in the 1980s: ‘dialogue also presupposes *deficiency in the Christian faith as such* ... It is one thing to challenge *my* faith; another to challenge *the* faith’.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Rowan Williams, ‘Sharing the Gospel of Salvation’, 2010, para. 1.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid. para. 97.

<sup>68</sup> Gaston, *Faith, Hope and Love*, p. 14.

<sup>69</sup> John Fahy and Jan-Jonathan Bock, ‘Beyond Dialogue? Interfaith Engagement in Delhi, Doha & London’ (The Woolf Institute, 2018).

<sup>70</sup> Smith, *Vibrant Christianity*, p. 67.

<sup>71</sup> Chris Wright, ‘Inter Faith Dialogue’, *Anvil*, 1.3 (1984), 232–58.

However, this dichotomy appears to be breaking down, as mission is seen as prophetic dialogue and Holy Spirit encounter. There is a realisation that ‘without dialogue, without a willingness to ‘let go’ before one ‘speaks out’ mission is simply not possible’.<sup>72</sup> As John V Taylor stated,

The Spirit’s witness to the lordship and love of Jesus Christ is, therefore, in itself a kind of dialogue. In the person of Jesus, and in his body, the church, the Spirit calls all men to respond ... It is this which gives us grounds for believing that in any dialogue between the church and the world, or between Christians and men of other faiths, the Holy Spirit is speaking in both participants.<sup>73</sup>

In response to this mutuality, and perceiving interfaith engagement as an opportunity for Christian renewal, Gaston suggests a fresh definition of evangelism, which:

Happens not through targets and strategies and developing a new ‘expansionist’ model of mission but as the outworking of our increased holiness as we deepen our relationship to Christ through the creative encounter with those of other faiths based on kenotic defencelessness and an active and prayerful engagement with the experiential reality of our own salvation.<sup>74</sup>

Traditionally there have been three distinct paradigms which inform Christian mission with people of other faiths. These paradigms focus on salvation.<sup>75</sup> Exclusivism (also called Particularism) is the conservative perspective: Christianity is the only way of salvation; only through Jesus Christ can a person be saved. Pluralism is the liberal view: different faiths are different ways to reach God, and there is a possibility of salvation through all faiths, with none being superior to the other. Thirdly, inclusivists take a broader view: that God is at work beyond the church and where the Holy Spirit is at work within or through other faith traditions people may be saved through Jesus, whether consciously or not. Modern authors critique

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<sup>72</sup> Bevans and Schroeder, *Constants in Context*, p. 350.

<sup>73</sup> John V Taylor, *The Go-Between God: The Holy Spirit and the Christian Mission*. (London: SCM Press, 1973), p. 181.

<sup>74</sup> Gaston, *Faith, Hope and Love*, p. 83.

<sup>75</sup> Smith, *Vibrant Christianity*, p. 17; Richard Sudworth, *Distinctly Welcoming: Christian Presence in a Multifaith Society*, 2007, pp. 30–33; Gaston, *Faith, Hope and Love*, p. 3; Tom Wilson, *Hospitality, Service, Proclamation: Interfaith Engagement as Christian Discipleship*, 2019, pp. 24–54.

this typology as unhelpful in relating to people of other faiths,<sup>76</sup> and instead focus on interfaith engagement of living out one's faith through loving and serving, and honest and mutual dialogue between faiths. Barnes has attempted to reframe the typology by suggesting, instead of soteriological positions, they can be viewed as complimentary values, discovered through interfaith dialogue, which can be held simultaneously:

'Exclusivism' witnesses to that faith which speaks of what it knows through the specificity of tradition. 'Inclusivism' looks forward in hope to the fulfilment of all authentically religious truths and values. 'Pluralism' expresses that love which seeks always to affirm those values in the present.<sup>77</sup>

## Hospitality

More recently, the churches have turned to the concept of 'hospitality' as a means for continuing with the dialogical journey ... Hospitality is a function of the guest-host dynamic. The host community, at its best, offers generous welcome to the stranger (the other) and values the differences between them with respect. It provides an orderly context for exchange and learning, and might even lead to change. The idea of hospitality is based on persons, not on systems; it speaks of 'open house' and not 'closed doors'.<sup>78</sup>

Russell gives a definition of hospitality as: 'the practice of God's welcome, embodied in our actions, as we reach across difference to participate with God in bringing justice and healing to our world in crisis'.<sup>79</sup> Referring to the concept of prophetic dialogue, in agreement with the definition above, Ross suggests that hospitality is a prophetic practice.<sup>80</sup> Hospitality is a fundamental expectation in many cultures, but Biblical teachings and stories challenge the hospitality of 'tea parties, bland conversation, and a general atmosphere of cosiness'.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Samuel Wells, *Incarnational Mission: Being with the World*. (S.I.: Canterbury Press, Norwich, 2018), pp. 84–85; Gaston, *Faith, Hope and Love*, p. 3.

<sup>77</sup> Barnes, *Theology and the Dialogue of Religions*, p. 9.

<sup>78</sup> Hedges and Race, *Christian Approaches*, p. 160.

<sup>79</sup> Letty M. Russell, J. Shannon Clarkson and Kate M. Ott, *Just Hospitality: God's Welcome in a World of Difference*, 1st ed (Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), p. 2.

<sup>80</sup> Cathy Ross, 'Hospitality: The Church as 'A Mother with an Open Heart' in *Mission on the Road to Emmaus: Constants, Context and Prophetic Dialogue*, ed. by Stephen B Bevans and Cathy Ross, 2015, pp. 67–68.

<sup>81</sup> Henri J. M Nouwen, *Reaching out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life* (London: Collins, 1976), p. 66.



Russell suggests that Biblical hospitality has four components: unexpected divine presence, advocacy for the marginalised, mutual welcome, and creation of community.<sup>82</sup>

In the Old Testament, God commands the Israelites to love not just their own people, but also the stranger (Leviticus 19), in remembrance that they themselves had been strangers in Egypt. For example, Abraham and Sarah welcome three strangers and find themselves entertaining angels (Genesis 18), the widow of Zarephath cares for Elijah (1 Kings 17); Rahab is saved through welcoming Joshua (Joshua 2). Jesus ministry both confirms this hospitality that welcomes the stranger, but subverts exclusivity where Israel kept themselves separate to be pure. Jesus practices this through hospitality itself becoming the means of holiness.<sup>83</sup> Jesus identifies with the marginalised and *impure* (Matthew 25:31-46), saying 'I was a stranger and you welcomed me' as one who is hungry, thirsty, homeless, naked or a prisoner. In meeting with the haemorrhaging woman (Mark 5: 25-34), Jesus shows that rather than being defiled by her, instead she is healed and cleansed by him: holiness is contagious. This dynamic is repeated as Jesus touches and heals lepers, those blind and deaf, and eats meals with 'tax-collectors and sinners' (Luke 14). As Wright states: 'Eating with 'sinners' was one of the most characteristic and striking marks of Jesus' regular activity ... Jesus was, as it were, celebrating the messianic banquet, and doing so with all the wrong people'.<sup>84</sup> And it is through this open commensality that the gift of *shalom* is shared, bringing healing physically and socially.<sup>85</sup>

In the gospels, the Greek word for hospitality is *philoxenia*. *Xenos* can mean guest, host and stranger, so to Jesus hospitality means 'delight in the whole guest-host relationship and in the surprises that may occur'.<sup>86</sup> We find that during his ministry Jesus acts as stranger, guest and host. For example, on the Emmaus Road, Jesus operated in all these modes (Luke 24: 13-35), 'as strangers become friends and Jesus was understood to be the risen Lord'.<sup>87</sup> Jesus calls the church to do likewise. As an example, during the early days of the church, Cornelius, an unclean Gentile, is sent by God to Peter's home (Acts 10) to explain his vision from God: that

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<sup>82</sup> Russell, Clarkson and Ott, *Just Hospitality*, p. 82.

<sup>83</sup> Luke Bretherton, *Hospitality as Holiness: Christian Witness amid Moral Diversity* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate Pub, 2006), p. 130.

<sup>84</sup> Nicholas T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, Christian Origins and the Question of God, 2 (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1996), p. 431.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 192.

<sup>86</sup> Bevans and Ross, *Mission on the Road to Emmaus*, p. 69.

<sup>87</sup> Bretherton, *Hospitality as Holiness*, p. 135.

there is no longer need for purity rituals regarding food or people, purity lies in Jesus himself rather than actions. This stranger – guest – host encounter shows us the dynamics of transformation and mutuality.

As Peter did, when we welcome the stranger, from outside and within ourselves, as one who unsettles, challenges and provokes us, while also bringing a wider perspective, this can open us to *the other*. We move from fear, to tolerance, to friendship, to unity: which could be termed transformation or conversion.<sup>88</sup> As Ross states:

We need the stranger to challenge us, to help us see ourselves as others see us, to call us out of our complacencies and Christian ghettos, to offer us new worlds, to break us out of our cosy domesticities. By practicing hospitality we may think we are engaging in ‘prophetic dialogue’ – in fact the stranger can bring that gift to us.<sup>89</sup>

Koyama expands this stranger-centred theology, suggesting ‘Mission is *extending hospitality to strangers*.’<sup>90</sup> In an inter-faith context, the two heart movements of the mission of God are *embassy*: an outward moving nature of love of God; and *hospitality*: the welcome and openness at the heart of God who is love.<sup>91</sup> Thus the roles of host and guest are merged into one mechanism,<sup>92</sup> which Dulles likens to the metaphor of breathing: the whole is comprised of both an inhalation and an exhalation.<sup>93</sup>

Volf has developed a further metaphor, of embrace, in considering welcome, especially of those seen as *other*: perceived as different, threatening and needing to be excluded for our own survival.<sup>94</sup> Volf characterises our reactions to the *other* as exclusion by expulsion, assimilation, subjugation or indifference, which replace interdependence and mutuality.<sup>95</sup> I would suggest that for the church, those of other faiths are very often portrayed as *other*.

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<sup>88</sup> Andrew Wingate, *Celebrating Difference, Staying Faithful: How to Live in a Multi-Faith World* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2005), pp. 179–81.

<sup>89</sup> Bevans and Ross, *Mission on the Road to Emmaus*, p. 70.

<sup>90</sup> Kosuke Koyama, ‘“Extend Hospitality to Strangers” A Missiology of Theologia Crucis’, *International Review of Mission*, 83.327 (1993), 283–95 (p. 285).

<sup>91</sup> Network for Inter Faith Concerns and Anglican Consultative Council, *Generous Love: The Truth of the Gospel and the Call to Dialogue: An Anglican Theology of Inter Faith Relations: A Report from the Anglican Communion Network for Inter Faith Concerns*. (London: The Anglican Consultative Council, 2008).

<sup>92</sup> Williams, ‘Sharing the Gospel of Salvation’, para. 93.

<sup>93</sup> Avery Robert Dulles, *Models of the Church* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1976), p. 220.

<sup>94</sup> Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), p. 99.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 66–67.

We often speak of tolerance or *having respect* for people of other faiths. However, Bretherton points out that this is a passive, inadequate reaction<sup>96</sup> because Jesus' command is to *love* our neighbour, which demands a positive response and must lead to action.<sup>97</sup> As Markham states, 'We need to move beyond tolerance, to active engagement and concern in the life of others, to dialogue, to collaborative truth-seeking and the enrichment of life through the insights of others'.<sup>98</sup> The metaphor of embrace has a four-fold pattern:

- opening the arms - as an invitation to the other and creating a space for them;
- waiting - which ensures choice and freedom;
- closing the arms – an action of reciprocity as both hold the other as guest and host;
- opening the arms again – preventing oppression, 'so that its own identity, enriched by the traces that the presence of the other has left, may be preserved'.<sup>99</sup>

As with the metaphor of breathing, Volf suggests this holds:

A double movement of aperture and closure. I open my arms to create space in myself for the other. The open arms are a sign of discontent at being myself only, and of a desire to include the other. They are an invitation to the other to come in and feel at home with me, to belong to me. In an embrace I close my arms around the other - not tightly, so as to crush her, or assimilate her forcefully into myself; but gently, so as to tell her that I do not want to be without her in her otherness. An embrace is the *sacrament of peace*.<sup>100</sup>

Space is needed for hospitality, and thus for mission. This space is personal and corporate; physical, social, spiritual, emotional and within busy lives. In the creation narrative, we read that God, in Triune community, created space through creating the universe. As Rublev's icon portrays, the Trinity invites us to participate in this divine community as those who are made in God's image.<sup>101</sup> We are called to model this hospitality that we have received from Triune God, as Taylor states, 'If one is closed up against being hurt, or blind towards one's fellow-

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<sup>96</sup> Bretherton, *Hospitality as Holiness*, p. 125.

<sup>97</sup> Smith, *Vibrant Christianity*, p. 24.

<sup>98</sup> Ian S Markham, *Plurality and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 188.

<sup>99</sup> Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, p. 145.

<sup>100</sup> M. Volf, 'Exclusion and Embrace: Theological reflections in the wake of 'ethnic cleansing'' in *Emerging Voices in Global Christian Theology*, ed. by William A. Dyrness (Eugene, Or: Wipf & Stock, 2003), p. 39.

<sup>101</sup> Cathy Ross, 'Attending to Global Christianity II Attentiveness as Creating Space for Hospitality', *Baptistic Theologies*, 6.1 (2014), 12–22 (p. 20).

men, one is inevitably shut off from God also. One cannot choose to be open in one direction and closed in another'.<sup>102</sup>

Sudworth describes sharing the good news with people of other faiths as giving space to hear people,<sup>103</sup> endorsed by Pope Francis who states, 'Often it is better to simply slow down, to put aside our eagerness in order to see and listen to others'.<sup>104</sup> We find an example of this in the story of Jesus being a guest at the home of Martha and Mary (Luke 10:38-42). Hospitality is shown by Martha in practical tasks, while Mary sits listening to Jesus. Jesus praises Mary's position of listening and attentiveness.<sup>105</sup> Ross summarises the characteristics of good listening as: 'humility, vulnerability, availability, receptivity and patience'.<sup>106</sup>

Corrie further suggests that through interactions between those of different cultures a *creative space* is possible, which 'causes them to relocate, renew and revitalize their identities because it creates the space within which Christ can do his transforming work'.<sup>107</sup> He continues by describing this space as a place for improvising the story of the gospel, as Jesus' disciples did within the space he gave them.

In conclusion, hospitality is the heart of mission. It is a reflection of God's welcome, seen through creation, the call to the Israelites, and confirmed in Jesus life and ministry. It is not necessary to become syncretistic, instead 'unashamed ownership of the Christian story and its provocative and outrageous claims releases space for the religious other to be themselves: to bring who they are to the table in shared discourse about what is dearest of each of us'.<sup>108</sup> The work of hospitality is as stranger, guest and host, and the creativity within that relationship. This requires space, both physical and personal, including skills of attentiveness and listening, mutuality and openness to *Missio Dei*, God at work in the world. As Henri Nouwen states: 'Hospitality... means primarily the creation of a free space where the stranger can enter and become a friend instead of an enemy. Hospitality is not to change people, but to offer them space where change can take place'.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Taylor, *The Go-Between God*, p. 19.

<sup>103</sup> Sudworth, *Distinctly Welcoming*, p. 58.

<sup>104</sup> Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium: The Joy of the Gospel* (Dublin: Veritas, 2014), p. 46.

<sup>105</sup> Cathy Ross, 'Attending to Global Christianity', p. 13.

<sup>106</sup> Cathy Ross, 'Attending to Global Christianity', p. 14.

<sup>107</sup> Corrie, 'The Promise of Intercultural Mission', p. 299.

<sup>108</sup> Richard Sudworth, 'Being With: Christian Presence and Other Faiths' in Ross and Smith, *Missional Conversations*, p. 54.

<sup>109</sup> Nouwen, *Reaching Out*, pp. 68-69.

## Reciprocity

Rev Dr Sam Wells has written extensively on the incarnational principle of *being with*,<sup>110</sup> and has expanded the reflection to *being with* those of other faiths through interfaith dialogue and personal encounter. He encourages exploration of the mystery in each other's faiths,<sup>111</sup> and for Christians to enjoy and be attentive to people of other faiths, finding where they offer a gift:

These gifts are of broadly three kinds. The *scrutiny* of strangers pushes Christians to identify, clarify, articulate, and refine their own traditions, convictions, and hopes. The *faith* of strangers challenges Christians' imagination, practice, and truth-claims and offers opportunities to discover wisdom and insight in unexpected places. The *company* of strangers creates occasions for Christians to receive blessing from the generosity, dignity, courage, and humility disclosed when the Holy Spirit chooses to grow fruits whose provenance Christians haven't already prejudged.<sup>112</sup>

In loving the stranger of another faith, I acknowledge I need the other, for example in learning to better pray, fast, meditate or love my neighbour. 'And I say to them ... "Thank you for being messengers of God to one another and the me"'.<sup>113</sup> Barbara Brown Taylor has termed this 'holy envy'.<sup>114</sup> Sudworth describes the loving mutuality in this interaction, that Christians have, at times, not recognised:

A disposition of 'being with' sees members of other faiths not as *projects* to be converted, where an otherwise worthy and unashamed hope that they discover the fullness of Christ is distorted into an instrumentalising of the relationship we may have with them. They are beautiful human beings, just like ourselves, and capable of being a blessing to *us*.<sup>115</sup>

In a recent text, Wilson has described four lessons he believes Christians can learn from other faith traditions: to put time and resources into children's ministry; the need to campaign for

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<sup>110</sup> Samuel Wells, *A Nazareth Manifesto: Being with God* (Chichester, West Sussex; Malden, MA: John Wiley & Sons Inc, 2015).

<sup>111</sup> Wells, *Incarnational Mission*, p. 81.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 97.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 99.

<sup>114</sup> Barbara Brown Taylor, *Holy Envy: Finding God in the Faith of Others*, 2019.

<sup>115</sup> Ross and Smith, *Missional Conversations*, p. 55.

freedom of worship; being community-oriented in use of our worship spaces; understanding how to explain our faith to others as religious minorities.<sup>116</sup> While helpful to consider, these are functional issues and not a description of true reciprocity, in which: 'There is a two-way exchange of gifts, between missionaries and the people among whom they work ... Mission is not a matter of just *doing things for* people. It is first of all a matter of *being with* people, of *listening* and *sharing* with them'.<sup>117</sup> This also echoes what has been said above about the mutual aspects of both dialogue and hospitality, and the two metaphors of breathing and embrace which portray the necessity of both taking in and letting go. In the Biblical stories we have explored, the strangers who were welcomed brought new truths to those with faith, e.g. the angels to Abraham and Sarah, and Jesus to those on the Emmaus Road and to Martha and Mary. Thus, as Wells suggests, we need the stranger. As Parker Palmer advocates:

Inviting the stranger into our private space, whether that be the space of our own home or the space of our personal awareness and concern. And when we do some important transformations occur. Our private space is suddenly enlarged; no longer tight, cramped, restricted, but open and expansive and free. And our space is illuminated ... hospitality to the stranger gives us a chance to see our own lives afresh, through different eyes.<sup>118</sup>

A question would be, is the church open and ready for this? As Keifert asks: 'the mainline churches ... are at a crucial juncture in this journey ... Will they, knowing fully that they might well end up being their guests, and surely Christ's guest, welcome the stranger?'<sup>119</sup> The stranger will bring challenge and new perspective, which may unsettle our norms. Are we 'open to being evangelised by those whom we are evangelising – a kind of 'mission in reverse'.<sup>120</sup> Hebrews 13:2 states, 'Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it.' Bretherton elaborates, suggesting that the host in the encounter needs to be converted: 'The conversion of the host can be read as the movement from an economy of gift the heart of which is antagonistic rivalry and the maintenance of honour ... to an alternative economy of gift, or perhaps more accurately, an

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<sup>116</sup> Wilson, *Hospitality, Service, Proclamation*, p. 143.

<sup>117</sup> Donal Dorr, *Mission in Today's World* (Blackrock, Co. Dublin: Columba Press, 2000), p. 16.

<sup>118</sup> Parker J. Palmer, *The Company of Strangers: Christians and the Renewal of America's Public Life* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), p. 131.

<sup>119</sup> Patrick R. Keifert, *Welcoming the Stranger: A Public Theology of Worship and Evangelism* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), p. 167.

<sup>120</sup> Bevans and Schroeder, *Prophetic Dialogue*, p. 22.

economy of blessing'.<sup>121</sup> An example from Scripture is of Jesus' interaction with the woman from Syrophenicia. He listened to her perspective and was open to recognising and rejoicing in God's unfolding promise.<sup>122</sup>

The scattering of the peoples at Babel by God (Genesis 11) has a two-fold purpose: to destroy false unity which enabled destructive power and control, and to free the nations to their own diversity of languages and cultures.<sup>123</sup> Russell joyfully describes this as 'God's response ... to create the gift of difference!'<sup>124</sup> and she continues by detailing the importance of diversity in our world. This diversity was not reversed at Pentecost (Acts 2), but the gift of the Holy Spirit enabled understanding of and unity through difference.<sup>125</sup> God is glorified by this riotous diversity of persons, cultures and places. It follows that the 'fullness of Christ' (Ephesians 4:13) will only be found through contextual dialogical encounter, as our message is listened to, developed, and then returned in a contextually appropriate form to that place.<sup>126</sup> Walls discusses this through description of the church in Ephesus, where Jews and Greeks worshipped together as one church.<sup>127</sup> Paul writes to them: 'His purpose was ... in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility ... And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit'. (Ephesians 2:15-16,22). Walls states:

Only in Christ does completion, fullness, dwell. And Christ's completion as we have seen, comes from all humanity, from the translation of the life of Jesus into the lifeways of all the world's cultures and subcultures through history. None of us can reach Christ's completeness on our own. We need each other's vision to correct, enlarge, and focus our own; only together are we complete in Christ.<sup>128</sup>

As detailed in the introduction, the vision of The Table was for a space that nourished and welcomed people from our community. Pohl writes 'the table is central to the practice of hospitality in home and church – the nourishment we gain there is physical, spiritual and

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<sup>121</sup> Bretherton, *Hospitality as Holiness*, p. 133.

<sup>122</sup> Russell, Clarkson and Ott, *Just Hospitality*, pp. 47–48.

<sup>123</sup> Russell, Clarkson and Ott, *Just Hospitality*, p. 55.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.

<sup>126</sup> Bevens and Schroeder, *Prophetic Dialogue*, p. 379; Smith, *Vibrant Christianity*, p. 69.

<sup>127</sup> Stephen B. Bevens, 'A Theology for the Ephesian Moment', *Anvil*, 27.2 (2010), pp. 6–7.

<sup>128</sup> Andrew F. Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission and Appropriation of Faith* (MaryKnoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2002), p. 79.

social.<sup>129</sup> Eating is a reciprocal activity, and especially when food is brought, shared and eaten together. Hershberger believes that at this type of meal where we welcome strangers, we are 'playing the drama of life',<sup>130</sup> as we meet and share in openness together. It is the practical outworking of the dialogue and hospitality described above. Describing prophetic dialogue, Bevans and Schroeder suggest three tables of missional activity:<sup>131</sup> the table of the church, indicating simple, everyday discipleship; the Eucharistic table, in which we are nourished and sent out into the neighbourhood.<sup>132</sup> The third table reaches to the whole world, a solidarity with all people, recognising we are all created in the image of God, and also extending to include all of creation.<sup>133</sup> The eschatological image of the Great Banquet (Luke 14: 15-24) was an inspiration, and was the theme of our first gathering at The Table. Bevans and Schroeder conclude by stating:

In our globalised world the banquet is a powerful and challenging image and vision of the reign of God at all three 'tables'. All are invited to come to the banquet that God has prepared, and we are privileged to help God in extending that invitation through the work of prophecy and dialogue.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> Christine D. Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids, Mich: W.B. Eerdmans, 1999), p. 158.

<sup>130</sup> Michele Hershberger, *A Christian View of Hospitality: Expecting Surprises*, The Giving Project Series (Scottsdale, Pa: Herald Press, 1999), p. 104.

<sup>131</sup> Bevans and Schroeder, *Prophetic Dialogue*, p. 108.

<sup>132</sup> Wells, *Incarnational Mission*, p. 97.

<sup>133</sup> Bevans and Schroeder, *Prophetic Dialogue*, p. 111.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 114.



## Chapter 3: Research Design

Using the framework of the Pastoral Cycle, after creating a thick description and reflecting theologically on the themes raised, the next steps are to gather and analyse data. In this chapter I will describe the methodology and methods used for this, including considerations in collecting and analysing the data. Finally, presentation and analysis of the data collected will be detailed in Chapters 4 and 5.

### Methodology

As a methodology or underlying approach, this study has used an interpretative paradigm. The epistemological assumption of this approach is constructivism,<sup>135</sup> which finds meaning arising from the setting and those involved in the research. It assumes that there are many interpretations of reality, and all are valid. The researcher becomes part of the process as a co-creator of the shared interactions. Using a constructivist methodology, narrative is seen as knowledge.<sup>136</sup> For example, in this study, six people are asked about the same experience of attending The Table. Each has answered with a different nuance, according to their background and perspective. When these narratives are drawn together, they can give a more accurate view of reality.<sup>137</sup> Practical Theology, however, uses a hermeneutic of suspicion, and is fundamentally concerned with seeking the truth.<sup>138</sup> This is created by careful collection of data and discerning reflection on it, spotting themes and patterns, in the light of Scripture and Tradition to enable faithful practice.

Angrosino defines ethnography as, ‘the *art* and *science* of describing a human group – its institutions, interpersonal behaviours, material productions, and beliefs’.<sup>139</sup> In order to create this type of research, the ethnographer needs to immerse themselves in a community ‘in

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<sup>135</sup> Swinton and Mowatt, *Practical Theology*, pp. 33–34.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>139</sup> Michael V. Angrosino, *Doing Ethnographic and Observational Research* (London: Sage Publications, 2007), p. 14.

order to learn something about and from them'.<sup>140</sup> Ethnography acknowledges the importance of context in theological reflection.<sup>141</sup> Social research, in contrast to scientific experiments, is always only a snapshot taken at one point in time, creating 'a partial and biased glimpse of a changing social world'.<sup>142</sup>

Moschella believes that ethnographic research can be used as a pastoral practice. She draws on therapeutic models of narrative therapies, and combines them with experience in congregational studies, to create a research process that is 'a potential means of spiritual growth and social transformation'.<sup>143</sup> She found that 'change comes when we tell our stories, listening for themes and subplots, and identify the guiding myths or the underlying convictions by which we live ... By altering the stories we tell about ourselves and about our world, we can start to imagine new ways of conducting our lives'.<sup>144</sup> The conditions needed for this are deep listening and reflecting by the researcher, which validates and honours a person's experience, which Moschella terms a 'dialogical process'.<sup>145</sup> This resonates strongly with the themes emerging from this study, of hospitality, dialogue and mutuality.

## Methods of Research

A qualitative case-study approach will be used to research this topic. Yin suggests using a case-study when 'a "how" or "why" question is being asked about a contemporary set of events over which the investigator has little or no control'.<sup>146</sup> The benefit of using a case-study is the comprehensive nature of using a multi-method approach.<sup>147</sup> This enables triangulation of data which ensures validity and reliability of the findings:<sup>148</sup> 'Validity is a measure of the degree to which an observation actually demonstrates what it appears to demonstrate'.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Mary Clark Moschella, *Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice: An Introduction* (Cleveland, Ohio: Pilgrim Press, 2008), p. 4.

<sup>141</sup> Green, *Let's Do Theology*, p. 13.

<sup>142</sup> Moschella, *Ethnography*, p. 28.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>146</sup> Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, Applied Social Research Methods Series, v. 5, 3rd ed (Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage Publications, 2003), p. 9.

<sup>147</sup> Helen Cameron and Catherine Duce, *Researching Practice in Ministry and Mission: A Companion* (London: scm press, 2013), p. 60; Yin, *Case Study Research*, pp. 97–101.

<sup>148</sup> Yin, *Case Study Research*, pp. 97–101.

<sup>149</sup> Angrosino, *Doing Ethnographic and Observational Research*, p. 58.

Case-studies enable presentation of findings at a local level, or broader generalisations can be suggested, extrapolating from the case-study.

The methods that will be used for this study are:

1. Interviews with six women and men that attend The Table regularly: participants are from Sikh, Muslim or Hindu backgrounds. Their self-descriptions are:
  - *We are from birth on Hindu religion ... We're not strictly religious. (A)*
  - *My dad was a Sikh, but we were never brought up like ... strict Sikhism. (B)*
  - *I was officially Muslim, then my mum is very religious person, she is Muslim ... She forced me to pray like Muslim. (C)*
  - *My family's all Hindu ... I was a devout Hindu, that's the way I was brought up. (D)*
  - *I belong to Sikh family. We believe in Guru Granth Sahib. (E)*
  - *My family background is very unique in a sense that ... my dad was a very liberal person, so at home we had the Bible, the Koran, the Gita, the Hindu scriptures, the Buddhist scriptures, the Sikh scriptures. (F)*

They have all been regular attenders and committed in some way in The Table gathering, although only one is actively involved in the leadership team. The interviews were conducted face-to-face using a semi-structured format. Sample questions<sup>150</sup> focus on faith journey, understanding of Jesus, and what has drawn the participants to attend The Table.

2. Participant observation of The Table: to be performed at one gathering, primarily to observe the dynamics of hospitality: host and guest.
3. Attendance data from The Table: to show diversity and breadth of hospitality and welcome.

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<sup>150</sup> See Appendix, page 58

## Reflexivity

Reflexivity makes explicit the reasons behind particular modes of engagement, the choice of methods, the reasons for looking at this population or individual in this way, and the impact of the researcher's personal history and presumptions on the situation.<sup>151</sup>

In this Fresh Expression congregation, I am the coordinator of the leadership team, so my role in the collection of data is described as a participant,<sup>152</sup> or an insider.<sup>153</sup> I have lived in this community for over 10 years, and have known those I have interviewed for 2 to 8 years, the majority through a weekly shared-meal that was held at our community-house, my home.

It is important to acknowledge reflexivity in this regard: I am deeply invested in The Table congregation and want it to succeed. I chose willing participants, who are positive enough about The Table to keep coming and be involved. This will lead to bias of positivity, but I hope has also enabled deeper reflection, honesty and transparency than would be possible with strangers or those less committed to the The Table. Each of those interviewed were willing volunteers, and no one that was asked turned down the opportunity to participate. Moschella believes a leader is well positioned to do ethnographic research because they are situated in liminal place, 'standing on the threshold of insider and outsider status,'<sup>154</sup> which enables them to both participate in faith practices but also critique and discern motivations.

As someone in the space between being an insider and outsider, relationships of trust had been established, which may have facilitated sharing of personal and spiritual experiences, as those interviewed had confidence they would be accepted and understood, enabling greater depth in data collection.<sup>155</sup> However, the disadvantage of being well-known, and also in a leadership role within the group, is that there is a high possibility of the participants giving answers I wanted to hear, rather than those that are true for them. To mitigate this, I often asked questions of repetition or clarification in order to ensure accurate meanings.

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<sup>151</sup> Swinton and Mowatt, *Practical Theology*, p. 57.

<sup>152</sup> Angrosino, *Doing Ethnographic and Observational Research*, p. 55.

<sup>153</sup> Sonya Corbin Dwyer and Jennifer L. Buckle, 'The Space Between: On Being an Insider-Outsider in Qualitative Research', *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 8.1 (2009), 54–63.

<sup>154</sup> Moschella, *Ethnography*, p. 37.

<sup>155</sup> Dwyer and Buckle, 'The Space Between', p. 58.

Dwyer & Buckle suggest that the most important personal characteristics of a researcher are the 'ability to be open, honest, deeply interested in the experience of one's research participants, and deeply committed to accurately and adequately representing their experience'.<sup>156</sup> In the context of this study, such communication can be described as *interpathic*, defined as: 'a place where people are free to be themselves and know that they will be accepted, a place where conflict can be expressed and resolved, and a place where diversity of opinion is honoured',<sup>157</sup> so that differences are valued and respected rather than ignored. As an example, communication style was especially important with participants using their second language, which was 5 out of 6 of those interviewed; and for those with a mild learning difficulty, assessed as 2 of those interviewed. In this, my experience and personal knowledge of participants were helpful, including speaking in simple, unambiguous English, and consideration of culturally-specific meanings.<sup>158</sup>

### Ethical Considerations:

A well explained and robust ethics policy ensures that participants in the research project know there is no coercion in their participation, so that they can be honest, transparent and open in their responses. With reference to the Ripon College Cuddesdon Research Ethics Policy and Guidance,<sup>159</sup> the following issues have been considered: safeguarding, informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity, and data protection. Ethics approval was sought and granted through Ripon College Cuddesdon.<sup>160</sup>

The key ethical consideration is that the research does no harm to those participating.<sup>161</sup> No children or vulnerable adults have been involved in this research. The researcher has a Diocesan DBS Disclosure that covers the placement situation, and the pastoral work at The Table is under supervision of the Incumbent of St John's Church, Southall. Permission to perform the research has been sought. The major consideration in this study is the risk to

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<sup>156</sup> Ibid., p. 59.

<sup>157</sup> Moschella, *Ethnography*, p. 34.

<sup>158</sup> Brian J. Hurn and Barry Tomalin, *Cross-Cultural Communication: Theory and Practice* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 84.

<sup>159</sup> 'Research Ethics Policy and Guidance' (Ripon College Cuddesdon, 2018) <<https://rcc.commonawards.org/course/view.php?id=129>> [accessed 9 July 2018].

<sup>160</sup> See Appendix, page 59

<sup>161</sup> Cameron and Duce, *Researching Practice in Ministry and Mission*, p. 38.

candidates if others consider they have changed their religion, and the consequent danger of physical or psychological violence, and thus the vital importance of maintaining anonymity and confidentiality.

Each participant interviewed has been informed in writing about the purpose and nature of the research,<sup>162</sup> their participation, and the potential availability and readership of the completed project, and that it will be conducted within the bounds of the Data Protection Act. They have given their informed consent to participation and electronic recording of the interview, through use of a consent form,<sup>163</sup> which they have each signed. Comfort and privacy for interviewees has been paramount. They were given options of where they would like to meet. Venues chosen were: a café, at St John's Church, and in their own home. Issues of confidentiality and security in each setting were considered and addressed.

Personal information used in the completed research has been anonymised, along with identifying information. In reporting the interview data, those interviewed will be identified using only a single letter: A-F. During the participant-observation, participants at The Table will be unaware that research is occurring to prevent bias from 'observer effect'.<sup>164</sup> Thus, it will be essential to ensure data collected is unidentifiable and any personal details completely anonymised.

A further concept of 'active participative ethics'<sup>165</sup> is considered by Ward. This is especially pertinent in this study as it concerns the dynamics of power and inequality in representing people and communities. As a female, Christian and part of the dominant Caucasian culture in Britain, it is important to be aware of my biases and assumptions in writing about people from other cultures and religious backgrounds.

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<sup>162</sup> See Appendix, page 63.

<sup>163</sup> See Appendix, page 65.

<sup>164</sup> Cameron and Duce, p. 51.

<sup>165</sup> Ward, *Introducing Practical Theology*, p. 161.

## Scope of the study

### a) Limitations

As a single-venue case-study, the scope of this research project is inevitably small-scale. In the constraints of time and word-limit, it has only been possible to interview six attendees of The Table. While they were chosen for being from diverse religious backgrounds, age-profiles, and from both genders, it is acknowledged that in such a small cohort, full diversity is not possible. Additionally, their views may not be generalisable or reflect those of all people from those demographic groupings. Ward states, 'it is not the qualitative researcher's responsibility to generalize. Their responsibility is to provide as rich and thick a description of the situation in hand as possible'.<sup>166</sup> However, it is hoped that this small-scale study may raise issues and insights that resonate beyond this single context. The possibility of this will be discussed in Chapter 6.

### b) Delimitations

In order to limit the scope of this study, I have chosen not to interview those with a Christian background attending The Table or members of the St John's Sunday-morning congregation, to find out their views on attendance of those from other faith backgrounds. I have also been unable to describe all types of inter-faith dialogue occurring in Southall, critique in-depth the heuristic typology for Christians engaging with other faith traditions, or discuss theories of conversion. Additionally, I will not be exploring sacramental theology as it relates to sharing meals, although this would be interesting to pursue as an additional avenue of reflection on The Table.

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<sup>166</sup> Ibid., p. 45.

## Chapter 4: Reporting data

Data has been collected from three sources. The most significant is from six interviews conducted with regular attendees of The Table whose backgrounds are in another faith tradition. In order to gain additional data, and to triangulate results to increase validity, participant observation was undertaken at one session of The Table, and attendance data for 12 months has been collected.<sup>167</sup>

Using this data, findings have been grouped into six themes: religious background; reason for attending; diversity; hospitality & welcome; dialogue; experience of God. The sources of data used to analyse each of these themes are presented in the Appendix.<sup>168</sup>

### 1. Religious background

The attendance data shows that at every gathering, with the exception of Christmas, the percentage of those from other faith backgrounds was over half, with Sikh and Muslim the majority. It is noted that this data does not give an indication about subsequent interest or commitment to the Christian faith. These nuances are shown more clearly in the interviews.

Those interviewed were from Hindu, Sikh and Muslim backgrounds, as described in Chapter 3.<sup>169</sup> Their past experience and current relation to that religion, however was diverse. Half of those responding had some form of contact with Christianity in early life: *'When we were in our childhood, we had a Father – Richard, came and show us films about Jesus'* (B) and *'When I was growing up in Malaysia, I studied at a Catholic school and they had Bible-studies then, and I took Bible-study for 6 years'* (F). Others had experienced dissatisfaction in their religion: *'I am brought up in a religious family, and I couldn't connect to my God in that way. So, I stopped. You know, it wasn't a sudden happen. Little by little I didn't follow Islam'* (C) and *'I don't feel close [in the Gurdwara] because I can't read Granth Sahib [Sikh holy book]. I only can read the Bible'* (B). For another, religion was described as a family tradition: *'The experience of the childhood is just like that: belief from our parents ... which gods they were praying, we were praying with them'* (A). In only one interview

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<sup>167</sup> See Appendix, page 67.

<sup>168</sup> Page 66.

<sup>169</sup> Page 26.



was strong commitment with their religion expressed: *'Stick to what your religion is, stick to what you want to be'* (E).

## 2. Reasons for coming to The Table

### a) The invitation:

Each of those interviewed mentioned about being invited, and all were previously attending either another group at St John's: *'We heard about The Table at Messy Church'* (A) or *'After I came to the church for Little Angels, and I know you and start knowing people ... You invited me for The Table, and then we came, all the family'* (C), or the community garden, which was started by members of the church: *'Why I came to The Table, because, as you know I am part of the community garden and they were talking about it'* (F). It is interesting to note that often there is an additional comment about God drawing people there.

### b) The format:

Those interviewed appreciated the informal setting: *'What was intriguing was, normally in a church setting, or a religious setting, it is normally very formal, and this one was very informal'* (F) and the opportunity for fellowship, discussion and prayer: *'Messy Church is more towards children's activity. But this was adults, and more religious things was getting discussed, knowing more people. All that was my gain to come and pray'* (A), and *'We prayed, we watched films and we talked ... it was nice, it was peaceful sitting together, talking about words of God. Yes, it was interesting'* (E).

## 3. Cultural diversity

The degree of cultural and religious diversity is a unique feature of Southall, bringing people of all backgrounds, all ethnicities, all ages together, overcoming barriers and finding joy in this difference. The vibrancy of this multi-cultural community is appreciated, especially by F, and leads him to feel a sense of belonging there:

*They had people from so many different backgrounds, different age-groups, ... I like the sense of community, people coming together ... Especially in Southall in the multi-ethnic groups here, it is so easy for people to, sort of divide, to separate into their little groups, right. I think what The Table has achieved is to overcome this, overcome these*

*barriers. And the barriers are on many levels because you've got the ethnic background, people from different nations, people from different religions, people from different genders, from different age-groups, you know. ... At The Table we've got a lot of children running around ... The sense of belonging, I think The Table it's a very unique phenomenon that would not have been able to happen in another setting out of Southall, you know ... that openness, and lack of discrimination, that lack of being judgemental.*

Analysis of the attendance data shows that those who are from Asian, Middle Eastern and African heritage always make up over half of those gathering, usually approximately two-thirds. It should be noted that each ethnic category of the data has great demographic diversity within it also.

#### 4. Welcome and hospitality

Those interviewed spoke eloquently about how they feel welcome at The Table, even from those who are not in their own religious building. A uses a descriptive metaphor of home: *'Whenever I come in, I feel like everyone's expecting me already ... I like this church, its activities, not only Table, but everything so welcoming. It just feels like our own home; we can get here any time.'*

Others likened it to family and community: *'The most important is, I feel they are my family ... What I feel about these people is like they are even closer than my relatives. Can you believe that? Really this is my feeling ... Here, everybody is very close friends. Very close relatives. Love each other'* (C) and *'We have become a community, you know, like a family. And as in any family, you want to know more about your brothers and sisters ... It's that welcome that makes people want to come back'* (D). The welcoming and inclusion is appreciated:

*Always someone or other, because I'm visually impaired will help me to a seat, or get me a cup of tea ... I think this is the beauty of The Table also which I've not stressed earlier, that it is very open and welcoming to people of different backgrounds, you know. Of different ethnic groups, different religious backgrounds and everybody is made to feel welcome and part of the whole. (F)*

When asked about whether they felt like strangers (outsiders), guests (invited in) or hosts (being part of making the gathering happen), some mentioned a sense of moving through these roles as they have become more familiar with the space. For example, C says: *'First times*

*when I came, I feel like a stranger, and I didn't feel comfortable, I didn't know English people well. I wasn't relaxed ... And now I think this is my house ... and I think everything here is mine ... I feel very comfortable and I help, I think everybody is my guest!*' All of those interviewed mentioned times when they had felt like hosts. Having a role seems to be significant to feeling like a host: [I'm] *'a host, yes because I like to help to serve, I like to do the dishes ... even the chairs at the end, putting them and tidy up at the end ... I like welcome everyone in there, whoever comes in'* (E).

On observing those who were interviewed in their roles during one session of The Table: D went straight to the kitchen and helped all evening there, drawing others in to help her too. E immediately approached a guest who was visiting and was very effusive in welcoming her. E also helped F, who has a disability to access the activities throughout the evening. A felt confident, when sitting alone with her children, to move to sit with others she knew and conversed with them for the rest of the evening.

Those interviewed also spoke about bringing others along and wanting more people to experience what they had found at The Table, expanding their hosting role: *'We also want to welcome some more people in there as well. I always keep asking some other person, 'why don't you come to Table' ... We are happy in the group but we want more'* (A) and *'You know H, I'm trying to get her to come, I've known her for many years'* (D).

The attendance data shows that 15 new guests came during the year.

## 5. Dialogue

This way of learning was appreciated by each interviewee: that everyone has a voice, is able to share their views, ask questions, share feelings and learn from each other, for example: *'Here everybody can talk. Everybody can share. You cannot see in Muslim communities. Only one person talks. Even in a group of women, only one woman talks, and everybody should listen. Here at The Table, you can see everybody can talk, everybody can ask, everybody can express her experience'* (C), and *'Everybody wants to give their idea, everybody wants to show 'This is how I see it, this is how I do it' and when you start a conversation or discussion, you notice everybody has something to say, and everybody has a different take on it. Which is interesting'* (D).

Through the Gospel stories that have been presented at The Table, two of the interviewees share profound insights about learning about Jesus as God with us, who endured suffering for us, and coming closer to Jesus:

*In Jesus life in Bible we can see everywhere he goes, he leaves an example behind, he leaves a lesson behind for others to follow. That's what I likes more. Then we feel like: if God lives a life like that, then why don't we. We can keep liking to follow it. ... In our religion, the standard which our gods is, is too high so we can't reach there ... We can't follow the god that way, because he is something else. He is quite divine, you know. We can't reach there. That's a difference I find between Jesus' life and our gods. That's the point, you know. I find that. Jesus walks just like a common man, and he lived all his life as a common man. And then he set examples for all of us. So, we can believe that, we can also do that. If as a common man he can do that, so why can't we do that. (A)*

*I am quite familiar with a lot of the stories, but I'm getting totally fresh insights, you know. And I'm discovering Jesus in a new light ... I've learned that Jesus, he went – goodness - he endured so much for the sake of the people. What we normally, human beings, thinking this shouldn't happen to anybody, he went through that, you know. Being homeless, being rejected, being a refugee, you know, being ostracised and tortured. And even being mocked. And betrayed by his followers. So, I think this is the beauty of The Table in the sense that we are exploring Jesus on a very beautiful level, in the sense that I would say I have come closer to him, and I can understand why his message resonates with millions of people around the world. (F)*

## 6. Experiencing God

### a) In thankfulness and prayer:

Learning to be thankful to God has been significant for most of the interviewees. For example, C says: *'I came and here for the first time I saw how Christians pray, how they are thankful of God, and I didn't say 'thank you' to God [before that], and it was very peaceful, and it was very, very nice to me to sing thanks to God. I said to myself 'why I never say thanks to God?'* Prayer is very important for each of those interviewed, for example A explains: *'The thing that makes me coming every time is, I learned how - actually I wasn't have any knowledge how to pray actually ... I am learning now to pray for someone, people, myself and then I can see the prayers getting answered, and everything.'*

The surprise that God listens to our prayers and answers them is also expressed by B: *'I started doing my prayers ... and I felt 'Oh my God, that God is hearing my prayers ... I like the prayers, and the singing and I like bringing the prayer-sheet with me home so in the morning I can pray with the paper.'*

b) Experiences of God at The Table:

All interviewees spoke of experiences of God. A describes this as *'the fruits of the Holy Spirit': 'I experience God more closer. I am getting some of the fruits of the Holy Spirit as well in my life. I am more confident, more satisfied with what I have.'* B describes this as *'God coming near to her,'* and D as *'a friend who's with me,'* C as her *'heart full up with love': 'When I came to the church, in Little Angels and The Table, I started knowing Jesus ... It was like a hole in my heart that's full up with that. And then little by little, when I knew Jesus, then I realised my heart is full up with love. And little by little everything happened to me. I found myself in the middle of the way!'*

F details God being in all aspects of The Table. He also speaks about an experience of being uplifted by being there:

*I experience God in the boisterous laughter, play of the children. I experience God in the people sitting around and talking to each other. I experience God in the hymns that we sing ... I also experience God because to look at the food that people have brought to share, and that's part of God's blessing. But it's also very uplifting. I've always left The Table ... there's a Sikh saying ... 'the art of living uplifting' ... I think that should be one of your main points at The Table. I've always left energised and feeling positive.*

The implications and analysis of this data is discussed in the following chapters.

## Chapter 5 – Data Analysis

The data collected and presented in the previous chapter will now be analysed and related to the literature and theological reflections in Chapters 1 and 2. The analysis will lead to the fourth step in the Pastoral Cycle: how we should respond in the light of what has been discovered.

In considering the research question:

- What is the role of the local church in a multi-faith community?

Drawing on the literature and data collected, in reference to the case-study of The Table, I have found that the local church can be a place of radical hospitality. Modelling God's generous welcome, the church can provide the space for *mission as encounter* to be enacted. Here people who are strangers meet each other, and rather than erasing difference, bring the fullness of who they are to the encounter. The next step is dialogue, as people listen, hear and engage creatively with each other: gifts are shared and mutual transformation can occur. In this setting, proclamation is also possible: proclamation by God to others but also to ourselves. This mutual proclamation is a two-way conversation, involving listening, sharing ideas and working together, resulting in mutual enrichment.<sup>170</sup> Thus the church can retain 'unashamed ownership of the Christian story'<sup>171</sup> while being open to hear, learn and be challenged by the faith of others. It is in this diverse space that faithful improvisation of the gospel story can occur.

Bevans & Schroeder add another nuance, describing mission as *prophetic* dialogue, as it imagines hopeful alternatives to brokenness, sin and injustice.<sup>172</sup> One expression of this creative missiology is interfaith dialogue,<sup>173</sup> exhibiting the values of faith, hope and love.<sup>174</sup> For example, here F expresses a strengthening of his faith, hope in a way forward, and love expressed as belonging through interaction with the diverse community of The Table:

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<sup>170</sup> Hedges and Race, *Christian Approaches*, p. 156.

<sup>171</sup> Ross and Smith, *Missional Conversations*, p. 54.

<sup>172</sup> Kritzinger, *Mission in Prophetic Dialogue*, p. 6; Bevans and Schroeder, *Prophetic Dialogue*.

<sup>173</sup> Bevans and Schroeder, *Constants in Context*, p. 349.

<sup>174</sup> Barnes, *Theology and the Dialogue of Religions*, p. 9; Gaston, *Faith, Hope and Love*.

*By attending The Table it's just enhanced my faith, my belief in God ... it has reinforced my idea that faith and spirituality is the way forward, and religion actually holds people back ... every time I meet people [Christians] and they ask questions, every time it has broadened my understanding of the Sikh faith ... I [experience] a sense of belonging: I can sit at The Table and feel part of it and never, ever [someone says to] me 'oh you are a Sikh, you've got a turban and beard, and what are you doing here'.*

Continuing with the dialogical journey leads to the prophetic praxis of reciprocal hospitality.<sup>175</sup> A metaphor suggested here is *breathing*, as the giving and receiving of gifts are united in one mechanism.<sup>176</sup> However, to examine dialogical hospitality at The Table, I have chosen the metaphor presented by Volf: the four-fold pattern of *embrace*: opening the arms, waiting, closing the arms, and opening the arms again.<sup>177</sup> I will use this structure to answer the second research question:

- Why are members of Sikh, Hindu and Muslim communities becoming part of The Table?

#### 1. Opening the arms: a movement of invitation

Those interviewed described their openness to attend The Table as: *curiosity* and *intrigue*. It can be noted that there is a double invitation: firstly, by Christians they had met at other groups: Messy Church, Little Angels parent-and-toddler group, or a community garden, and who had personally invited them to The Table. For example, B says: [The leaders] *'asked me to come and see ... I was helping in the church at the toddler group.'* This resonates strongly with the Gospel call of Jesus to Andrew, inviting him to follow, saying 'Come and see' (John 1:39); and then Phillip's invitation to Nathanael to 'come and see' and meet Jesus (John 1:46). Here we can find the double invitation: both by Jesus, and by fellow disciples: 'Come and see.' So, the second invitation is by Jesus, the Holy Spirit at work in preparation or prompting. Three of those interviewed had contact with Christianity early in life: B, D & F. C had a crisis experience that led her to the church: *'I said to myself: 'Better go to church to cry,'* even though, as a Muslim, she had not entered a church building before.

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<sup>175</sup> Bevans and Ross, *Mission on the Road to Emmaus*, pp. 67–68.

<sup>176</sup> Dulles, *Models of the Church*, p. 220.

<sup>177</sup> See Chapter 2, page 18; Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, p. 145.

To deepen the research and understand mutuality further, it would be interesting here to interview more members of St John's Church to hear their experiences, including challenges, of becoming open to people from different faith backgrounds. We hear a little of the journey of this from D:

*I personally don't think that I'm needed, but you have made me feel I'm needed, so that makes me want to come ... I feel I'm an important host, if I may say, only because I can gel with both [Christians and those of other faiths] ... you know what's surprising is the ladies that have joined, I feel I have an affinity with them.*

In her interview D describes how she made a commitment to follow Christ, coming from a Hindu background about 20 years previously. Here we get the sense that through opening to others, she is experiencing a surprising new direction in her faith perspective.

## 2. Waiting: creating a space

Members of The Table leadership team made a video for the Diocese. D spoke about it: *'There was an interview ... and would you believe it! It was like once I was in there it felt like the Holy Spirit speaking to me because it was none of my own ideas ... it all come just flowing.'* In the video she describes The Table: *'I think that's the great opportunity of The Table, it's just a space for people to come ... It's a friendly place as well, there's always a welcome ... Everyone's welcome at The Table.'*<sup>178</sup>

On coming to The Table, all those interviewed for this study said they were welcomed, and welcomed others, using metaphors of home, family and community. B speaks of the mechanics of welcome: *'The people who organise The Table, they make you feel really comfortable and welcome, and they don't like just ignore you, they come and greet you and talk to you.'* This willingness to welcome was also noted during the participant observation. Henri Nouwen describes this as 'creation of a free space'<sup>179</sup> where people become friends and the space allows for change to occur.

This change may begin by finding The Table as a place of prayer, for example: 'I [like] the prayers, the singing, and I like bringing the prayer-sheet home with me' (B), and a place of learning: *'I like discussing on topics, Jesus, and I like the main moral behind all the stories'* (A). This resonates

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<sup>178</sup> 'The Table | Centre for Church Planting & Growth' <<http://www.centreforchurchplanting.org/video/the-table/>> [accessed 6 September 2018].

<sup>179</sup> Nouwen, *Reaching Out*, p. 68.



with Paul Bayes vision of Jesus as the poor man: 'we are called by him to pray, and read, and learn at the holy table'.<sup>180</sup>

Corrie suggests that intercultural interactions in themselves allow a creative space.<sup>181</sup> The attendance data shows that The Table is such a space where people of diverse cultures gather. The interviews suggest that this vibrancy is appreciated. Moschella has called this *interpathy*: a community where difference is valued and respected.<sup>182</sup> In this space she suggests that the gospel can be improvised, perhaps meaning fleshed-out in a community. F, especially, talks about this, of The Table bringing ethnic communities together, overcoming barriers of background, age, genders and religion. He concludes: [There is] '*openness and lack of discrimination, lack of being judgemental, a sense of belonging, I think. The Table it's a very unique phenomenon.*'

Improvisation could also mean creating a format formed around, and shaped by, those who attend, for example from F: '*I think what actually first sparked my interest was that it had a bit of everything ... there's craft involved, writing involved, you know ... singing of hymns, there is storytelling, and of course there's food.*' Hershberger described this sharing of food together as 'playing the drama of life',<sup>183</sup> which speaks of creative improvisation, especially when that food is cooked and shared by all who come, as it is at The Table.

Sudworth writes of the importance of giving space to hear people;<sup>184</sup> the reciprocity of dialogue takes time and space. As two people say: '*Here at The Table, you can see everybody can talk, everybody can ask, everybody can express her experience*' (C) and '*We sat and talked about our feelings. We let out our feelings. Because I think in the Indian Gurdwara, nobody listens what's in your heart exactly*' (B). In this space where people are welcomed and listened to, is the possibility of radical welcome, a place without compulsion, but where 'ongoing and continuous conversion, to be more conformed to Jesus Christ'<sup>185</sup> among all members is possible. There is also an echo of the conversation of Triune God, from 'the beginning ... [*when*] the earth was formless and

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<sup>180</sup> Bayes, *The Table*, p. 11.

<sup>181</sup> John Corrie, 'The Promise of Intercultural Mission', *Transformation*, 31.4 (2014), p. 299.

<sup>182</sup> Moschella, *Ethnography*, p. 36.

<sup>183</sup> Hershberger, *A Christian View of Hospitality*, p. 104.

<sup>184</sup> Sudworth, *Distinctly Welcoming*, p. 58.

<sup>185</sup> Anthony J. Gittins, *Living Mission Interculturally: Faith, Culture, and the Renewal of Praxis* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2015), p. 185.

empty [space] ... and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters' (Genesis 1:2) and God spoke the creative Word and the universe was formed.

### 3. Closing the arms: an action of reciprocity

As people enter into the embrace of this creative space of The Table, and *'everybody is made to feel welcome and part of the whole'* (F), there is a sense of reciprocity, of mutual sharing. B and E say this is what first brought them to The Table: *'Somebody said to make some parathas [Indian bread], and bring it to The Table. So, I said 'OK, why not?' ... So, I made the parathas and I took them there. So, we got together and we came'* (E) and *'I basically came to do the prayers, and I came for my interview' [to give her testimony]* (B).

Within the dynamics of hospitality there are intrinsically strangers, guests and hosts.<sup>186</sup> As discussed in Chapter 4, some people mentioned a sense of moving through these roles as they have become more familiar with the space at the Table. None of those who were interviewed said they feel like a stranger now, they all mentioned feeling like a host, at least at times. For example: *'Once I had a role like a host as well, when I shared my story. At that time, it can be a role like a hosting'* (A) and *'I've never felt like an outsider ... Because everybody takes turns, so there's no one host ... No, I don't think I am a guest. I think I'm part of The Table'* (F). We can conclude that to feel like a host, requires a role. D especially understands this dynamic and tries to draw people in to help, in order to welcome them. This was clear during the participant observation, when she invited people to help in the kitchen:

*I try to draw them in and make them feel part of it. And the best way to do that is to say: 'Come help with the washing up or come help with this. I need your help' and that makes them feel needed.*

This role of host taken by those from other backgrounds yet in a church building is fascinating, because as Christians there, we would expect to be the host. This may lead us to a place of discomfort, as we consider what roles we are willing to let guests take? However, as Ross suggests, this reversal of roles opens us to prophetic dialogue, as the stranger brings a gift to

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<sup>186</sup> Anthony J. Gittins, *Ministry at the Margins: Strategy and Spirituality for Mission* (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 2002), pp. 122–31.

us.<sup>187</sup> What gifts do they bring? We find examples of the three categories suggested by Wells<sup>188</sup> in the interviews:

- Scrutiny - enabling clarification of traditions:

For example, A draws theological comparisons with her Hindu religion from hearing stories of Jesus at The Table, which also remind Christians of the wonder of Jesus' incarnation and our call to follow him: *'In our religion, the standard which our gods is, is too high so we can't reach there... Jesus walks just like a common man, and he lived all his life as a common man. And then he set examples for all of us ... If as a common man he can do that, so why can't we do that?'*

- Faith - discovering unexpected wisdom.

F gives a wonderful insight about Jesus' way of communicating, which challenges our methods of presenting teaching: *'This Table is almost recreating a setting like how Jesus would have preached because he wouldn't have just preached to people, because there would have been questions being asked, you know. 'Master, what is this, why have you said this' or whatever ... And I think the more I learn about from the Bible, the stories of the scriptures, its actually enhancing my faith.'*

- Company - growing fruits in unexpected places:

A, a Hindu, explains about experiencing the Holy Spirit: *'I experience God more closer. I am getting some of the fruits of the Holy Spirit as well in my life. I am more confident, more satisfied with what I have.'*

These movements of faith within those from other faith backgrounds, if we allow them, can illuminate our space, so we see our Christian practices through fresh eyes, which challenges and broadens our view of the faith we profess, not through syncretism but through fresh revelation of God's grace and blessing.<sup>189</sup> This embrace of the other is described by Bretherton as conversion (perhaps more clearly described as *transformation* in an interfaith context) of the host to an economy of blessing.<sup>190</sup>

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<sup>187</sup> Bevans and Ross, *Mission on the Road to Emmaus*, p. 69.

<sup>188</sup> Wells, *Incarnational Mission*, p. 97.

<sup>189</sup> Palmer, *The Company of Strangers*, p. 131.

<sup>190</sup> Bretherton, *Hospitality as Holiness*, p. 133.

#### 4. Opening the arms again: allowing freedom

This is the movement that prevents coercion or control, as it allows freedom of movement into or out of the space by all participants. Having been present in embrace with the other, Volf states that this movement enables each to preserve 'its own identity, enriched by the traces that the presence of the other has left'.<sup>191</sup> However, the mission tension of letting go of control of the outcome, may be the most difficult transition. What will happen next, and will the outworking remain faithful to the gospel? This is faith, to trust this into God's hands, to trust the working of the Holy Spirit in people's lives. Signs of the Holy Spirit at work at The Table include:

- An experience of Jesus' love and desire to follow him:

*'When I came to the church, in Little Angels and The Table, I started knowing Jesus ... It was like a hole in my heart that's full up with that. And then little by little, when I knew Jesus, then I realised my heart is full up with love. And little by little everything happened to me. I found myself in the middle of the way. I don't know I am following him!'* (C)

- A realisation of Jesus' presence in prayer:

*'In our religion, I don't pray every day to my temple in my house because we need to have shower, we need to get fresh, we need to get properly fresh body and soul and then we can only go there near the temple and light the lamp if we have just showered and then goes there without shoes and everything ... Rules in Hinduism is strict. We can't do in the 3 days [while menstruating], we can't even enter the temple, we can't even go closer to our house temple, we need to close the doors of our temple in those days. We can't do any pooja ceremony, no lamp to the god on that day. So too many restrictions ... But in praying to Jesus is easier ... So, we can pray walking down the road and we can pray everywhere.'* (A)

- Noticeably changed lives, with experiences of peace, joy and love:

*'Everybody who knows me: in Iran, here, my family, everybody said wow, because 'I'm totally changed. I was very anxious and now I am good'* (C) and [My family] *'think I have changed a lot. Before I was very quiet and depressed, but now they see the*

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<sup>191</sup> Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, p. 145.

*change and they're really happy with me, that I'm going out and helping people and doing all these good things' (B).*

Also overflowing, in wanting to let others know about what they have found:  
*'I want to draw more people to The Table ... I would give leaflets out everywhere, so people would know ... [Why?] Because they'll find God there, believe me!' (B)*

- Encouragement in gifts of the Holy Spirit, even while remaining within their own religion:

*'It helps anyone to be a good person, a good Sikh. Yes. Because it's telling you ... when you are good and human, you have already found God, you see' (E) and 'By attending The Table it's just enhanced my faith, my belief in God ... it has broadened my understanding of the Sikh faith'. (F)*

## Chapter 6 – Response

In reflecting on the research questions posed during this study:

- What is the role of the local church in a multi-faith community?
- Why are members of Sikh, Hindu and Muslim communities becoming part of The Table?

This case-study demonstrates that the local church can be a place of radical hospitality in a diverse multi-faith community. The Table is an example of a transformative, Jesus-centred, creative space of worship, prayer and learning, to which all are welcome. Within this space prophetic dialogue can occur, as each person comes as they are, to meet with others in an attitude of listening, learning, and openness to receive from the other. In this, we follow the example of Jesus, who dined and ministered ‘to all the wrong people’,<sup>192</sup> and many were healed and saved through these encounters, as they experienced his contagious holiness.

Lesslie Newbigin, missiologist, writes that the local church should be a hermeneutic of the gospel, as ‘a congregation of men and women who believe [the gospel] and live by it’.<sup>193</sup> Encounter with those of other faiths is not dependant on the Christian faith being compromised or worship becoming syncretistic; rather the wisdom of others can be a means of grace that challenges, sharpens and deepens our lived faith as disciples of Jesus. From this experiential reality, the gospel can be creatively improvised in word and action through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

The experience of The Table can be described using the metaphor of embrace: where all peoples are welcomed and the gift of difference is celebrated.<sup>194</sup> The sequence of the embrace begins from the open arms of invitation: a double-movement from members of the church and from Christ. Strangers are welcomed and experience a sense of belonging. Secondly, in waiting a creative space is made, where there is encounter with each other and the Word, in dialogue. Here improvisation of the gospel includes: creating an inclusive intercultural community evidenced in eating a shared-meal together, openness and dialogue, telling stories, listening and loving each other, praying together, and experiencing the Holy

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<sup>192</sup> Nicholas T. Wright, p. 431.

<sup>193</sup> Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: W.B. Eerdmans, 1989), p. 226.

<sup>194</sup> Russell, Clarkson and Ott, *Just Hospitality*, p. 55.

Spirit at work. The resulting reciprocity of mutual embrace, evidenced in a sense of belonging and blurring of stranger-guest-host relationships, allows the creation of a contextual gospel, which effects transformation in both host and guest, church and community. Finally, the courage of freedom is needed in opening the arms and trusting the work of the Holy Spirit. The characteristics of this two-way embrace include vulnerability, mutual respect and bold humility, which host the mystery of God. The embrace may then be described as a sacrament of peace.<sup>195</sup>

It is in this interpathic space of embrace that the riotous diversity of persons and cultures within the community can begin to express the fullness of Christ (Ephesians 4:13). Echoes of the joy of those experiencing this in Southall can be heard here:

*I think the best is, we can see different people: Muslims, Hindu, Christians, Sikh and this is interesting that church can bring all other communities and all the religions get together and they can meet each other, can talk, enjoy being together and talking about everything and listening to Bible stories. (C)*

Newbigin suggests that such a community, centred around Christ and committed to prayer, will explode with love, joy and hope.<sup>196</sup> This overflow of the life of Jesus is attractive, and D explains: *'The fact that I see so many different communities, people of different cultures and nationalities, who are being attracted, you know, and wanting to know more and that's what amazes me, it amazes me!'*

In response, together we may experience a foretaste of the eschatological Great Banquet:

On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples,  
a banquet of aged wine – the best of meats and the finest of wines ...

In that day they will say,

'Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us.

This is the LORD, we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation.'

(Isaiah 25: 6 & 9)

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<sup>195</sup> Dyrness, *Emerging Voices*, p. 39.

<sup>196</sup> Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, p. 116.

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# Appendix

## Sermon for the Installation Service 8th Bishop of Liverpool<sup>197</sup>

*So there's this table.*

*It's a simple table but it's well made, because it was made by a carpenter. The guy who made it is a poor man, but he's generous. He offers a place at the table to anyone who wants to sit and eat. This is a table that started in one place but now it can stretch down every street, and it can go into every home, if people want to sit there.*

*It's a table for meeting. It's a table for talking around. It's a table for laughing. Most of all it's a table for eating. It's a level table. Maybe it's not a round table. Maybe it's a square table, so that people can look directly at one another as they sit there. Can look each other in the eye as they sit there, beside the poor man who made it. But it's not a high table. You don't have to qualify to sit there. It's for anyone. And the poor man sits there, and wherever people sit, he sits beside them. You can sit there too, with the poor man, and look across the table, at people you like and at people you don't like, at people who agree with you and at people who disagree with you.*

*Sometimes it's a table for thumping. Sometimes it's a table for signing treaties and for making peace. Always the poor man sits beside you.*

*Most of all it's a table for eating. You can't eat alone at this table. You can't buy a meal at this table. You can't buy a ticket to sit here. Anyone can sit here. It's a table like a table at a wedding. You sit with guests you never knew, and you find out about them, and they become your friends. And the table is spread with a beautiful fair white linen cloth and if you come here, like any pilgrim coming into a new house, they will clothe you in the most beautiful clothes and they will make you welcome.*

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<sup>197</sup> Paul Bayes, 'Sermon for the Installation Service 8th Bishop of Liverpool' <<http://www.liverpool.anglican.org/userfiles/files/Bishops/Bishop%20Paul/Sermons%20and%20speeches/Inaugural%20sermon%2015-11-14.pdf>> [accessed 23 May 2019].

*And if you eat the food served here you will never be hungry again. Because the poor man offers the food at this table. And the poor man will serve you, and the poor man's hands are wounded when he serves you, because the food came at a price, and he paid the price.*

*The poor man's name is Jesus, who though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor so that through his poverty we might become rich. And if you sit at his table, he will feed you and he will ask you to feed others; he will serve you and he will ask you to serve others; he will love you and he will ask you to love others.*

## Sample Semi-Structured Interview Questions

1. How long have you been coming to The Table, and why did you come along the first time?
2. What do you like most at The Table? Why do you keep coming?
3. Can you tell me times when you have played these roles at The Table:
  - a. Stranger
  - b. Guest
  - c. Host
  - d. Other

How did you feel in each of these roles? Which role do you like best and why?

How do you feel you contribute to The Table?

4. What is your family's religious background? Can you tell me one experience you had of God in your childhood?
5. Do you experience anything at The Table that you don't find in the Institution of your own faith?
6. Have you come to know anything more about Jesus at The Table? What does this mean to you?
7. How do you experience God at The Table?
8. Do you have any thoughts or ideas about the future of The Table?

**RIPON COLLEGE CUDDESDON COMMON AWARDS RESEARCH ETHICS APPROVAL FORM**

**SECTION A**

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TEI/Formational Centre: CMS

Module name and code: TMM42360 Dissertation

Assignment title: **All are Welcome Here: the local church and radical hospitality in a multi-ethnic community**

**SECTION B**

INITIAL DECLARATION

This investigation will include research involving children or young people under 16: No

This investigation will include research involving young people aged 16-18: No

This investigation will include research involving adults: Yes

This investigation will include research involving vulnerable adults: No

NB This form covers research involving human participants through the use of questionnaires, interviews, focus groups or observations of activity. Separate advice and permission must be sought for any research activity not covered under these headings.

All students must complete all sections of this form. You should include with your application a copy of your proposed Consent Form and Information Sheet for participants.

Completed applications should be submitted to the Academic Administrator:

[melody.njoki@rcc.ac.uk](mailto:melody.njoki@rcc.ac.uk)

## **SECTION C**

Please answer all the following questions.

Where Yes/No is requested, give details if answering Yes (or if necessary to explain No)

### **1. What are the aims of this study/project?**

The aim of this research is to explore the role of the local church in welcome, hospitality, and evangelism in a multi-ethnic, multi-faith community. It will look in-depth at one model of church community that has attracted people from other faith backgrounds and explore how this setting is encouraging people in their faith journeys, and whether this involves moving toward Jesus. The reciprocal aspect of the host, guest, stranger relationship will be explored, and the gifts that those from other faith backgrounds bring the church will be considered.

### **2. How will the study be carried out? (e.g. interviews, questionnaires, observation)**

Please include copies of any questionnaires with your application

- participant observation
- semi-structured interviews
- attendance data

### **3. How many participants will be recruited, and by what criteria will they be selected?**

Up to 6 women or men that attend the church community regularly. Participants will be from Sikh, Muslim or Hindu backgrounds. They will be regular attenders and be committed in some way to the gathering.

## **SAFEGUARDING**

**4. Does the study involve participants who are under 18 or particularly vulnerable or unable to give informed consent?**

No

**5. Have any safeguarding issues have you identified? If yes, provide details of the arrangements you will make to ensure safeguarding good practice.**

No

**6. Will the study involve discussion of sensitive topics not usually addressed in your placement work?**

No

**7. Could the study induce psychological stress, anxiety, or cause harm or negative consequences to the participants beyond the risks encountered in normal life?**

No

**8. Will financial inducements (other than reasonable expenses) be offered to participants?**

No

**9. Do you foresee any other particular ethical issues?**

Yes: The issue of risk to candidates if others consider they have changed their religion, and the danger of physical or psychological violence this could cause will be kept in mind, and thus the importance of anonymity and confidentiality.

### **INFORMED CONSENT**

10. Will you ensure informed consent from individual participants? (please include a copy of your information sheet and consent form with your application)

Yes

11. Do you need to seek permission from any institution or service-providers?

Yes: Permission to perform the research will be sought from the incumbent of St John's Church, and she will be kept informed of the progress of the research, and any concerning situations.

12. Will any interviews be audio or video recorded?

Yes

### **CONFIDENTIALITY AND ANONYMITY**

12. How will confidentiality of individual participants be maintained?

All data will be anonymised. The interviewees names will be changed to provide confidentiality, and I will aim to remove any identifying information.

Issues of confidentiality and security in the setting chosen for the interview will be considered and addressed.

13. How will the confidentiality of the placement or context be maintained?

The locality of the placement will be used within the research, because it provides important contextual information. However, the exact location and the name of the church and Fresh Expression gathering will not be disclosed.

14. Who will have access to the data gathered?

The researcher and supervisor

15. Who will have access to the final piece of work?

A copy of the final piece of work is made available in the CMS library, which can be accessed by registered students.

### **DATA PROTECTION**

16. How will data be collected (e.g. recording, written notes)

Interviews will be recorded, and written notes may be made.

Written notes will be taken during observations.

17. How, and for how long will the data be stored?

Until the final marks for the dissertation are received.

18. I confirm that data for this project will be handled in accord with the TEI Data Protection Policy and IT Acceptable Use Policy.

**SECTION D (Supervisor(s))**

**Placement Supervisor (where applicable)**

Name: Dr Cathy Ross

Address: Ripon College, Cuddesdon

I have read this form and support the student in their proposed study

Signature: .....Date:

**Module Supervisor**

Name: Dr Cathy Ross

Address: Ripon College, Cuddesdon

I have read this form and support the student in their proposed study

Signature: .....Date:

**SECTION E (Student)**

I agree to conduct this study in line with the ethical guidelines laid down in the document 'Common Awards Research Ethics Policy'.

Signature: .....Date:

ETHICAL APPROVAL HAS BEEN GRANTED: November 2018

COMMENTS:  
CONDITIONS (if any):

Signed:

Name:

Role in TEI:

Date

## Research Participant Information Sheet

I am studying an MA Course at Ripon College, Cuddesdon. To complete this course, I am writing a Dissertation that uses qualitative research methods. I would like to ask you to be part of my study, but you have a free choice whether you would like to do so or not. Please read the following information carefully so you understand what it means to be involved. You may wish to discuss it with others. For any further information or questions about my research, please contact me using the details below. A full copy of Ripon College, Cuddesdon's Research Ethics Policy can be viewed on request.

### **1. Study Title:**

'All are Welcome Here: the local church and radical hospitality in a multi-ethnic community'

### **2. Brief information on the aims and purpose of the project:**

The aim of this research is to explore the role of the local church in our multi-ethnic, multi-faith community. I will be taking The Table as an example and looking in-depth at what attracts people from other faith backgrounds to come along. I want to explore how this setting is encouraging people in their faith journeys, and whether this involves understanding more about Jesus. I will be looking at the different roles of those who come along and asking what gifts those from other faith backgrounds bring to the church.

### **3. Why you have been chosen and who else will take part:**

I have chosen 6 people to take part who were brought up in a Sikh, Hindu or Muslim family, and have come along regularly and are committed in some way to The Table gathering.

### **4. Informed consent:**

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary: you are free to decide whether, or not, to take part. If you decide you do wish to take part, you are free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason, although this will be difficult once the study has been written up. If you decide to take part you will be asked to sign a consent form, and you will be given a copy of it to keep.

### **5. Information about what the research will involve:**

I will interview each of those taking part individually. The interview will take about 1 hour. You will be able to think about what you have said, and we can talk about it again if you want to. I will also ask if you can do a very short creative piece: this may be written or made through talking together. It will be in the form of a prayer, or expression of worship to God.



**6. Information about any risks or benefits for the participant:**

Risks - I do not foresee many risks for you in undertaking this research. If we talk about anything that makes you feel uncomfortable, you can stop the interview at any point, or we can talk and pray about it further at a more informal time. If you would like to talk to someone else, Rev Anna Poulson is available. I am aware that some of your family and friends may not think it is a good thing that you come to the church, so I will keep the research anonymous: your name will not be mentioned, and I will try to ensure you cannot be identified.

Benefits – I hope the results of this study will help other churches in multi-ethnic communities to feel more confident to welcome their neighbours from other faith communities. Your participation will give ideas and help this to happen. It will also help all of us at The Table to welcome other people from our community better.

**7. Confidentiality:**

Only myself and my supervisor, who's details are below, will know your name, that you have participated, and see the transcripts of the original interviews. When I write the report, your name will not be mentioned, and I will try to ensure you are not able to be identified. I will be mentioning that this research has been conducted in Southall, but the exact location and name of St John's Church and The Table, will not be used. Myself and my supervisor are the only ones who will know this detail. If you would like to read the report before it is submitted, you will be able to do so.

**8. Data:**

With your consent I will record the interviews on my phone. I will then transcribe it. This information will be used when I write-up the study. The completed dissertation will be submitted to my college to be marked. Once I have received my mark, I will destroy all the interview data. A copy of the dissertation will be placed in the college library, which is only open to registered students. I will not make the information more widely available without asking you.

**9. Further information**

My contact details:            Idina Dunmore  
  c/o St John's Church, Southall

My supervisor's contact details: Dr Cathy Ross  
  Ripon College, Cuddesdon

Many thanks for considering taking part in this study. If you decide to participate, you will be given a copy of the information sheet and a copy of the signed, dated consent form attached.

## Ripon College Cuddesdon Consent Form

**Participant Identification Code:**

**Title of Project:** All are Welcome Here: the local church and radical hospitality in a multi-ethnic community

**Student Name:** Idina Dunmore

**Supervisor Name:** Dr Cathy Ross

**Please read and sign:**

I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet about the above-named project and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

I understand that participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time prior to the research project being written up, without giving a reason.

I agree to the interview being audio recorded.

I agree to take part in this project.

Name of participant: .....

Signature: ..... Date: .....

Name of student: .....

Signature: ..... Date: .....

**Participants will be given a copy of this signed, dated consent form. The original signed consent form will be kept by the student.**

## Table of Data Sources

	Theme	Source of Data
1	Religious background	Interviews Attendance data
2	Reasons for Attending	Interviews
3	Cultural Diversity	Interviews Attendance data
4	Welcome & Hospitality	Interviews Observation Attendance data
5	Dialogue	Interviews
6	Experiencing God: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In Thankfulness &amp; Prayer</li> <li>• Experiences of God at The Table</li> </ul>	Interviews

## The Table Attendance Data: May 2018- April 2019

MONTH	TOTAL NO.	NO. ADULTS	NO. CHILDREN	ETHNICITY - adults only					RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND <sup>a</sup> - adults only						GUESTS <sup>b</sup>
				SOUTH-ASIAN <sup>c</sup>	WHITE EUROPEAN <sup>d</sup>	IRANIAN /MIDDLE EAST	AFRICAN	OTHER <sup>e</sup>	CHRISTIAN	SIKH	HINDU	MUSLIM	BUDDHIST	OTHER FAITH <sup>f</sup>	
MAY	48	32	16	16	11	4	1	0	12	10	3	6	1	63 %	0
JUNE	56	41	15	16	17	4	2	2	20	6	5	8	2	51%	1
JULY	54	38	16	.12	14	8	2	2	16	6	3	10	3	57%	4
SEPT	48	31	17	17	9	4	0	1	13	7	3	6	2	58%	0
OCT	56	34	22	20	9	3	1	1	11	13	4	5	1	68%	1
NOV	63	40	23	20	10	6	3	1	16	12	3	7	2	60%	3
DEC	60	38	22	16	16	3	1	2	23	8	2	4	1	39%	2
JAN	49	34	15	15	11	5	2	1	17	5	3	7	2	50%	0
FEB	48	30	18	13	11	4	1	1	13	5	2	7	3	57%	2
MARCH	66	40	26	18	13	6	2	1	17	6	7	8	2	58%	1
APRIL	48	28	20	15	10	2	1	0	12	5	3	5	3	57%	1

<sup>a</sup> **Religious background** refers to the religious faith of the family in which the person was born

<sup>b</sup> **Guests** are those who have been invited by regular members of The Table. Christians who came to visit the ministry have been excluded.

<sup>c</sup> **South-Asian** is defined as those ethnically from India, Pakistan, Nepal or Sri-Lanka, regardless of birth-country

<sup>d</sup> **White European** is defined as those ethnically from Western and Eastern Europe

<sup>e</sup> **Other** has included those from Afro-Caribbean and Chinese backgrounds

<sup>f</sup> **Other faith** refers to the percentage of people attending with non-Christian backgrounds

