DOCTORAL THESIS

Developing a genuinely multi-ethnic local church congregation an auto-ethnographic investigation into Greenford Baptist Church 1987-2014

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Award date:
2022

Awarding institution:
University of Roehampton

Developing a genuinely multi-ethnic local church congregation: an auto-ethnographic investigation into Greenford Baptist Church 1987-2014

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of DTh

School of Humanities and Social Sciences

University of Roehampton

2021

Abstract

From October 1987 until January 2015 I was a pastor at Greenford Baptist Church (GBC) in West London. During this time the church transitioned from being a White British congregation, to one with people from approximately forty-five nationalities regularly attending. During worship different languages were used with songs, dance and prayer in styles that were used 'back home'. Every aspect of congregational life reflected the cultures from the different ethnicities that made up the congregation.

This research investigates how this transition occurred. The minutes of both leadership meetings and church members' meetings were examined along with other relevant documents. Insights and questions arising from the documentary analysis framed discussion for four focus groups and twenty interviews with forty-seven research participants in total. As a leader within the congregation for the whole of the period researched, my own autoethnographic insights contributed into the research.

Key findings were that people from overseas experienced GBC as a community of faith that was welcoming, safe and fully accepting of them. People who had been born in the UK to parents who had come to the UK from overseas and were a part of GBC, reflected that their experience at GBC had, in their view, given them significant advantages over their peers.

The conclusion of the research is that there are four interlocking components that seem to have enabled the transition that took place at GBC. Firstly, thinking that decentred Whiteness as an organising concept. The ecclesiological use of a tapestry metaphor for

the congregation was crucial in this process. Secondly, attitudes of hospitality and vulnerability enabled the creation of open community. Thirdly, structures that enabled transition, which included radical changes to the nature of the Sunday gatherings and investment in training for leadership. Fourthly, leadership that was willing to learn and serve both GBC and the wider community.

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Acknowledgments

There are many people to whom I am indebted for their help, support and contribution, which has enabled this research.

It was a privilege to serve as a pastor at Greenford Baptist Church (GBC) from 1987 to 2015. I am grateful to the members of GBC for their patience, tolerance and willingness to experiment. I am grateful to the GBC leadership for their total support and enthusiastic cooperation during the research. I am grateful to the forty-seven research participants who willingly gave of their time and shared their lived experience with me.

My supervisors at the University of Roehampton, Julian Gotobed and John Moxon, have been unstinting in their critical engagement with this research. They have pushed, prodded and challenged and always done this with strong encouragement. This research is so much the better because of them.

My deepest debt however is to my wife Lesley. She has been my strongest supporter and my fiercest critic throughout this research. She also has been my proof-reader and has helped hugely with the final formatting of the text.

1 Introduction

1.1 The Purpose of this Research

The purpose of this research is to investigate the transition of Greenford Baptist Church (GBC) in West London from a predominantly White British congregation to a multi-ethnic one. I have been asked many times to write about the journey of GBC, to draw out lessons or principles in order to help other churches undertaking a similar transition. However, I realised that in order to do this effectively I needed to understand the GBC transition with more depth and rigour. This realisation led me to develop and undertake this research.

As discussed in section 3.2, this research is situated within the discipline of Practical Theology.

The General Secretary of the Baptist Union of Great Britain, Lynn Green, in *Journeying to Justice* noted the 'longstanding and developed approach [to multicultural local church leadership] being modelled creatively by Greenford Baptist Church (Reddie (Ed), 2017: 210). The General Director of the Evangelical Alliance, Steve Clifford, in *The (Im)Possible Dream: Believing for an integrated ethnically diverse church* commented on his personal observation of the transition of GBC from an 'almost entirely white British congregation' to a 'genuinely multi-ethnic church' 'a healthy united church, which crossed numerous ethnic backgrounds … flourishing' (2019: 76). These senior nationally recognised leaders acknowledged in their writing the significant transition undertaken by GBC; others, including Wale Hudson-Roberts, the Baptist Union Justice Enabler, regularly spoke of GBC as an exemplar of a good multi-ethnic church when introducing me as a speaker at various Baptist events.

I was inducted as the pastor of GBC in October 1987 and was in post throughout the period of concern to this study. In this sense, the investigation is partially auto-ethnographic in nature. I remained in post as Pastor, or Senior Pastor, as the church staff grew, until January 2015 when I took on the role of Interim Minister of a Baptist Church in East London and ceased most of my involvement at GBC.

1.2 The Significance of this Research

There has been very little published research into the development of multi-ethnic churches in the UK. Malcolm Patten's DMin thesis *An Analysis of a Multicultural Church* (submitted 2011) examined the journey of West Croydon Baptist Church in South London; it was followed by his book, *Leading a Multicultural Church* (2016). GBC's context and transition are very different to West Croydon and my research is focussed less on leadership and more on what was taking place in the life of the congregation. There is no other published research specifically into this area. I am personally aware of a number of churches seeking to become multi-ethnic where the attempt has ended in separation and division. There is a clear gap in what is known about congregational development and a need for research in this area. In March 2011, the Baptist Union Council adopted a document called *The Journey*. This document, published in an appendix of *Journeying to Justice* called for:

> The commissioning of research that will guide the planting and development of effective multicultural congregations.
> The development of resources to encourage culturally diverse worship (Reddie (Ed), 2017: 226).

My research contributes to the body of knowledge needed for such developments, not just in Baptist churches but also churches in other denominations throughout the United Kingdom.

1.3 Locating Myself in this Research

I grew up on a council estate in Hampshire and had no contact that I remember during my childhood or teenage years with anyone who was not White British. In 1980 at the age of twenty-three my wife and I moved to Southall in West London. For the first time I lived and worked amongst Asians and Caribbeans. We enjoyed the new experiences, the vibrant colours, the wonderful flavours and aromas, although no Asians or Caribbeans became close friends. It was not until our move to Greenford in 1987 that closer relationships with people born outside of Europe began to develop. I have been very privileged to have developed deep friendships with people born in Nigeria and Jamaica. Very occasionally, I have been able to glimpse life through their eyes and this has hugely enriched my understanding and helped me in my own developing appreciation of different ethnic perspectives.

I recognise that I am a beneficiary of White Privilege, although it was not until my time on sabbatical in South Africa in 1992 that I began to become aware of it. By 'White Privilege' I mean that I have inherent advantages because of my white skin. This concept is explored in Chapter Two. A few months after I returned from the sabbatical in South Africa I found myself feeling increasingly guilty by history and association. I felt powerless to do anything about racial injustice because I felt naturally associated with the perpetrators. I arranged to meet Rosemarie Davidson-Gotobed, a Black racial justice

activist, who was at that time the Racial Justice Co-ordinator for the London Baptist Association. She challenged me to use my privileged position as a White, well-educated, male, Baptist Minister to challenge injustice and to work for the full acceptance in church of what today are termed Black and Minority Ethnic people. Twenty-five years later we sat drinking coffee together at a Jamaican café in London after a Baptist ministers' breakfast there; as far as I can recall, I had been the only White person present. I asked her what in my remaining years of ministry I could further contribute. She challenged me to write up my story, and what I had learnt, in order to help others on their journey. That conversation led to this research.

So, I started this research still a beneficiary of White Privilege, still a White, well educated, male, Baptist Minister but now with some understanding of my privilege, of racism and its impact and now with thirty-two years of experience of working with people from a variety of ethnicities. I started knowing that there was still a great deal that I did not know and with a determination to learn as much as I could through the rigours of academic research and critical reflection, so that I could better help others.

1.4 Definition of Terms

The term 'ethnic' is used by different writers to signify different things. I use the term to mean 'relating to or characteristic of a large group of people who have the same national, racial, or cultural origins, and who usually speak the same language' (Cambridge Dictionary, no date: para. 2).

The expression 'multi-ethnic church' is also used by different writers to indicate different things. I use the term 'genuinely multi-ethnic church' to mean one where people from a

mixture of ethnicities not only regularly attend, but are actively engaged in all aspects of the life of the congregation and where the cultures of those who attend shape not only the corporate worship but the entire ministry of the congregation. I use the term ministry to cover all the activities engaged in by members of the congregation as they seek to serve God both within the church and wider society. I use the adjective 'genuinely' to draw a distinction from churches that are 'apparently' multi-ethnic where, although there is an ethnic mix in the congregation, the practices, and often the senior leadership, are predominantly White British. I have chosen not to use the term 'multi-cultural church' although this term is widely used. The rationale is that nearly every church has people in it from different cultures, people of different ages, different genders, different educational abilities, different social strata etc. The focus in my research is on the ethnic dimension of difference.

The definition of racism adopted in this research is from the *Report of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry* to which I gave evidence. The report's author Sir William Macpherson stated that 'Racism in general terms consists of conduct or words or practices which disadvantage people because of their colour, culture, or ethnic origin' (1999: 20). I have chosen to use this definition because Macpherson's definitions of racism and institutional racism are still widely referred to today as authoritative. There is further discussion about racism in Chapter Two.

1.5 A Narrative Account of the Transition of GBC

To set in context the findings laid out in Chapters Four and Five from the focus groups and interviews, something of the story of the GBC from October 1987 to January 2015

needs to be told. The account below is based on documentary analysis, specifically of the minutes of meetings of what was initially called 'the Diaconate' but later renamed as the 'Leadership Team' (LT), Church Meetings (CM) and other relevant documents. CM means the meetings of the members of GBC; these meetings followed normal Baptist principles and practice, which will be explored in Chapter Two. I have supplemented these accounts from my own memories. The methodology for the documentary analysis is discussed in Chapter Three. A thematic approach was chosen for this section rather than a chronological one, in order to make the developments clearer.

1.5.1 Membership

At the end of 1987, just after I had arrived at GBC, 91% of the 93 members were White British. Five of the eight non-White-British members were teenagers or in their early twenties with Caribbean parents. One of the older adults was the mother of two of the teenagers/early twenties; she had been born in Jamaica. The remaining two older adults were an elderly Greek couple who never attended church while I was there and whose membership lapsed the following year. At the end of 2014, 33% of the 195 members were White British, and this percentage had been fairly constant since the end of 2009. The year-by-year proportion of White British members is shown in a table in Appendix 1.

In January 1988, the first Asians were welcomed into membership at GBC. They came by transfer from another local Baptist Church where, as Indians, they did not feel welcome. In March 1989, another Indian couple from a Christian background also became members.

At GBC, in common with most Baptist Churches, adults, and in some circumstances teenagers, who had chosen to make a public profession of their faith were normally baptised by total immersion. During 1988 there were twenty-eight people baptised. Two of those baptised were Caribbean new converts; both became members (the other twenty-six who were baptised were White British).

Three Hong Kong Chinese adults became members in February 1989, two of them following conversion from a Buddhist background and baptism. Two other Caribbean adults joined during the year, one by transfer having moved into the local area, the other following a rededication of his life to God. There was then a slow trickle of Caribbeans becoming members year by year.

In April 1991, the first African-born people were welcomed into membership of GBC. The married couple came to Greenford from Nigeria where they had been part of a Baptist Church. My subsequent friendship with the husband was to form a key part of my, and GBC's, development. It was December 1993 before the next African-born people became members; they were also a couple from Nigeria and were brought to GBC by the first couple. No more Africans became members until 1998 when there were six, all Nigerian and all friends of the first couple to join GBC.

The first person born in the Middle East to become a member was welcomed in April 1999. She was from Iran and came to GBC by transfer from another UK Baptist Church.

From the account above one can see a gradual increase in the number and mix of GBC members who had been born overseas. However, from the end of 2005 to the end of 2007

there was a sharp decrease in the proportion, but not the number, of White British members from 54% to 40%. During these two years thirty new people became members, only six of these were White British. This rapid change followed directly on from GBC radically changing the structure of its morning meeting and was eighteen months after the appointment of a part-time Evangelist and a part-time Prayer Co-ordinator and Worship facilitator. The nature and significance of these changes will be explained below.

1.5.2 Welcoming and Integrating New People

By February 1989, only 16 months after I had arrived, one third of the membership, 35 people, had been members for one year or less. Welcoming and integrating new people is a recurrent theme throughout the CM and LT minutes. The first reference is in November 1987 at my first church meeting where I encouraged church members to 'be sensitive to newcomers in our services and to make it a priority to speak to them afterwards'. In September 1988, the members were informed that the deacons (the name then used for the elected leaders) had decided that on Sunday mornings my priority should be talking to newcomers, as members could arrange to see me at other times. This sent out a clear message about the importance of making new people welcome. In my annual report to the members in January 1989 I talked about the need for us to be 'ready to welcome' and to work hard to involve new people in the life of GBC. One example of this in practice is that a Caribbean adult baptised at GBC on 3rd April 1988, is recorded in the LT Minutes of 17th May 1988, as taking responsibility for the publicity for a weeklong mission event planned for the autumn. Another example is that in January 1989 two of the Hong Kong Chinese new members referred to above, took on responsibility for preparing and serving

tea and coffee after the service concluded. In April 1989, the deacons agreed to set up a 'Greet and Seat Team' whose role was to welcome people, especially new people, on Sunday mornings. In January 2004, the leadership started an annual training session for those on this team. A part of this training was in sensitivity to people from different cultures and contexts.

On 15th October 1991 the leaders agreed to 'systematically' work through the membership roll to 'see if there are particular ways in which we can help people and to increase our awareness of them'. In almost every leaders' meeting for five years, the leadership considered around ten members, discussed their current activity within GBC, their degree of relational connection to others within GBC and any ways it was thought that the leaders could help, support or challenge them. Each person discussed was contacted by one of the leaders who subsequently reported back to the other leaders. From 2009, and still continuing when I became Interim Minister elsewhere, GBC ran 'Reaching your Potential in God' workshops. These resumed the process of the leadership, now joined by the staff team, looking at the ways church members could be helped. The leaders and staff regularly met with invited groups of members for teaching on gifts and one-to-one sessions agreeing strategies for exploring and developing areas of gifting.

Social events were an important aspect for the relational connection of new people. The first reference is LT Minutes 17th May 1988, where it is noted that each house group would be organising one social event. 25th January 1989 CM minutes list six social events that took place in 1988. In 21st February 1989 LT minutes, seven events planned for that year are listed. There are numerous subsequent references to social events, which became a

routine part of church life. These included rambles, picnics, canal boat trips, coach outings, dances, meals and evenings of entertainment. From memory, these were well attended and enabled people to meet and get to know each other.

There were church weekends in 1993, 2008 and 2010. These took place in the church building and a nearby school. They ran from Friday late afternoon to Sunday afternoon with a packed programme. People slept in their own homes but all food was provided in the church building. So many people came that it was a challenge to fit everyone in. These were important times for the building of relationships and integration of new people.

The emphasis on ensuring that new people, and those already at GBC, were well integrated relationally was a key aspect of GBC's development. However, this strategy was not intentionally adopted to help people who came to GBC from *outside* the UK to integrate, it was a general strategy intended for all people. I am now aware, but was not aware at the time, that there were additional challenges for integrating people who had been born outside of the UK. The strategy of working intentionally on integration through welcome, social events, church weekends, groups and strategic review and intervention, seems to have been effective for both White British and those from other ethnicities who came to GBC. In Chapters Four and Five some of the research participants recall their experiences of arriving at GBC for the first time and how they developed relationships within the church.

1.5.3 Church Leadership (non-salaried)

In 1987 the Diaconate (this was the term then used at GBC for the elected church leadership) was entirely White British, mainly over 50 and mainly female. The CM on 30th November 1988 on my initiative, appointed as a deacon a young Black female. She was the second Black church member at GBC (her older sister had been the first member, but not the first to attend regularly) having been welcomed into membership in April 1980. She was already a youth leader and co-ordinating a mission project.

In the LT minutes from 20th June 1989, it is recorded that I intend 'to begin a monthly meeting with five young men to train them as leaders for the future'. This was the first Leadership Training Group (LTG). Four of those young men were Black. Prior to commencing my DTh research I believed, and had publicly stated, that the creation of the first LTG was a deliberate, strategic move towards the development of a more ethnically diverse leadership. During my research, I found a document written by me prior to the agreement by the leadership at GBC to the creation of the first LTG. This document gives my analysis of some of the difficulties faced with the leadership as it was then constituted, with some proposals for ways forward. It is likely that I presented this document to the leadership, which consisted of six White British people and the newly appointed UK born Black Caribbean mentioned above. I know that all of the recommendations were implemented. Three of the difficulties I listed were; 'Shortage of males in the current leadership team (diaconate) (2 out of 7). Shortage of under 50's in the current leadership team (diaconate) (3 out of 7). Complete lack of males "suitable" for eldership function.' The relevant part of the proposed way forward was; 'Leadership Training Group

commencing September 1989, five under 30's males, with a view to:- [sic] Approximately 3 of these on leadership team (diaconate) by January 1991'. There is no mention at all of creating ethnic diversity in this document or in the LT minutes from this time. There is no evidence that the creation of the LTG was initiated in order to create a more ethnically diverse leadership, but rather that it was created to address gender and age disparity. However, the acceptance of the creation of this group and its membership does evidence the beginning of a change of values in the acceptance of Black people in leadership roles within GBC.

At GBC members of the leadership were appointed by secret ballot at members' meetings. Any two church members could nominate any other church member for appointment. The church meeting had the final say; there was no other body that could veto any appointment. These procedures were normal Baptist practice and are discussed in the section on ecclesiology in Chapter Two (Bacon, 1982: 173). Under the constitution in place at GBC until 2010, the church leaders were appointed as 'deacons' although the practice was not to use this term apart from on the nomination form and ballot paper. The 'diaconate' was called the 'Leadership Team' in all other contexts as GBC believed that the term 'diaconate' was not widely understood. In 2010 a new constitution was adopted which replaced the term 'deacon' with 'charity trustee' but the practice of using the term 'Leadership Team' continued unchanged.

On 28th November 1990, the CM appointed three of the young Black men trained in the LTG as deacons. The remaining two group members took on other responsibilities within the church. Subsequent minutes show that these new leaders took very active roles. On

27th November 1991, one of the new male Black leaders was appointed at the CM as Church Treasurer, the first Black church officer at GBC.

It had been my intention that, over the life of the LTG, three or more of the LTG members would earn the confidence and trust of the church members and be appointed as a part of the leadership. With hindsight, but I was not aware of this at the time, appointing three young Black men onto the church leadership was a significant step towards the development of a genuinely multi-ethnic church community. This step is further explored in section 4.5.

The second LTG started in October 1991 with five White British and two Hong Kong Chinese church members. In November 1995, the first African-born member at GBC became the first African-born member of the leadership, following membership of another 18-month LTG. These groups were a regular feature of GBC's life. In discussion with the rest of the leaders, I chose to invite to join a LTG those who I thought had the most potential irrespective of their ethnicity. As GBC's membership became minority White British, these groups reflected that. For example the group that started in June 2006 was made up of one Iraqi, one from Sierra Leone, one from Jamaica, one British born Caribbean, one British born Nigerian and one White British. This was a significant investment from me into discipling and mentoring potential leaders. The rationale for this was that I believed that I needed to train future leaders in order for GBC to be able to continue to develop and grow. This investment in training leaders resulted in there being people from a mixture of ethnicities involved in every area of church leadership. Several of the LTG members went on to develop significant ministries within GBC and

subsequently outside of GBC. In Chapter Four some of the research participants who had been part of a LTG, recount some of their memories and comment on the significance of this training for them.

Drawing from his doctoral research of Paul's mission and church planting work as described in Luke-Acts, Thorsten Prill developed six 'guidelines or principles that can help us to develop strategies for the integration of migrants into local indigenous churches' (2009: 343). He asserted that one of the principles is that churches with migrants:

> need to identify spiritual leaders from among them and call them into the overall leadership of the church. Doing so demonstrates that the local church takes the spiritual status of migrants seriously and validates the fact that they are brothers and sisters in Christ. Further, it shows a willingness to listen to them and to learn from them (2009: 345).

In the conclusion to his book *Leading a Multicultural Church* Malcolm Patten comments that the development of 'diverse leadership teams' is very important. He notes that 'empowering people of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds to participate within multi-cultural teams is what will ensure that the changes we make are not superficial' (2016: 149). Other writers note that often leadership remained White British in ethnically mixed churches even though effort was made to include others (Hylton, 2009: 18; Jolley, 2015: 10; Smith, 2018: 17-18). At GBC the investment that was made in training people for leadership from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds meant that over time the leadership of every aspect of the church increasingly reflected the ethnicity of those within the congregation.

1.5.4 The Intentional Addressing of Multi-Ethnic Issues, 1987 to 1997

Although the welcoming and integrating of new people started the process of developing a genuinely multi-ethnic community, this was not at first the intention. It was the intention to see genuine church community created and to see everybody integrated. However, at this stage (as will be elaborated in section 4.5) I was ignorant about racism and White Privilege. I was also not initially aware of the extra challenges that there were for people born outside of the UK to integrate into what was in essence still a White British church. Nor did I have any understanding of their cultural contexts, so in the early years I did not intentionally engage with any of these issues.

The first reference to any ethnic issue in the official documents occurs in the LT minutes of 15th October 1991, four years after I arrived. At this point four of the nine deacons were Black. There was a discussion of the perception by some of the deacons that many 'Afro-Caribbeans' only came on Sundays and were not involved in mid-week groups. It was suggested that we should hold an invitation only 'Afro-Caribbean consultation'. Further discussion was set for a LT day-away; however, discussion at LT days-away was not minuted. In 18th January 1994 LT minutes this idea, now a workshop, appears again but there is no evidence that it took place.

22nd January 1992 in the CM minutes there are details of my sabbatical planned for the summer 'this is for him to study multicultural churches and structural racism'. This entry is the first time either of these issues is mentioned in the minutes.

This sabbatical was seminal for the transition of GBC. In September 1992 I wrote a report on this sabbatical entitled *Reflections on a Journey.* I found this report during my documentary research. My sabbatical lasted 16 weeks, eight of which I spent in South Africa where I travelled extensively and met with people from a wide range of theological and political perspectives. My report focused on areas where I had 'changed/developed/grown/learned' (1992: 1). The first section was headed 'Racism'. I noted some aspects from the legacy of Apartheid, especially 'economic' and 'educational deprivation' and then wrote:

> To me however, the most painful aspect of racism is what it does to people on the inside, the damage done to someone growing up in an environment that hammers home at every turn "you are second rate", "you are sub-human". The emotional and mental scars are very deep (1992: 2).

I then went on to ask:

> What role has the church towards the victims of racism within its own ranks? We must start by recognising and treating others as fully human, strongly affirming them along with their culture, heritage and perspectives. We must open up all sorts of opportunities to them … We need to recognise that creating trust will not be easy because trust has been betrayed often in the past (1992: 3).

The second section is headed 'Theology'. Here I focussed on hermeneutics, noting how 'our own ideology/value systems' affects what we see in scripture. I noted the importance of us 'listening to others' insights; never believing that we have a final understanding' (1992: 3). This led onto a consideration of the importance of 'orthopraxy' (correct actions/behaviour) rather than the standard evangelical emphasis on 'orthodoxy' (correct beliefs and thinking) with its attendant danger that 'someone's Christian beliefs affect only the private devotional segment of their lives without having any societal consequences' (1992: 4).

Under the heading 'Ministry' I pondered, 'are we involved in the community as we should be? In what ways can we make a distinctive contribution?' (1992: 5). Under the heading 'Church' I considered the question 'what constitutes non-racial church?'

> It is much more than simply having a mix of cultures represented in the congregation. Important factors seem to include having a multi-racial leadership (without job reservation!), having worship and preaching that reflects the cultures of the congregation rather than simply the dominant/host culture and valuing social aspects of all cultures, for example food (this frequently was cited as a key issue!). Affirmation of cultures and people other than the dominant/host culture at every level is vital. European culture is neither intrinsically "good" nor intrinsically Christian. Education about racism has an important place in church. Our society has racist tendencies, and Christians are not free from this influence which is often unnoticed by those in the dominant culture. Church should model mutual racial acceptance, but education through preaching and other means is necessary to help facilitate this (1992: 5-6).

Rereading this document today (30th October 2020), having analysed and written up the data from the forty-seven research participants, I notice how much the aspirations and hopes expressed in this reflection have been realised in the subsequent development of GBC. As will become clear in Chapters Four and Five, Black research participants expressed that they felt that they, along with their culture and heritage, were affirmed and accepted at GBC. Racism was addressed. Worship, preaching and social events, including food, did come to reflect the cultures represented in the congregation. Multi-ethnic leadership did develop, without any 'job reservation'. Not only was this document a 'reflection', it became for me a manifesto.

Reflecting back on this sabbatical that took place nearly thirty years ago it is difficult to overstate its impact on me. My eyes were opened to the reality of racism and its impact on individuals, groups and wider society. I began to see something of the economic injustice that flows from racist policies. I was challenged deeply about my own Euro-

centric understanding of the world, which included the way that I read, understood and taught from the Bible. I returned to local church ministry determined to continue to learn and to do what I could to address racism and social injustice in my context.

There were significant new connections that arose from my sabbatical. As a consequence of my visit I was asked to become a member of an Evangelical Alliance working group called Evangelical Support for South Africa and a Baptist Union group working on Racial Justice issues. In 1993 GBC became a member of the African and Caribbean Evangelical Alliance. This membership was an active engagement, with leaders of ACEA speaking at GBC and me becoming a member of the ACEA council in December 2003. This active connection helped me to become more aware of issues facing African and Caribbean Christians in the UK and facilitated input into GBC from speakers, literature and events that I and others attended.

On 29th September 1993 the CM passed a resolution on racism that included the statement 'as a multicultural church we want to reaffirm our welcome and acceptance of people from all cultures'. This resolution was prompted by the election of a British National Party councillor in East London. Importantly this statement illustrates the self-image then held by the church members. They saw themselves as 'a multicultural church' even though at that time 80% of the membership was White British.

The LT minutes of 16th May 1995 identified 'Multicultural issues' as one of three 'future topics of major importance for discussion'. On 20th June 1995 under the heading 'What is our church heart?' the possibility was noted in the LT minutes that 'multi racial [sic] issues could be a main part of our church heart'. This is significant because it shows a

change in the understanding of the nature of GBC by the leadership, even though the membership was at that time 79% White British.

In the autumn of 1997, I began a part-time MA in Aspects of Biblical Interpretation; this study was described in the CM minutes as 'looking at multicultural issues' (16th July 1997). My sabbatical had helped me appreciate how Euro-centric my handling of scripture was. I recognised that I needed to develop new skills if I was to be able to preach effectively to people from other ethnicities. My MA Dissertation was entitled *Towards evaluating cultural interpretations of scripture from within a multi-cultural London local church context, with special reference to the interpretation of selected texts* (Wise, 2000b). My learning from this MA transformed my understanding of hermeneutics and my preaching practice. From the congregation's perspective the biggest change was that I began routinely asking the congregation questions during my teaching and wandering around with a microphone so that answers could be heard. My questions aimed to help congregants use their imagination and engage with their emotions as they considered the biblical text. Towards the end of the teaching I asked congregants to express how what they had learnt would impact their own lives. This was designed to draw out different cultural applications of the text. In Chapters Four and Five I report observations on this from some of the research participants.

1.5.5 The Attack on the Paul Family

In December 1997 there was a serious racially motivated assault on an Asian family who were members of GBC. This assault had a profound effect on the congregation and its movement towards becoming a multi-ethnic church. As this assault is a matter of public

record I have not used a pseudonym for the family but I have avoided using any of the family's first names in the account that follows, as use of their distinctive first names would make them easier to trace via social media.

1.5.5.1 The Context and the Assault

The Paul family started attending GBC in late 1987, with their son and daughter, after moving nearby. The parents had been born and married in India. They became an integrated and committed part of the GBC congregation attending almost every Sunday and being involved in other church activities. In 1993 the son was baptised at GBC and became a member of the church.

In March 1993 the family moved to a larger house. The new house was outside of what GBC considered its local area but it was only a couple of miles from the church building and the family continued to be an active part of GBC. My first note of discussing with the family issues of 'racial harassment from neighbours' is dated December 1996.

As these events took place over 22 years ago I have drawn on original publications from the time to draw a picture of what occurred.

The Monitoring Group, which was 'a legal advice centre organisation based in Southall West London' (*Background to 'The Monitoring Group'*) published *The London Monitor*. Issue 1, Spring 1998, reported on its front page:

> Over the past two years the Paul family have been victims of repeated racial abuse and attacks. Each time the family took some form of legal action to prevent further harassment the perpetrators made false counter allegations, particularly against the younger son. On each occasion the police responded speedily to the counter allegations. At one time the son … was falsely accused of sexually harassing a

> perpetrators [sic] daughter. Despite the lack of evidence he was charged and convicted in a Magistrates Court. With The Monitoring Group's (TMG's) assistance he appealed in a Crown Court and was exonerated on 30 January 1998.

The front page of *The Baptist Times* dated 8 Jan 1998 reported that in December 1997 in the early hours of the morning, three masked men forced their way into the Pauls' home. The father, aged 56, suffered 'a dislocated shoulder, broken ribs and head injuries'. The mother suffered 'bruises and cuts to the face' and the son, who was the attackers' primary target, required 'plastic surgery to the face as well as stitches [because of stab wounds to the inner thigh] and a broken nose reset'. I was quoted in the same report as saying that the Paul family had 'suffered harassment' for around three years and 'It is our view that the police have, up to now, been unhelpful and unresponsive in dealing with previous incidents'.

The front page of *The London Monitor* continued its coverage by commenting that

> No one has been questioned, arrested or charged. In addition there does not appear to have been a thorough enquiry made after the attack … [the father said that]… "we believe … [the son's] … case was made up to drive us out of the area … When we would not move we were viciously attacked. We believe that there would have been far greater action if black people had attacked a white family in this way. We thought the police were here to protect us but they failed to do so"… At a case conference prior to the attack Mr and Mrs Paul pleaded with the authority to either rehouse them temporarily, or install a CCTV camera in their house for identification purposes … the council chose not to assist the Pauls (Issue 1, Spring 1998).

1.5.5.2 The public meeting 1st July 1998

It was the view of the Paul family, The Monitoring Group and myself that the local police had failed to take seriously the campaign of harassment and to investigate the assault. We decided to raise the profile of the case by organising a public meeting at the GBC church building. This event took place on 1st July 1998. There were nine speakers at the meeting

the best known of whom was Neville Lawrence, the father of the murdered teenager Stephen Lawrence. In addition to Neville Lawrence, I spoke and there were also speakers from the Churches Commission for Racial Justice, The London Baptist Association, The Monitoring Group and another family campaigning for racial justice following the death of a family member. A BBC radio crew attended and recorded the event, journalists were present and there was subsequently extensive coverage in the Christian press and some in other media.

1.5.5.3 Complaint to the Police Complaints Authority

Following these events, and what seemed to me and others to be a lack of appropriate police action, I encouraged the Paul family to make a formal complaint to the Police Complaints Authority (PCA). However, Mr Paul did not believe that they would get any better treatment at the hands of the PCA than they had received from the local police. On 29th January 1998, I wrote to the chairman of the PCA to ask 'whether there is any evidence or argument that you can furnish me with that I can present to people here [at GBC] that will help them have the confidence that any complaint that they make will be properly, independently looked at' (Personal correspondence). This correspondence resulted in a meeting between the chair of the PCA, Mr Paul, another GBC member and myself on 22nd April 1998. Following this meeting, Mr Paul agreed to enter a formal complaint that was lodged in June 1998 and was based on seven grounds. The statement of complaint dated 15 June 1998 is six pages long. The nature of the complaint can be seen from the following short extracts from page 2.

> The police never took any serious action over the harassment the Pauls were suffering … Officers persistently failed to turn up to take statements … The police

> chose to believe the word of XXX [the individual who was the primary source of the racial harassment] against …[the son] … By their favouritism the police contributed to an atmosphere in which it was easy for a group of thugs to invade the Paul home at night and viciously attack them. The police failed to follow up the attack actively or vigorously, apparently they did not even undertake house-to-house enquiries and witnesses who had seen the men thought to be involved were not immediately questioned.

Mr Paul's Witness Statement for the Police Complaints Authority is dated 28 September 1998 and is 39 pages long. It recounts a campaign of racial harassment from their neighbours that began in March 1996. The abuse listed in the detailed statement includes verbal racial abuse, threatening phone calls, a racially offensive note left in their garden, their car being vandalised and false accusations made against their son. Mr Paul summarised his complaint as 'gross incompetence, culpable negligence and racism of officers at Uxbridge and Ruislip police stations' (Witness Statement: 38). He also details the alleged failure of the local authority to act to protect his family.

1.5.5.4 Stephen Lawrence Enquiry

Following on from the public meeting for the Paul family, I was invited to give evidence to the second phase of the Stephen Lawrence Enquiry on 8th October 1998. I talked about the experiences of the Paul family and another church member. I commented that 'these two cases illustrate the fact that the police here in West London seem to respond differently to Black and Asian people than to Whites' (Text of my talk). Subsequently I was interviewed by a BBC news team and by a Guardian journalist, which resulted in further publicity at the time and subsequently (Muir, 2009: 6).

1.5.5.5 The Impact on GBC

Prior to commencing this research, I believed that the racially motivated harassment and violent attack on the Paul family, the apparent lack of protection of the family in advance of the assault and the lack of investigation by the police after the assault, had had a significant impact on the development of GBC. I believed that it had made clear the reality of racism in our local community and wider society to all at GBC, especially to the White British members.

There is no record of what was said at the time in the course of the Sunday services nor what was shared in church or leadership prayer meetings concerning these events. The first mention in the CM minutes is 28th January 1998, a day before I wrote to the PCA, 'The Paul family. The court case has been adjourned until Friday 30th January. Urgent prayer is requested. A new legal team is now involved.' This minute is a reference to the appeal against the son's conviction. The LT Minutes record:

> Support/campaigning group for Paul family. David has been asked by Church Campaign for Racial Justice to act as convenor of campaign. David has agreed to convene one public meeting for those concerned. Likely to take 2-2½ years to get to court. Need to think and pray about this, as to whether David should take on (LT Minutes 21st April 1998).

The minutes of the next meeting record 'Paul family campaign, update and discussion re David's involvement. Public meeting at GBC on 1.7.98. David to be involved in steering group, but not as chairman. If he needs to be freed from church work for short period of time this will be O.K.' (LT Minutes 26th May 1998).

The CM Minutes record:

> Update on the police enquiry on the Paul family given. Prayer was requested for … [Mr Paul] as he is interviewed by the police and detailed investigations are carried out … David Wise has been asked to give evidence in the Lawrence enquiry regarding the attitude of the police towards the Paul family (CM Minutes 30th September 1998).

Further CM minutes through to September 2000 record that updates were given and prayer was requested. These minutes are evidence that the events surrounding the Paul family continued to have a significant profile and impact in the life of GBC for at least a two-year period.

During my research I asked six of the research participants, who were part of GBC at the time of the assault, what they remembered about the impact on GBC of the events surrounding the Paul family. Each person remembered hearing about the attack and recalled their own personal shock and anger at what had happened. Natasha (as explained in 3.3 pseudonyms are used for each research participant), a church member who had been born in the Caribbean, said:

> I think people were very shocked when it happened. People were very sad it happened and I think outraged as well …Especially with the way the whole incident was handled by the police and things. I can remember that. That was outrageous and I think the church, the people you talk to about things like that, they were really disgusted that it happened and how it was handled.

There was awareness too of the impact on the GBC community. Betsy, who is White British, commented:

> Well, you see I think that it was because we'd seen first-hand how terrible it was and talked to them and realised what they were going through. But if we had just heard, oh so and so had been attacked, we'd say "Oh that's terrible isn't it" and then go on and talk about something else. But when you sort of see first-hand and you are involved with the people it has a very different effect.

Brian, also White British, noted:

> Of course, it was around the time of the Stephen Lawrence stuff as well and because that was slightly remote from us, it didn't quite affect us in the same way, but then it did when it happened to them. You suddenly realised there is an issue within our society … it made me think about my thinking with regard to other people from other ethnicities as well and so making sure I wasn't having prejudiced thoughts towards them because of somebody's ethnicity.

Janice, White British, commented "When it happens to your own, then you start thinking and questioning yourself, your thinking and your beliefs and what you understand about race and people". By "your own" Janice was referring to her perspective that when someone you know who is a part of your own church community is a victim of a racist attack, the reality of racism and its impact becomes real to you.

For Betsy, Brian and Janice, three White British members of GBC, what happened to the Paul family brought home to them the reality of racism in a way that the high-profile murder of Stephen Lawrence elsewhere in London had not. Because this attack happened to some of 'our own', what was a reality on the outside of GBC became earthed inside. The fact that I as the church pastor, with the support of the church leadership and membership, was to the forefront of not only campaigning for justice for the Paul family, but also to expose the systemic racism in our society and its institutions further made clear some of the challenges that faced us. The research seems to support my previously held view that this series of events, with the continual focus on systemic racism over a two-year period, changed the way that people who were a part of GBC at the time saw racism. Racism was exposed as an ugly, dangerous, daily reality that afflicted the lives of people who were a part of the church congregation. It was seen as sin and consequently something that needed to be confronted in our lives and in the life of the congregation. The attack on the Paul family and the subsequent events, as the comments recorded above

demonstrate, changed the self-understanding of people who were a part of GBC, especially the majority White British attendees, and therefore it seems clear that these incidents significantly affected the trajectory of the church's transition.

1.5.6 Church Staff (salaried)

30th April 2003 CM minutes record that the church members unanimously appointed a part-time 'Prayer Co-ordinator and Worship Facilitator'. This was a key appointment in the process of facilitating changes to worship (sung, spoken, dance and visual arts). Among the responsibilities for this role was 'to integrate and develop multicultural prayer and worship'. The person appointed served in this role until 2017. His ministry, under my direction, was the main driver for GBC's prayer, sung worship and artwork displayed in the GBC building that intentionally drew on and engaged with material and practices from other cultures. 10th February 2004 LT minutes report that the worship leaders had 'discussed multicultural worship'. 29th November 2005 LT minutes record that at the worship workshop there had been a 'good discussion on Multiculturalism'. 25th July 2006 LT minutes note that the 'Worship … Workshop day produced a list of worship suggestions for consideration. More diversity in songs needs thinking about'. In January 2008 a Worship Co-ordinating Group was created. Apart from the GBC staff member, all the initial members had been born outside of Europe. In 2010 and 2011 there are frequent LT minutes about the learning and introduction of 'songs in other languages' and about worship leaders attending a workshop about 'multicultural worship' at a church in Alperton (West London). There are also references to the staff member attending a weeklong course that was a part of a module of an MA in Ethnomusicology.

In July 2003 another appointment was made, a part-time evangelist. He was British born but of Jamaican parents. As GBC's evangelist, he was often the first person from GBC that people met, and he was at the front at most GBC outreach events. Having Jamaican parents he was obviously not White British, which made a visible statement about the church's welcome and inclusion of people from other ethnicities.

In May 2010 GBC appointed a female Brazilian Assistant Pastor who had been previously involved in leadership roles in a Baptist Church in Brazil. She worked part-time initially, but full-time from February 2011 after GBC had obtained a Ministry of Religion Visa for her. Her cultural preferences had a major impact on the rest of the male British-born ministry staff team that, by this time, also included a White British Assistant Pastor. For example, the *pastora* was very passionate, emotional and loud in her prayer and worship. She was very physical when she greeted people with hugs and kisses. She interpreted the biblical text with a much more literal approach than we were used to. In essence she confidently challenged the staff team norms.

The staff appointments show that by 2003 the members at GBC were intentional and committed to developing a genuinely multi-ethnic church (although the term multicultural was the usual term used at that time). Choosing to both appoint a person to lead and facilitate developments of worship and prayer, and a few months later to appoint a British-born Caribbean as the church Evangelist, are clear evidence of that commitment. The appointment of a Brazilian national as an Assistant Pastor, shows an openness to and acceptance of cultural diversity at the very heart of GBC's life.

On 22nd January 2002 LT minutes record me expressing 'concern that non White/non English people are not coming into leadership'. This was a reference not to the LT but to other leadership roles across the church. This issue was repeatedly discussed during 2002. The minuted outcomes included Nigerians taking on House Group leadership and leading prayer in various meetings. These minutes show that the LT were committed to seeing people from ethnicities other than British taking on leadership in all areas of church life.

1.5.7 The Intentional Addressing of Multi-Ethnic Issues 1998 to 2015

1.5.7.1 Opposition

The transition towards becoming multi-ethnic was not without opposition. The LT minutes record conflict between the church leadership and the leadership of the church Music Team. This conflict was long running, multi-faceted and very unpleasant. As the pastor, I was the central target for harassment. There were numerous issues raised concerning finance, health and safety, pastoral care, church vision, my undertaking MA study etc. Relevant to this research is that the leaders of the Music Team held a European understanding of music/worship that prevented participation by people from other ethnicities. At the time I was only aware of the lack of co-operation with me in my attempts to introduce worship material that had originated in other cultural contexts, or to involve people that were not White British as singers or musicians. In the spring of 1999, the LT decided to disband the existing Music Team entirely and to remove its leaders from their leadership roles. The three music team leaders left the church with a few supporters joining another local congregation, but they continued sustained opposition to my ministry for another two years. Their ongoing campaign included sending regular letters

to all church members, with a variety of accusations, and making a formal complaint to the Baptist Union concerning my alleged misconduct. After their departure, as people from a range of ethnic backgrounds became involved in worship leadership, Africans told me that it had been made clear to them that they were not welcome as musicians or singers by the previous leaders. Other Black people told me of having been refused auditions to join the singers' team. This was a key moment in the transition because the sudden departure of people who had tightly controlled music in all our corporate meetings created a need, and a lot of space, for others to become involved. Many were enthusiastic to get involved. The opposition came to an end at the conclusion of a long and thorough Baptist Union investigation, which exonerated me. The opposition by the leaders of the Music Team was the only opposition by a group to the church direction of travel. There were individuals who left at various points because they did not like the way that 'the church' or 'the worship' was changing, but usually they left with good grace.

1.5.7.2 Inclusion of Elements from cultures other than British

The LT minutes of 22nd June 1999 record a discussion of 'the African practice of prayer night vigils'. At the 13th July LT meeting a decision was made to hold one as a trial in the autumn, to be led by some of GBC's Nigerian members. From memory the prayer vigil was well attended by GBC people from a mix of ethnic backgrounds and subsequent night vigils were occasionally held. June's meeting also recorded the suggestion that 'in a Sunday morning meeting we should look to use praying styles led by and representing different cultural approaches, as part of being a multi-cultural church'. These decisions led to the gradual introduction of prayer styles that had originated outside of the UK.

Initially these were mainly reflective of Nigerian traditions and were in English. Very gradually over the years other approaches and languages were occasionally used.

On 24th November 1999 there was discussion in the CM about the celebration of GBC's 70th anniversary the following April. Striking is the statement 'different cultures would be represented and national dishes provided' and entertainment was hoped to include a Gospel Choir, Irish dancing, Asian dancing and European classical music. At this point around two thirds of the church members were White British. However, the inclusion of so much from other cultures was not controversial. CM minutes of 31st May 2000 in reviewing the 70th anniversary events recorded 'everyone agreed that the multi-cultural evening was outstanding'. This shared perspective is significant in that it shows that by the end of 1999 the members of GBC, who were 65% White British, not only were comfortable and accepting of the inclusion of material drawn from other ethnicities but welcomed and enjoyed it.

27th April 2004 LT minutes record a decision to find ways to display on the walls in the worship area art that reflected GBC's ethnic mix, 'e.g. God is Love in all our languages'. This aspiration gradually became a reality. By 2015 there was on display Chinese art, various pieces of art reflecting different African styles and a large prominently displayed installation that featured the name of God in 28 languages. Members of the GBC congregation contributed all of the art. There is a photo of the Names of God artwork in Appendix 2 and a participant of the workshop that made the artwork describes the significance of this for her in Chapter Five.

On 14th December 2004 an LT discussion 'considered what customs, ways and habits could deter people, from feeling 'at home' with us, and felt we could/should address varying cultural expectations'. In April, July and August 2005 the LT discussed belief in generational curses, witches and evil spirits among Ghanaians and Nigerians within the congregation. These minutes are evidence of the intentional, considered actions being taken in pursuit of the creation of a genuine multi-ethnic church community. An important outcome of these discussions was that the leaders' understanding of different worldviews held by different church members was enhanced; this enabled better pastoral care.

In January 2008 GBC started a weekly Bible Study Group in Arabic led by an Iraqi church member who had come to the UK as a Christian refugee. In October 2008 GBC started a weekly Portuguese speaking Bible Study Group. In September 2010 Alpha was run in English, Portuguese and Polish for the first time. Everyone ate together then met in language specific groups.

1.5.7.3 Change in self-identity

Every two or three years GBC's LT produced a document entitled 'Leadership Team Vision for Greenford Baptist Church'. In Autumn 2001, for the first time, the aspiration was included 'To become a community that values and expresses a wide-ranging cultural diversity'.

The 17th December 2002 LT minutes record the outcome of a lengthy discussion under the heading 'What is God saying to GBC at the moment?' One of the four things noted was that 'there was also a strong feeling that God has distinctively called us to be a multi-

cultural church as a prophetic statement to the community and to other churches but also enriching each other as we draw on one another's cultures.' The minutes do not record how this conclusion was arrived at and I do not remember the discussion. However, this statement marks a significant realisation. The LT concluding that God had called GBC to be 'a prophetic statement to the community and to other churches' meant a reorientation of priorities for GBC. In the LT's next 'Leadership Team Vision for Greenford Baptist Church' document dated Autumn 2004, in addition to the aspiration 'To become a community that values and expresses a wide-ranging cultural diversity' was added the aspiration 'To be a resource to other churches in modelling multi-cultural community'.

Striking also in the December 2002 minutes is the statement of the realisation that GBC can be 'enriched' by drawing on the different ethnic resources within the congregation. The growing multi-ethnic mix was not seen as a problem or a challenge but as a resource. Subsequent entries in the minutes, which are explored below, show some of the developments that flowed from this new realisation. In the 2007 vision document the wording was changed from 'To become..' to 'To be a community that values and expresses a wide-ranging cultural diversity' recognising that the aspiration had to some extent become a reality.

1.5.7.4 Change of Structure of the Sunday Morning Meeting

In the summer of 2003, I took my second sabbatical that lasted for three months. The aim was to explore cross-cultural ministry. I spent time in Albania, Italy and Jamaica exploring how British and other European nationalities had, and were currently, working across cultures. The most significant outcome for GBC from my sabbatical experiences was a

transformation of the structure of our Sunday morning meetings. Sitting on a hillside overlooking Vlore in Albania thinking and praying about what I had so far seen and learnt, I heard God speak to me in an almost audible voice. I wrote down what I heard, "you have been putting the new wine at Greenford into an old wine skin, if you do not change the skin the wine will be lost". I understood this as expressing the need for us to completely change the structure of our Sunday meetings, which is what I had been thinking about at that moment. The first LT discussion concerning changing the Sunday meeting structure is minuted 9th December 2003. The changes came into effect in March 2004. Various formats were experimented with. All of them involved lengthening the morning meeting from seventy-five to ninety minutes to around two and a half hours, which included a twenty-five minute 'connection time' in the middle when refreshments were served and people were encouraged to talk to each other. Newly added weekly ingredients in the meeting included time for testimonies, celebration of birthdays and anniversaries and a time for 'prayer ministry'. Prayer ministry refers to the practice of inviting anyone who would like to be prayed for to come to the front during the meeting. One of the church leaders or staff would invite two others from the congregation to pray for each person who came forward. There was increased time for singing, praying, creative activities (such as dance, poetry, drama) and more time for Bible teaching. Eating together after the service became a monthly event. It was noted in the LT minutes of 23rd March that these changes led to 'a family feel'.

Willie Jennings' book *After Whiteness: An Education in Belonging* (2020) reflects on theological education especially in the context of a university divinity school. One of the

themes running through the book is the way that structures shape, enable or limit the development and growth of individuals. From his context he writes particularly about the way that structures put in place by White people, prevent the healthy growth of Black people (Jennings, 2020). The key drivers for me in suggesting the changes to the Sunday meeting structures were to create space to incorporate ingredients from other cultures and to further build community. I came to realise that the current meeting structures, unchanged since the 1960s, were preventing the full participation of people who were not White British. It is noticeable in the ethnic composition table (Appendix 1) that the membership began to consistently grow from the end of 2003 by the addition of people who were other than White British. Some of the research participants, as will be described in Chapter Four, specifically linked the growth in attendance to the changes in our Sunday meetings. In Chapters Four and Five reflections on the changes to the morning meeting by people who were a part of the congregation at the time are recounted.

1.5.7.5 Reaching out to the Asian Community

In 2006 in January, April, May and August the LT discussed ways that GBC could reach out to the Asian community that surrounded the GBC building. This concern became a focus for the church for the year. Early in the year, the national flags of India and Pakistan were hung in the main hall and repeatedly used to focus prayer for both countries, for those from these countries who lived in the area and for GBC as it tried to reach out to them. The LT minutes of 24th July 2007 noted that GBC had been unsuccessful in attracting people who had come to the UK from the Indian subcontinent; I suggested that we find someone to talk with us about this concern. On 18th March 2008, LT decided to

send one of its members and the evangelist to a 'British Asians Conference' organised by South Asian Concern. Attending this conference began an ongoing involvement in what became an important group in helping the church to become more welcoming to Asians. In the spring of 2008, the LT invited the London Baptist Association Racial Justice Co-ordinator, who was an Asian convert from Hinduism, to visit GBC as a 'mystery worshipper' to assess how GBC could do better at welcoming Asians. The concept of a 'mystery worshipper' came from the *Ship of Fools* website. The idea is that the 'mystery worshipper', who has to be unknown at the church they visit, arrives like an ordinary visitor, participates in the service, takes any opportunity to meet fellow participants and then writes a report after they leave (Ship of Fools, 2021). GBC's 'mystery worshipper' report was discussed by the LT on 13th August 2008 and a presentation was made to the Broader Leadership Group (this group consisted of all those who led any group, project or ministry within GBC) in October. His report was overall very positive about his experience of being at GBC. His recommendations included making sure that visitors were included in conversations during breaks, that non-western illustrations were used, that there was a sense of awe in worship, that there was more congregational participation, that Asian backgrounds be used sometimes during projection of songs, that we encourage people to pray in their 'mother tongue', sing in languages other than English and undertake some training in cross-cultural mission.

The 27th October 2009 LT minutes noted that 'some Asian people are now attending Alpha. An answer to prayer'. 4th September 2012 LT minutes record 'Jesus Through Asian Eyes – possibility of launching in January 2013'. This programme was an initiative from South

Asian Concern. They had produced Bible study material that was designed to help Asians see that Christianity is not a White Religion. It also helped non-Asians appreciate the Bible from an Asian perspective. GBC trialled the material before it was prepared for publication and the feedback from the GBC group that used it helped improve it. GBC became full partners in the project. The Evangelical Alliance website says of this resource:

> The course is the first of its kind exploring key questions that people from the South Asian and East Asian diaspora have about Jesus Christ and the Christian faith. These resources will help churches to answer questions that Asians of other faiths have about Jesus in a culturally appropriate way (Evangelical Alliance, no date: paras. 1-2).

At the end of the period covered by this research in January 2015, it was usual for there to be 15 to 20 people of Asian heritage in the Sunday morning congregation. Several people of Asian heritage were research participants and their reflections are recounted in Chapter Four.

1.5.7.6 Working Across Cultures Outside of the UK

GBC's commitment to engaging with other cultures and working for reconciliation was also reflected in its overseas work. In 1993, GBC sent a church member to work long-term with Youth With a Mission based in Cyprus but having a wider ministry across the Middle East. In the autumn of 1996, I led a prayer/ministry team to Cyprus. The LT minutes record:

> The YWAM team, with its new leader, were prophesied over, indicating a change of focus for XXXX into the whole area of reconciliation. He has already been doing this between churches, - we believe that in the future it will be between South and North (LT Minutes 15th October 1996).

At GBC the term 'prophesied over' refers to the practice of people sharing aloud what they believe that God is saying about a situation.

On 25th November 1998, GBC's worker reported to the CM that 'he is very conscious of the calling to a ministry of reconciliation'. On 3rd June 2007, he reported that 'there is a measure of reconciliation between Greek and Turkish Cypriots and bridges are being built between the two communities'. In 2011, GBC sent a church family on a long-term placement to Bosnia Herzegovina (BiH). They worked with an organisation who want to build bridges across the ethnic divide there. I led the first team of GBC members on a ministry trip to BiH in 2012. A ministry team travelling to BiH became an annual event in addition to teams going to Cyprus. This practice not only raised the profile of their work within GBC, but also gave many church members first-hand experience of the context thereby opening people's eyes to other ways of being church and to some of the realities of cross-cultural mission.

1.5.7.7 GBC's Reputation

By the end of 2007, GBC had a growing reputation for the development of its multi-ethnic congregation. LT minutes 9th October 2007 records my being asked to become a facilitator on the We Belong course. This programme was a Racial Justice training course developed by the Baptist Union of Great Britain and the United Reformed Church (The Baptist Union of Great Britain and The United Reformed Church, 2006). All accredited Baptist ministers were very strongly encouraged to attend by the Baptist Union's Ministry Department. It was delivered three times in back-to-back sessions each year and it ran for four years. 18th December 2007 LT minutes record that Moorlands College asked GBC to accept the placement of a student who thought that she might be called to multicultural ministry. 17th January 2012 LT minutes record that GBC was asked to host the head of the

Brazilian Baptist Mission Organisation for three months to help him improve his English. He stayed with my wife and I, received daily English lessons from one of GBC's qualified TEFOL teachers and was engaged in GBC's life. After a sabbatical in Brazil in 2011, I travelled to Brazil each year for the next three years. Each time I spent four to six weeks there delivering leadership training and improving my Portuguese language skills. LT minutes 18th June 2013 note that I was asked by Pioneer ('a relational network that connects, inspires and equips churches in the UK and globally' (Pioneer, 2021: para. 1)) to write a paper on how to grow a multicultural church, what steps to take and how I might help as a consultant. 21st October 2014 LT minutes lists my speaking and writing invitations:

> Article for developing multi-ethnic worship, chapter for book using GBC as a case study, invitation from Institute of Excellence to attend symposium in Belgium – how to better cater for the theological education of migrants, invited to speak at Reverse Missions conference – how to develop multi-ethnic congregations, exploring the possibility of visiting Brazil; April/May 2015 (LT Minutes 21 October 2014).

1.5.8 Summary

The Narrative Account drawn mainly from the CM and LT minutes, along with other documents and my lived experience, gives a view of the transition of GBC from a White British church to one that was genuinely multi-ethnic. It indicates that the first steps in the transition were intentionally building community within the congregation. They were intentionally making everyone welcome and working to ensure that everyone was relationally connected. The beginning of the creation of a multi-ethnic community was not intentional but grew out of GBC's determination to make everyone welcome. It was not until after my sabbatical in South Africa in the summer of 1992, five years after I

arrived at GBC, that GBC began to take intentional steps towards creating a multi-ethnic church congregation. One year later the CM minutes include the statement 'as a multicultural church' showing that this had become a part of GBC's self-identity. It was nine years later in 2002 that the LT minutes include the statement that 'there was also a strong feeling that God has distinctively called us to be a multi-cultural church as a prophetic statement to the community' (LT minutes, 17th December 2002). The staff appointments in 2003 alongside the changes to the structure of our Sunday meetings, both of which were intentional strategic moves to further develop GBC's multi-ethnic church life, led to a rapid acceleration of the arrival of church members who were not White British and the drawing on elements of their cultures to enrich church life. A much more detailed picture of what this looked like will emerge in Chapters Four and Five when the voices of the research participants are heard.

1.6 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has told something of the story of the transition of GBC from October 1987 to January 2015, drawn mainly from the minutes of leadership and members' meetings supplemented by other documents and my own memory of events. Racism has already been identified as a significant factor and in the next chapter the theological roots of racism will be explored. Following this exploration aspects of the ecclesiology underlying the practices at GBC will be examined.

2 Racism, Theology and Ecclesiology

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter described the development of GBC from 1987 to 2015 during which time GBC changed from being a predominantly White British congregation to being a genuinely multi-ethnic one. This chapter explores aspects of racism, theology and Baptist ecclesiology before examining the ecclesiology of GBC. The central argument of this chapter is that racism is a reality within the church, that racism arises from a 'diseased social imagination' (Jennings, 2010: 6) and that at GBC a new imagination took root that to some degree overwrote the 'diseased social imagination'. The developments at GBC will be placed within the wider context of Baptist ecclesiology and within the specific context of the adoption by the Baptist Union of Great Britain of *Five Core Values*.

2.2 Racism

Racism is a broad and contentious subject area. Although racism is not the primary focus of this research, it was, as noted in Chapter One and as will become even clearer in Chapters Four and Five, a significant factor in the life experience of many of the research participants. This section briefly draws on three contemporary UK based Christian authors to give some perspective on racism within the UK church in order to be able to view GBC in a wider UK church context. It then briefly examines how Practical Theology can perpetuate or challenge racist views.

Ben Lindsay, a church pastor based in London, in his book *We Need to Talk about Race* (2019) writes about his own experience of growing up as a Black boy in London and of

his experience in White majority churches. He prefaces his first chapter entitled *Being Black in the UK* with a quote:

> 'The harsh reality is race, ethnicity, religion, gender, disability status and related categories all continue to determine the life chances and wellbeing of people in Britain in ways that are unacceptable and in many cases unlawful.' Professor Tendayi Achiume, the UN's special rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, May 2018 (2019: 1).

Lindsay describes how in 1993, at the age of 14, he was the victim of a violent racist assault and how, even though there were lots of people watching, no one came to help him and also how his local church, although expressing personal support for him, did nothing to raise or address issues of racism (2019: 3-4). Lindsay reviews government and other published research and concludes that 'the truth is, racism is structural and often unseen, its purpose to consolidate power for the majority culture while blocking ethnic minority cultures from flourishing' (2019: 6). He asserts, noting a long list of reports, that 'white supremacy has been woven into the fabric and structure of our society' (2019: 11). He defines White Supremacy as 'the racist ideology based on the belief that white people are superior in many ways to people of other races and, therefore, white people should be dominant over other races' (2019: 11). The subject of White Supremacy will be returned to in section 2.3.

Greg Smith has more than forty years' experience working in urban mission and social research. Smith's Temple Tract *The Revenge of the Racists and the Silence of those who Worship the Lamb* (2018) includes reflection on 'xenophobia and racism in the contemporary context of the United Kingdom … [and] …it seeks to dissect the elements of white male privilege and personal and institutional racism in church and society' (2018: 5). From his research he concludes that:

> Despite all the enquiries and reports (From Scarman 1981, to Macpherson (1999) [sic] on the murder of Stephen Lawrence, see also Foster, Newburn and Souhami, 2005), and equality and diversity policies institutional racism remains in place. Life chances in education, employment, income, the criminal justice system, health and housing are significantly higher for white middle and upper-class people living in the south of England than for any of the minority ethnic communities. Violent hate crimes are frequent and tend to peak when political events (such as Brexit) give permission for racist thuggery, verbal and online abuse goes on unchecked and subtle forms of racism expressed in a look, body language or unfavourable customer service are an everyday experience (2018: 13).

A.D.A France-Williams' book *Ghost Ship: Institutional Racism and the Church of England* (2020) draws on both his personal experience and observation as an Anglican priest and from the lived experience of many others within the Church of England. The view expressed throughout the book can be summed up by a quote from Justin Welby, the Archbishop of Canterbury. In February 2020 at the General Synod Welby said, "There is no doubt when we look at our own church that we are still deeply institutionally racist" (2020: 206). The recently published report of the Archbishops' Anti-Racism Taskforce *From Lament to Action* (2021) supports Welby's view:

> In considering why so little progress has been made in many areas of church life after more than 40 years of reports, debates, study courses, discussions, motions and resolutions, the Taskforce supports the Archbishop of Canterbury's contention that there is institutional racism in the church's practices and structures (2021: 11).

It needs to be noted that The Church of England is episcopal in nature, whereas Baptists, as will be explored in section 2.5, are congregational. These two church types represent distinct ecclesiologies (doctrines of the church) and polities or structures, patterns of decision-making, and understandings of ministry. The Church of England states that:

> The Church is led by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York and 106 other bishops. They provide guidance and direction to the churches across the country and make decisions on the Church in society. The General Synod is an assembly of bishops, clergy and laity, and creates the laws of the Church (The Church of England, no date: para. 1).

Whereas The Baptist Union of Great Britain's Declaration of Principle, first article, states:

> That our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, manifest in the flesh, is the sole and absolute authority in all matters pertaining to faith and practice, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures, and that each church has liberty, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to interpret and administer His laws (Baptist Union of Great Britain, 2021: para. 7).

Which means that for the Baptist Union:

> Governance is the word which holds all of the mechanics of running a church together. This includes the Trust Deeds (about the bricks and mortar) and the Constitution (about the people). This now also includes many legal requirements to which we, as 'owners' of a public building, must adhere and be compliant (The Baptist Union, no date a, para. 2).

It is striking that governance (the title of both the Church of England and the second Baptist Union webpage) is a national matter for the Church of England but a local matter for the Baptist Union. In practice, local Baptist congregations are largely independent of control by regional or central church authorities whereas the Church of England is governed by central church authorities, although local dioceses do have some decision making power. This means that, making significant changes to the practices within a local congregation is a decision for the local members in a Baptist church but an Anglican parish church is required to consider National Church and Diocesan factors.

The discipline of Practical Theology, within which this research sits, has been critiqued for being blind to its own racism because of the lack of awareness of the way that White norms shape theological thinking and reflection. Tom Beaudoin and Katherine Turpin argue that 'white practical theology perpetuates colonizing beliefs and practices through its common way of proceeding' (2014: 255). They assert that in the United States 'theology has played an important role in supporting the idea that white people were set apart by the creator to spread God's word' they describe this as 'racial exceptionalism'

which ‘serves … “white supremacy”’ (2014: 257). They argue that a key part of addressing this going forward is ‘learning to listen to others, a countercultural practice in a culture in which white culture dominates’ (2014: 265). Beaudoin and Turpin conclude that ‘whatever keeps whiteness invisible and yet ultimately authoritative must stop’ (2014: 266).

It is clear from looking at the news in the UK on almost any day that racism continues to be an issue in UK society (Financial Times, 2020). It is also clear from the writings of France-Williams, Lindsay, Smith and the Archbishops’ Anti-Racism Taskforce that racism is not only an issue outside of the church but it is also an issue within the church as well. Racism was a challenge that needed to be addressed when GBC began to develop as a multi-ethnic church community. The lived experience of racism both in the Greenford area and within GBC itself will be explored through the lens of the research participants in Chapter Four.

Willie James Jennings in his book *The Christian Imagination. The Theology and the Origins of Race* (2010) traces the origins of racism back to medieval Christian theology. Of particular significance to this research is the concept of ‘the diseased social imagination’ that Jennings sees as a legacy from this period (2010: 6). By ‘diseased social imagination’ Jennings is referring to the way that Whiteness is consciously and unconsciously imagined and taken as the norm, the standard against which everything else is assessed. Jennings also sees a key role for contemporary Christian theology in addressing ‘the diseased social imagination’. It is the suggestion of this research that the tapestry metaphor developed at GBC (described in section 2.6) was a way of imagining

GBC that to some extent displaced the 'diseased' way of imagining church. The next section draws out some of the key themes from *The Christian Imagination*.

2.3 The Theological Roots of Racism

Chapter One of Jennings' book opens with a description of the arrival of 235 African slaves in Lagos, Portugal on 8th August 1444. An eyewitness, the Royal Chronicler Zurara, wrote a detailed description of their sale. The account is theological; there is prayer, there is the payment of a tithe to the church, and there is the expectation that these slaves become 'good and true Christians'. Jennings comments:

> Something more urgent and more life altering is taking place in the Christian world, namely, the auctioning of bodies without regard to any form of human connection … This auction will draw ritual power from Christianity itself while mangling the narratives it evokes, establishing a distorted pattern of displacement. Christianity will assimilate this pattern of displacement. Not just slave bodies, but displaced slave bodies, will come to represent a natural state. From this position they will be relocated into Christian identity. The backdrop of their existence will be, from this moment forward, the market. (2010: 22).

Zurara also described the slaves being valued according to their skin colour. Those who are almost White were viewed positively; those who are Black were viewed as 'deformed' (2010: 23). Jennings comments:

> Herein lies the deepest theological problem. Zurara brings into view the crossing of a threshold into a distorting vision of creation. This distorting vision of creation will lodge itself deeply in Christian thought, damaging doctrinal trajectories (2010: 25).

From this distorting trajectory Jennings argues that 'whiteness emerges' as 'an organising concept' that is used to reshape colonial life and lands. Also from this trajectory, the partnership was born between commercial exploitation and the mission to bring those considered 'lost' inside the Catholic Church so that they would be 'converted' and receive salvation (2010: 25-27). 'From the beginning of the colonialist moment, being white

placed one at the center of the symbolic and real reordering of space. In a real sense, whiteness comes into being as a form of landscape with all its facilitating realities' (2010: 59).

Chapter Two of *The Christian Imagination* starts in Lima, Peru, in 1572 with the arrival from Spain of a Jesuit, Jose de Acosta Porres. After arriving in Peru, Acosta came to view the natives as stupid, ignorant and lacking intellectual ability. Jennings comments that this is:

> … far more than problems of adjustment to the New World. He draws theology and theological tradition into an evaluative form from which it cannot escape. What comes into effect is a new form of ecclesial habitus in which the performance of theology— in teaching, preaching, writing, and other ministry— becomes the articulation of processes of colonialist evaluation. These processes of evaluation carry within them what Acosta perceives as the soteriological and social distance between himself and his student barbarians (2010: 105).

Jennings describes other developments in Acosta's thinking as 'the ground upon which the ideologies of white supremacy will grow' (2010: 109). He further asserts that:

> What will grow out of this horrid colonial arrangement is a form of imperialism far more flexible, subtle, and virulent than could be explained by appeals to cultural difference or ethnic chauvinism. This imperialist form drew life from Christianity's lifeblood, from its missionary mandate and its mission reflexes (2010: 112).

Although Jennings wrote from a United States context, the events narrated in Chapter One took place on European soil and the Jesuit Acosta was a European theologian. Jennings' contention is that these events came to shape the way that White people in the Western world view people whom they perceive as other than White. This contention is supported and traced in the context of British Society and the British Empire by Michael Taylor's book *The Interest: How the British Establishment Resisted the Abolition of Slavery* (2020) which focusses on one decade in the early nineteenth century. Taylor explores the

influence of a coalition of slaveholders, merchants, bankers and others who benefitted financially from the institution of slavery and their supporters who included clergy from the Church of England, politicians, and royalty. In the face of a campaign to abolish slavery in the British Empire, they sought to maintain it. Taylor argues that the influential legacy of this coalition continued throughout the nineteenth century.

Katharine Tyler is Associate Professor (Anthropology) at the University of Exeter. Her book *Whiteness, Class and the Legacies of Empire on Home Ground* (2012) explores Whiteness as a 'forgotten legacy of a colonial past'. Her book is based on twenty-seven months of ethnographic research in Leicestershire, UK and demonstrates that the construct of Whiteness continues to be a significant contemporary issue in the UK. Tyler's work supports Jennings' contention that still today White peoples' views of people who are not considered White, tend to be shaped by the events he relates. Tyler's research exposes the contemporary reality of racism in the lives of 'ordinary' White British people as they lived out their lives in different locations. A key part of Tyler's conclusion is that:

> One of the legacies of Empire in the present is White people's unwitting inheritance and internalisation of a colonial worldview that ensures the co-construction of a racially unmarked and culturally superior White Western self in relation to racially unmarked Others (2012: 222).

Leading British Black theologian Anthony Reddie repeatedly asserts that any attempt to discuss the situation of Black people in the UK without engaging with the construct of Whiteness and the ongoing impact of colonialism is inadequate (2019).

2.4 Theological Resources to Combat Racism

For Jennings, although the roots of White supremacy and colonialism are found within Christian theology, the tools to combat these are also to be found within Christian theology.

Jennings began by examining the writings of Olaudah Equiano. Equiano was born in 1745 in a place that is now within modern day Nigeria (2011: 169). *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano; or Gustavus Vassa, the African* was written and published by Equiano in 1789 (2010: 171). The *Interesting Narrative* relates Equiano's personal story of being captured as a child and sold into slavery within Africa before being transported initially to Virginia. Throughout the account there are graphic descriptions of the way that he and other slaves were treated. Chapter Ten gives 'some account of the manner of the author's conversion to the Faith of Jesus Christ' (1815: 238).

What is particularly pertinent to Jennings' work is Equiano's application of Bible passages to the way that people with darker coloured skin are treated by White people, 'his narrative carries the demand for humanizing relationships as central to the performance of Christian identity' (Jennings, 2010: 189). Towards the end of the first chapter Equiano argued that there is a 'strong analogy' that the Africans 'had sprung' from the Jews (1815: 31). He based this claim on observations of a similarity of customs between Africans and Jews 'before they reached the land of promise' and a biblically based claim that Africans were descended from Abraham (1815: 31-32). In order to 'remove the prejudice that some conceive against the natives of *Africa* on account of their colour', he illustrated how 'the complexions of the same persons vary in different climates' and asserted that those 'carved in ebony' equally bear the 'stamp' of the image of God (1815: 34). His conclusion is worthy of quoting in full:

> Let the polished and haughty *European* recollect that HIS ancestors were ONCE, like the *Africans* uncivilized and even barbarous. Did Nature make THEM inferior to their sons? and should THEY TOO have been made slaves? Every rational mind answers, No. Let such reflections as these melt the pride of their superiority into

> sympathy for the wants and miseries of their sable brethren, and compel them to acknowledge, that understanding is not confined to feature or colour. If, when they look round the world, they feel exultation, let it be tempered with benevolence to others, and gratitude to God, "who hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth; * and whose wisdom is not our wisdom, neither are our ways his ways." * Acts xvii. 26. (1815: 34-35, all emphases are original).

Jennings comments that 'Equiano asserts a portrait of the creation against the false image of superior white/inferior black beings based on intelligence' (2010: 190). Equiano 'read the world scripturally' (2010: 195).

Jennings in his conclusion to *The Christian Imagination* notes that he wants 'to draw attention not simply to the medieval beginning of racial vision but also to a theological beginning' (2010: 289). In terms of working towards a 'postracial future' Jennings asserts that:

> Whiteness must be analysed … in its identity-facilitating characteristics, its judgement constituting features, and its global deployments of embodied visions of the true, the good, and the beautiful. To analyze whiteness requires nothing less than a theological consideration (2010: 290).

He calls for 'a theological identity [that] enters imaginatively into various social forms and imagines the divine presence joining, working, living, and loving inside boundary-defying relationships' (2010: 291) and a 'change [to] one's way of imagining connection and one's way of desiring joining' (2010: 294). It is the contention of this thesis that the tapestry metaphor that underlay the understanding of the nature of GBC is such a new 'way of imagining connection' that enabled 'boundary-defying relationships' to develop and thrive within GBC.

There will be further discussion of these themes in section 2.8 after an examination of the ecclesiology of GBC.

2.5 Baptist Ecclesiology and GBC

GBC is a Baptist church in active membership of both the Baptist Union of Great Britain and the London Baptist Association. As indicated in Chapter One, I am an ordained and accredited Baptist Minister and was a pastor at GBC during the period covered by this research. Active membership of the Baptist Union included sending delegates every year to the annual Baptist Assembly, which is a one to four-day event attended by representatives from Baptist churches in membership of the Baptist Union, Baptist colleges and BMS World Mission (the British Baptist overseas mission agency). The Assembly is a mixture of spiritual devotions, business meetings and opportunities for fellowship. During the period covered by the research GBC supported the Baptist Union and BMS World Mission financially as well as by promoting events and literature. GBC also sent delegates to meetings of the London Baptist Association. Until I commenced my MA in 1997, I was a member of the London Baptist Association Council, General Purpose and Finance Committee, and the Evangelism Committee. I chaired the Youth Work Committee and I was a director of the London Baptist Property Board. Additionally, for twenty years I served as a member of the Baptist Union Racial Justice Working Group.

As GBC is a Baptist church, an understanding of Baptist ecclesiology is helpful in order to see GBC's ecclesiology in context.

Paul Fiddes, an ordained and accredited Baptist minister, was Professor of Systematic Theology at the University of Oxford and principal of a Baptist college, Regent's Park College, Oxford. In his book *Tracks and Traces: Baptist Identity in Church and Theology*

(2018) Fiddes seeks to communicate a concept of 'Baptist identity' (2018: *xv*). In his introductory chapter he states that:

> We can readily name a number of convictions that belong to a Baptist community – notably the gathered church, the priesthood of all believers, the final authority of Christ, believers' baptism, the call to faithful corporate discipleship and religious freedom (2006: 12).

Fiddes notes that none of these convictions is unique to Baptists but 'there is something distinctive about the way that Baptists have *held these convictions together*' (2006: 12). All of these convictions were held at GBC and shaped the life and witness of the congregation. Each of these convictions, and the way GBC was shaped by the belief, will now be briefly examined.

The gathered church. Baptist historian David Bebbington asserts that whereas Roman Catholic, Orthodox and some Protestant denominations view everyone who lives in a self-defined area as 'their adherents', Baptists see their churches as 'voluntary organisations' where people have to make a 'deliberate choice' having accepted 'Christ as Saviour' to apply to join (2018: 177). When I arrived at GBC the church was fairly inwardly focused as a result of a very painful end to the previous pastor's brief ministry. I believed that it was the right time for the church to begin re-engaging with the community in which it was set. Therefore, I gently encouraged what became a continual programme of reaching out to those in the local area with a view to seeing more people make the 'deliberate choice' to accept Christ as their saviour and join GBC. The process of reaching out was multi-faceted so as to engage with a variety of different people. Those attending GBC were regularly encouraged to talk to people they already knew in the local community to invite them to events at GBC. They were also regularly encouraged to speak to people around

them that they did not yet know, neighbours, parents they met at the school gate, fellow participants in sport or social activities etc. In addition, there were regular times when people were organised to cold-call on houses in the local area to introduce GBC to them. There were regular leaflet drops and posters inviting people to social events or special services such as Carols by Candlelight at Christmas. The significance of these outreach activities was that it increased the profile of the church and ensured a constant stream of visitors. There was a continual turnover of people who lived in the local area. As new people moved in, GBC's outreach activities gave them the opportunity to connect with the church. GBC became passionate about seeking to gather those in its local community.

The priesthood of all believers. Fiddes begins his section on *A Baptist Theology of Participation* by observing that 'True ecclesiology is an ecclesiology of participation' (2006: 66). He draws on three New Testament images. The first image is 'the church as 'the body of Christ'' (1 Cor. 12: 12, 27), noting that 'there is a simple and absolute identity; the bodily form of the risen Jesus is the church' (2006: 66). 'The point is that the members join to make the whole body visible …Like a computer-generated picture of a face, the many features of Christ come together to allow his face to stand out' (2006: 67).

The second image is 'the church as a temple indwelt by the Spirit of God' (1 Cor. 3: 9-17) (2006: 67):

> not a building made of inert blocks, but a structure that is alive like a body … composed of unlike people … quite different from each other in culture and tradition … We might say imaginatively that when God builds a temple God chooses a colourful mosaic of different building blocks (2006: 68).

The image of a 'colourful mosaic' closely links to the tapestry metaphor for GBC that is explored in section 2.6.

The third image is ‘the people of God’ (1 Pet. 2: 9) Fiddes notes that:

> there is a deliberate echo of Exodus 19: 6, and the link in both texts between the idea of being the ‘people of God’ and a ‘royal priesthood’ is especially significant … called to be a priestly mediator of this blessing to others, and to intercede with God for others (2006: 69).

Fiddes comments that:

> The images of body, temple and nation all express … a diversity within the church … yet there can be a tension between recognising the distinctiveness of another and achieving unity of fellowship. Engagement in the life of God means an experience of ‘otherness’, not only the otherness of God from humanity, the otherness of the Creator from the created; it is to participate in the otherness of the Creator from the created … To be part of a community which participates in the relationship in God means that we are brought up against the challenge of the … radically different, the unlike; but at the same time we have the security of experiencing a fellowship more intimate than anything we can otherwise know (2006: 81).

In the previous chapter it is noted that GBC saw itself as being a prophetic model of reconciliation to the surrounding community. The local Member of Parliament (Stephen Pound) and the leader of the London Borough of Ealing Council (Julian Bell) visited GBC during Sunday services and for special events on several occasions. In their spoken public and private comments they said that they appreciated the way that people at GBC were a united community clearly celebrating the mixture of ethnic cultures represented. At GBC the way that all were treated as equals before God modelled reconciliation to the surrounding community and was frequently remarked on by visitors to GBC events. There are comments about this phenomena from research participants in Chapters Four and Five.

The significance of being ‘a priesthood’ will be further explored in the next section.

The final authority of Christ. Fiddes asserts that ‘our Baptist identity has been forged in an interplay between three sources of authority – Christ, the Bible and the church meeting

… in that order' (2006: 52). The church meeting sits at the heart of decision making in a Baptist church. In Baptist language the expression 'church meeting' refers to the meeting where 'members come together to make decisions affecting every aspect of the church's life and work' (Bacon, 1981: 32). The pastor and the church leaders are subject to the decisions of the church meeting. Bacon asserts that there is no 'outside human authority with power to control its actions' (1981: 32). It should be noted that this degree of freedom became less for GBC over time (in common with all other churches in the UK) as government legislation increasingly impacted groups with charitable status. Currently the legal section of the Baptist Union of Great Britain website has an index of eighty-eight leaflets 'created to help local Baptist Churches with legal, property issues, and charity law' (Baptist Union Corporation, 2021: para. 1).

Fiddes makes clear that:

> The aim of the meeting of the church members for prayer and business is not to make majority decisions … The point is to find together the mind of Christ who is present in the midst of his church … and to use the scriptures to help us in this search of his purpose in our world today (2006: 52).

The belief in the 'priesthood of all believers' means that every member is to be considered a priest. Howard Marshall in his commentary on 1 Peter comments that 'the term "priest" should be dropped as a way of designating ministers of the gospel' as every Christian is a priest and therefore 'has in Christ the right of direct access to God without the need of any other mediator' (1991: 75). Peter Davids in his commentary on 1 Peter comments on 'the privileged position' of all believers in that as priests they all share 'the privilege of serving in the presence of the deity, of "coming near" where no one else dares' (1990: 92). The belief at GBC was that every Christian, and therefore every church member, had equal

access to God and equal right to speak in the church meeting. As people who were not a part of the White British majority applied to become members at GBC it was made clear to them, in the same way as it was to White British people, that they had not just the opportunity but an obligation to fully participate in the church meeting. This meant that, with further encouragement from me as chair of the church meetings, perspectives were heard in the church meeting from people from ethnic minorities in the church as well as from the White British majority.

The freedom that GBC had as a local church to decide how to order its affairs without interference from any other body was crucial in its development. The church meeting made the decisions on the appointment of staff, of changes to the structure of Sunday meetings, and the numerous other developments outlined in Chapter One. As long as GBC abided by the laws affecting charities there was no national or regional church hierarchy that could overrule them.

Believers' Baptism. Nigel Wright, former principle of Spurgeon's College (a Baptist College in the UK) and a former president of the Baptist Union of Great Britain, in his book *Free Church, Free State*, first published in 2005, discussed Believers' Baptism. He notes that 'those baptised are choosing baptism for themselves in response to the liberating call of God' (2011: 71) and that 'in the New Testament baptism was not an optional bolt-on to conversion but an intrinsic part of it' (2011: 98). He summarises the significance of believers' baptism as speaking of, 'being buried and raised with Christ and so of the cleansing and life changing impact of Christ's work upon those who embrace it in repentance and faith' (2011: 76). At GBC, services that included believers' baptism were

considered a highlight of church life and for those being baptised marked a radical change of alignment of their life, which included a commitment to discipleship. Following baptism, those baptised attended 'new believer's classes'. These weekly classes, which usually ran for around six months, explored biblical teaching on how a follower of Jesus should live.

The call to faithful corporate discipleship. Wright points out that 'discipling' sometimes is seen in church as a relationship where one person instructs another 'in the things of God'. However, he asserts that 'essentially it is a community project' because everyone has things to learn from others. 'Since Christ is in the midst and in each one it [discipleship] works in all directions' (2011: 66). At GBC the emphasis on corporate discipleship rather than individual discipleship worked well with those who came from cultural contexts where the community was seen as having more significance than the individual. The importance of this social fact will surface in the perspectives of the research participants in Chapters Four and Five.

Religious freedom. Thomas Helwys, who 'planted the first of the General Baptist churches in England' published his *Short Declaration of the Mistery of Iniquity* in 1612 (Bebbington, 2018: 38). Helwys argued for freedom of conscience in matters of faith, for all, 'Let them be heretics, Turks, Jews or whatsoever, it appertains not to the earthly power to punish them in the least measure' (Helwys and Groves, 1998: 53). Once each year GBC ran two classes for new members. At the first class there was teaching on Baptist origins and history. From 2009 a video produced by BMS World Mission entitled *Thomas Helwys, The Birth of Baptists in Europe* was shown. The video features an actor relating Helwys'

words from Newgate prison. Baptist commitment to freedom of conscience and the fact that British Baptists had been imprisoned for their commitment to such freedom was made clear to all members.

Fiddes, after observing that Baptists have 'from their beginnings … argued for freedom of conscience and religious liberty', gave historical and contemporary examples of these working in practice (2006: 259-264).

At GBC, not surprisingly given the wide range of contexts people had come from, there was a wide range of views held on many issues. For example, within the GBC membership there were some who believed that 'gay' marriage was acceptable, others believed that homosexual orientation was itself sinful even if people remained celibate. There were some who believed that abortion was sinful in nearly every situation and others who would have had an abortion themselves if they had discovered that their foetus was likely to have a serious life limiting disorder. Although these differences of view were from a narrower spectrum than that of full religious freedom, the underlying belief in religious freedom helped church members, most of the time, to be able to discuss differences of view with grace and to agree to disagree without negatively impacting relationships within the church. Such an attitude was essential for the church to maintain unity in its diversity. Wright comments that, 'tolerance of each other for the Lord's sake is a Christian virtue. It … enables diverse people to live together … The virtues which are learned and practiced in this way … can set the tone for the wider community' (2011: 223-224).

2.5.1 *Five Core Values* and GBC

As well as setting the ecclesiology of GBC in the context of historical Baptist beliefs and practices, it is important to set it within the context of the emphases of the Baptist Union during the period covered by the research. In 1996 following a Baptist Union denominational consultation, there was agreement that further work needed to be done to encourage British Baptists to 'grapple afresh with issues of living justly in our contemporary world' (The Baptist Union, no date b, para. 2). Following a meeting of the Baptist Union Council in November 1996 a task group was created and the *Five Core Values* (*FCVs*) was published in 1998 as an outcome of this process. Each core value was accompanied by a brief description of how it might be lived out within Baptist church life. The intention was for the *FCVs* to help the Baptist Union 'be committed to diversity and equality in terms of class, gender, and ethnic justice' (Goodliff, 2021: 14). These values were seen as 'a standard by which to measure all we are and do as Baptists' (The Baptist Union, no date b, para. 2).

The promotion of the *FCVs* must be viewed within the context of the issue of racism within the church in the UK and the 'diseased social imagination' described above. I know from my own work with the Baptist Union Racial Justice Working Group, that there was at times sustained resistance within the Baptist community to addressing racial justice issues. One of the aims of these values was to address problems with equality and justice for people from ethnic minorities both within Baptist churches and within the communities in which the churches were set. In March 2000, in a report to the Baptist Union Council from the Racial Justice Round Table (a Baptist working group set up in

response to the McPherson Report) there was a proposal 'to mark the year 2000 by using a study of *Five Core Values* … in order to initiate a sustained programme for tackling racism within our Union and in society' (Minutes of Racial Justice Working Group, March 2000). This statement is evidence both for the recognition of the reality of racism as an issue to be tackled within the Baptist Union and for the *FCVs* being a potential resource for tackling it.

There is no documented information on how GBC responded to or discussed the *FCVs*, but there was a copy of the original booklet among the documents from the 1990s. However, as will be seen from the comments below, GBC actively reflected and embodied all of the *FCVs* in the life of the church. This occurrence was perhaps partly because these values reflected some of those already being adopted within GBC, and partly because my involvement in the Racial Justice Working Group and its related activities actively kept these values to the forefront of my own thinking and leadership. The original sixteen-page A4 sized booklet has no page numbers or date of publication. In the following paragraphs all the quotations are taken from the original booklet.

Core value one was to be 'a prophetic community. Following Jesus in… Confronting evil, injustice and hypocrisy. Challenging worldly concepts of power, wealth, status and security.' Drawing on the 'dissenting history' of the Baptists this was a call 'to live distinctively and prophetically'. Among the challenges made that are relevant to this research were, 'taking seriously issues of justice in the world of work (e.g. discrimination …)' and 'Ensuring that the voices of marginalised groups are heard in Baptist structures at all levels'. As has already been described in Chapter One, and will be seen from the

research presented in Chapters Four and Five, addressing justice issues was a central part of the development of GBC, as was ensuring that marginalised voices were heard clearly within GBC.

Core value two was to be 'an inclusive community. Following Jesus in… Transcending barriers of gender, language, race, class, age and culture. Identifying with those who are rejected, deprived and powerless'. Drawing on the doctrine of the 'priesthood of all believers' this was a call 'to welcome and accept those on the margins of life and learn from them.' This core value was especially relevant at GBC. Among the challenges made were to work in the local church for the 'full participation' of those 'under represented', 'to welcome and affirm those who do not fit commonly accepted forms of speech, dress and appearance', ' to be open to those who are theologically different from us'. In wider society there was a call 'to promote positive attitudes to the two-thirds world and active support for mission and development agencies'. As has already been described in Chapter One, and will be explored in more detail in Chapters Four and Five, GBC worked hard to 'welcome and accept' everyone who the church came into contact with. Part of the meaning of the tapestry metaphor (see section 2.6) was to 'affirm' and 'learn from' people who were ethnically and culturally different from those who were White British.

Core value three was to be 'a sacrificial community. Following Jesus in… Accepting vulnerability and the necessity of sacrifice. Seeking to reflect the generous, life-giving nature of God'. Relevant to GBC was the call to 'vulnerability' rather than 'power and triumphalism'. The colonial heritage, as described earlier in this chapter, can lead to a tendency for White British people to see their values as 'correct'. The practice of

vulnerability and the willingness to sacrifice British ways of doing things was an important aspect in GBC's development. The outworking of this value included 'discovering ways to forgive each other' and 'supporting … those oppressed, those denied religious freedom.' The practice of vulnerability will be returned to later in this chapter.

Core value four was to be 'a missionary community. Following Jesus in… Demonstrating in word and action God's forgiving and healing love. Calling and enabling people to experience the love of God for themselves'. This value included a call 'to be communities of welcome, characterised by forgiveness, reconciliation and healing'. We have already noted the impact for GBC continually reaching out to those in the surrounding community. Chapter Four of this thesis includes research on the nature of the 'community of welcome' that seems to have been created at GBC.

Core value five was to be 'a worshipping community. Following Jesus in… Engaging in worship and prayer which inspire and undergird all we are and do. Exploring and expressing what it means to live together as the people of God, obeying his Word and following Christ in the whole of daily life.' Relevant to this research is the call to 'develop a broad appreciation of different approaches to worship, prayer and spirituality'. Chapter One looked at this aspect of the development of GBC from the point of view of the official documentation, Chapters Four and Five will explore the development of 'worship, prayer and spirituality' from the viewpoint of those who participated in the life of the church.

2.5.2 Summary

Baptist ecclesiology contributed to facilitating the changes that took place at GBC between 1987 and 2015. Belief in the gathered church encouraged church members to

reach out to everyone in the local community, leading to a steady stream of visitors. Belief in the priesthood of all believers, with its attendant theology of participation, meant that everyone who became a part of GBC was seen to have a relationship with God that potentially gave them important contributions to make into the life of the church community. Belief in the final authority of Christ meant that God's will as discerned by the meeting of the church members could be implemented without needing approval from any other authority and could not be overturned by any other authority providing that the church did not contravene its trust deed. The trust deed is a legal document that sets out how, in this context, a church building can be used. Belief in believer's baptism, with the connected commitment to faithful corporate discipleship, enabled a culture of mutual discipleship and learning to develop. Belief in religious freedom helped enable acceptance of others within GBC who held different opinions on moral and ethical issues, facilitating discussion and debate with an ability to agree to disagree without a breach of relationship.

The *FCVs* align with the developments at GBC. The leadership at GBC were deeply committed to Baptist values and actively engaged with the life of the Baptist Union so although there is no documentary evidence of a direct influence on GBC from the *FCVs*, it is probable that these values did influence GBC's development. Values one and two encouraged the welcome, acceptance and inclusion of people from other ethnicities. Values three and four encouraged the listening to and learning from people from other ethnicities. Value five encouraged the use of a wide range of approaches to prayer, spirituality and worship (including singing, movement and art). At GBC there was an

additional unique ecclesiological component which had a very significant influence on its development.

2.6 Tapestry as a Metaphor for Church

For most of the period covered by this research the metaphor of tapestry as a way of understanding the church was widely used within GBC. The metaphor was used during Sunday sermons and small group discussions but most significantly, it was a lens used by the GBC leaders as they looked at developments within the congregation. There was no physical tapestry at GBC nor any pictorial representation. During the research no other church has been identified as using the tapestry metaphor ecclesiologically and, apart from those written by David Wise, only one publication (from 2015) using tapestry as a metaphor for church has been identified.

Craig Ott writing in the journal *Missiology* explores how biblical metaphors can aid intercultural communication of the gospel. He comments that 'metaphor is a powerful communication tool that not only illustrates truth, but can touch emotions and can shape cognitive functions' (2014: 358). He points out that metaphor 'can communicate a whole complex set of meanings, relationships, dynamics and emotions' (2014: 360). Raymond Gibbs, in a paper delivered at the 5th International Cognitive Linguistics Conference, asserts that twenty years of research had shown that 'metaphor is not merely a figure of speech, but is a specific mental mapping that influences a good deal of how people think, reason, and imagine in everyday life' (1999: 145). Tapestry as a metaphor for church became a significant feature of GBC's shared identity.

2.6.1 The Biblical Roots of the Tapestry Metaphor

It was my reading of Colossians 2: 2, rendered in the Message Version as 'I want you to be woven into a tapestry of love', that led to my adoption of the tapestry metaphor as an image to guide the development of GBC. The underlying Greek verb rendered 'woven' is συμβιβάζώ. The standard Ancient Greek-English lexicon, Liddell and Scott, describes συμβιβάζώ as 'causal of συμβάινώ, *bring together*: Pass., *to be put together, to be knit together, framed'* (LSJ, 1675). New Testament commentators take a variety of positions on the interpretation of this verb. A detailed examination of the various options is not undertaken here as I simply want to note that this rendering is how I understood and used this verse and that this use is supported by mainstream biblical commentators. Peter O'Brien in his Word Biblical Commentary stated that 'the majority view … takes the verb συμβιβάζω in the sense of "unite" "knit together" a meaning equally well known from ancient times', although he, on balance, preferred the translation 'instructed' (1982: 93).

At GBC Colossians 2: 2 was read in conjunction with Ephesians 2:10 'we are God's workmanship' (all Bible quotations in this thesis are from the NIV unless otherwise stated). The underlying Greek noun here is ποίημα. Commentators note that ποίημα refers to a work of art or a masterpiece made by an artisan (Bruce, 1961: 52; Barth, 1974: 226; Hoehner, 2002: 346—347; Thielman, 2010: 145; Fowl, 2012: 79). O'Brien made a further point:

> The term rendered *workmanship* which often appears in the LXX to denote creation as God's work, has the same nuance of the physical creation in its only other New Testament occurrence (Rom. 1:29). But here in Ephesians 2:10, which stresses what believers are because of God, the cluster of creation terms, including this word and *created*, along with *good works*, is applied directly to the *new creation* (1999: 178).

The significance of this meaning is that Romans 1: 19-20 states that God can be 'clearly seen' through creation. This revealing of God takes place not only via the natural world but also via the church, God's new creation. GBC believed that as God wove the tapestry of GBC God was revealed through the emerging image to those inside and outside of the church community.

Ephesians 3: 10 states that 'His [God's] intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known'. O'Brien pointed out in his commentary that 'manifold' (πολυποίκιλο) 'was poetic in origin, referring to an intricately embroidered pattern of 'many-colored cloaks' or the manifold hues of a 'garland of flowers' (1999: 245). 'Many-colored cloaks' is reminiscent of the tapestry metaphor. David Byrd commented in his doctoral thesis that:

> "The manifold wisdom of God" in a real sense is the multiethnic [sic] wisdom of God. Further, this wisdom is "made known through the church." God intends for the church to display this incredible variety and diversity of peoples as one new body in Christ and the triumph of His wisdom (2013: 94).

The most significant colours in a tapestry are not usually the ones that there are most of, which are often the background colours. The most significant colours are those that mark out detail. There may be only a few threads of a particular colour but they can make a substantial contribution to the overall image. In the body metaphor for the Church found in 1 Corinthians 12, it is noted that parts that are 'weaker' or are hidden have been given 'greater honour' by God. In Chapters Four and Five of this thesis there is evidence from the research participants of significant contributions into GBC from ethnic groups that had very few members who were part of GBC.

The one occurrence of the use of tapestry as a metaphor for church outside of my own writing is in the book *Ethnicity, The Inclusive Church Resource* (2015). Here Michael Jagessar briefly mentions the metaphor of 'rainbow tapestry' in his conclusion to an exploration of 'a theology of ethnicity'. He notes that 'In the case of tapestry … each thread with its distinctive texture and colour is very important in its contribution to the beauty of the whole. Theologically our humanity is interwoven' (2015: 94). Jagessar's use of the tapestry metaphor is similar to that developed within GBC in that he emphasises that it is through the difference between the threads that the picture is made visible.

Willie Jennings in his commentary on Acts reflects on Timothy, whom he calls 'the mulatto child', 'a body formed between two peoples' having a Jewish mother who was a believer in Jesus and a Greek father who probably was not a believer (2017: 152-153). Jennings uses Timothy as a basis for a reflection on 'intercultural and interracial life'. He notes that 'Western life' is 'dogged by forms of belonging that narrow the possibilities of life lived in its fullness'. He then asks 'could you imagine a new way of seeing and being yourself, a way that weaves together the ways of many people?' (2017: 156). The use of the term 'weaves' is suggestive of tapestry.

At GBC the theological interpretation of the tapestry metaphor was framed by Rev. 7: 9-12 in which the image of heaven is one with people 'from every nation, tribe, people and language' standing and worshipping God together. In Chapter Four data from research participants who view their experience at GBC as an anticipation of heaven is presented, several of them refer directly to Revelation 7: 9-12. At GBC it was believed that there was something eternal about people's ethnicity and language, that in the future people from

every single ethnic group would be worshipping God together and that in the meantime people can anticipate, live out and reveal aspects of heaven in their corporate worship (Wise, 2004, 2009, 2018, 2021: 97).

2.6.2 The Impact within GBC of the Tapestry Metaphor

In June 2017 a small piece of preliminary research into the significance of the tapestry metaphor at GBC was undertaken. Five short (13 to 19 minutes) interviews were conducted with people who had been, or still were, a part of GBC's leadership. The five research participants from the preliminary research all subsequently became research participants in the main research project. From the analysis of these interviews five themes emerged which illustrate the significance of the tapestry metaphor at GBC. These findings are summarised below.

Subconscious identity: The five research participants each believed that the tapestry metaphor had entered GBC's shared subconscious identity. Kunle said:

> it [the tapestry metaphor] has become, if you like, the DNA of the church because everything is woven together and conscious effort is made to live that out in the way that we do things, the way we relate to each other and … the way we live our lives as well.

Brian commented:

> something I heard someone said in a conversation yesterday made me think that is the tapestry metaphor coming up, even though they may not say that or realise it for themselves …that is whatever their core understanding is.

Alvita related that people "have kind of in a sense grown accustom [sic] to it being in a sense a natural part of what the church is about. Then they have kind of just grabbed hold of it … welcoming people of all cultures".

The perspective of Alvita, Brian and Kunle, based on their lived experience as leaders at GBC, was that the tapestry metaphor was both at a conscious and a subconscious level shaping the congregational life, behaviour and self-identity at GBC.

Experiencing difference in unity: Dianne commented:

> In order to appreciate a tapestry, you need the different colours. You need the different shades and tones, so therefore in a congregation there needs to be appreciation of the differences there are, rather than trying to make everybody the same.

Kunle observed, "The tapestry is where every ethnic and cultural group is woven together and they enrich each other to make life, if you like, better in terms of the way that we worship God". Brian, commenting on worship within a recent Sunday service, said that "I don't think you would get that unless the tapestry metaphor was at the core of the church and there was that understanding of our uniqueness within togetherness". Alvita, "it is all about the different mix so to speak. People from different backgrounds coming together, being in one place, being as family… all His people of different nations, colours, class, being together".

Each of the research participants talked about how, in their lived experience, the tapestry metaphor helped enable difference to be experienced in a context of unity. This feature is one of the distinctives of the tapestry metaphor that differences are maintained, even celebrated, rather than there being an attempt to produce a blend.

Being 'woven together' leading to personal change: Kunle said:

> The strength of each group comes out when we are all together … we are able to be a better people than if we just look at our individual cultural or ethnic group … to actually see people as equals, rather than one group being inferior to the other.

Brian:

> It means this brother or sister from another ethnicity or people-group is able to be my close friend, even though we might have a difference of opinion or a different viewpoint we can still at our core talk about it, reconcile and walk forward together, recognising our differences and even celebrating them.

For both Kunle and Brian one aspect of the impact of the tapestry metaphor was a change in the way they viewed people from other ethnicities. They came to appreciate that difference was something they could celebrate and that could be a source to enrich their own lives. Brian further commented that a single person from another ethnicity "can bring a difference without having to think I'm only one person over here from one ethnic group. They realise they have something to play out in this". The single thread of a different colour can make a significant contribution to the emerging picture.

Dianne saw the tapestry metaphor as a tool to help combat racism:

> It is that awareness that racism was around … and seen as this is not who we should be. This is not what the Gospel says …. If the congregation could be self-aware, it is that recognition of that's not how it should be and therefore once that's identified, having the strength and the tools to say no, what needs to change.

With the tapestry metaphor there is no 'us' and 'them', rather all are 'us', woven together as part of the same picture with all of the ethnic differences being incorporated.

Embodying the Gospel: Brian said:

> First and foremost, the Gospel is about reconciliation … we, especially here in west London in our multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, diverse town are embodying reconciliation between people groups … that shows into the community outside.

Dianne commented that for her the tapestry metaphor applied to all of life not just church:

> For me, particularly living in London, being aware of the different nationalities and ethnicities that I live and work with, because I think the metaphor is a good one and a valuable one I don't think it just applies to church. It can apply to every area of life.

For Alvita the tapestry metaphor "kind of reflects what God wants us to do or what he wants us to be … that is just a representation of what it will be like in heaven".

The living out of the tapestry metaphor meant, in the view of the research participants, that the gospel was embodied within GBC in ways that otherwise may not have been the case. In particular the embodiment of reconciliation, which Brian describes as "at the heart of the gospel", was seen by the local community in the way that people from many different ethnicities within GBC shared life together. At GBC, guided by the tapestry metaphor, a community of people united in their Christian faith yet maintaining their ethnic identity and diversity was visible, which GBC believed revealed something of God.

The cost of living the metaphor: Several of the research participants commented that the changes that had taken place within GBC during its transition had been difficult for some to cope with and that some people had withdrawn from the congregation. This outcome was also referred to in Chapter One.

2.6.3 The Significance of the Tapestry Metaphor

The research described in 2.6.2 indicates that the five participants in this small preliminary study, all of whom were drawn from the leadership of GBC, believed that the tapestry metaphor had a role in shaping the development of the GBC congregation. The tapestry metaphor was a concept that people could easily grasp. The research participants believed that the metaphor had become an aspect of GBC's self-identity that helped shape the experiencing of unity within a context of diversity, that it helped facilitate personal change, and that it helped embody reconciliation (Gibbs, 1999: 145). The preliminary

research pointed to the acceptance and celebration of ethnic difference in the context of an experience of unity that became a hallmark of GBC being rooted in living out the tapestry metaphor of church.

In *The Christian Imagination* Jennings introduced the concept of a 'diseased social imagination' after relating an account of a visit by two White evangelists to his home in Grand Rapids Michigan and an account of the response by some Dutch Reformed professors to his first sermon in the chapel of Calvin College where he was a student (2010: 1-6). Rooted in Jennings' lived experience is an awareness that something is 'missing'. That something is a sustained 'ability to see the profound connections' between 'very different people' (2010: 7). Putting the lived experience of racism of the Christian writers related above, alongside the lived experiences of research participants related in Chapters Four and Five and my own observations over the years, I am convinced by Jennings' description and conceptualisation of reality.

Romans 12: 2 says, 'Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind'. 'Diseased social imagination' needs transforming for the potential joining between different people to take place. I began this doctoral programme with a desire to understand what had taken place at GBC that enabled the creation of a genuinely multi-ethnic church congregation. In my preliminary research I discovered the significance of the role of the tapestry metaphor. However, it was not until I engaged with Jennings' writing that I saw that potentially the tapestry metaphor was of crucial significance in that it displaced the 'diseased social imagination'. This observation links back to Gibbs' understanding of the way that metaphor works which is

discussed in section 2.6 (Gibbs, 1999: 145). Jennings poses the question in his subsequent commentary on Acts (already quoted) 'could you imagine a new way of seeing and being yourself, a way that weaves together the ways of many people?' (2017: 156). The research presented here implies that at GBC a new imagination, in the form of the tapestry metaphor, took root that, to some degree, overwrote the 'diseased social imagination' articulated by Jennings. There seems to have been transformation by the renewal of the mind. Further evidence of this will be seen in the presentation of the key themes from the main research presented in Chapters Four and Five. In Chapter Six there will be further reflection on the significance of the tapestry metaphor at GBC.

2.7 Theological Arguments for the Creation of Multi-Ethnic Church

Smith, whose research was introduced in section 2.2, notes that in terms of the situation within the UK church there are many examples of:

> warm relationships and Christian love between believers of different ethnic backgrounds in many local congregations …However, it remains the case that in major cities Sunday worship is highly segregated … urban congregations, where there is a diverse religious market, draw like-minded people together, according to age and family status, educational level, theological and worship style preference but above all by language and ethnicity. London in particular has congregations worshiping separately in scores of different languages (2018: 17).

Smith quotes data from an Evangelical Alliance survey conducted in 2014 where '39% of the BME respondents and 55% of the white respondents said they attended a church where "most of the people in my church are of the same ethnicity as me"' (2018: 19-20).

Some scholars argue that there is a theological argument to be made for the intentional creation of multi-ethnic churches. David Byrd, whose doctoral thesis argued for a multi-congregational expression of multi-ethnic church, asserts from a survey of Old and New

Testament texts that 'bringing together as one body people from diverse social, generational, economical, and racial backgrounds' is a 'facet' of 'God's plan to restore unity and wholeness' to humankind (2013: 69).

Richard Hardison, writing from a Southern Baptist context in the United States of America, summarises in Chapter Two of his doctoral thesis what he saw as the seven arguments put forward by exponents of multi-ethnic church:

> The Babel/Pentecost argument maintains that Pentecost reverses the ethnic separation that stems from Babel. The hospitality/love argument points out that faithfulness to the biblical commands to love one another and care for strangers necessitates a multi-ethnic church. The argument based on the ministry of Christ highlights Jesus' multi-ethnic ministry and his selflessness in the incarnation, which provides an example of the self-sacrificial character that is necessary in multi-ethnic churches. The unity argument proposes that the oneness of the church is compromised when the church divides along ethnic lines. The Jew/Gentile argument compares Jew/Gentile relations to modern ethnic distinctions. The NT emphasizes practical unity between Jews and Gentiles, which should extend to all ethnic groups in the church. The heaven argument claims the church on earth should look like the multi-ethnic church of the future. Finally, the argument based on NT examples examines the cultural diversity present in the churches of Jerusalem and Antioch, and these multi-ethnic churches are prescriptive for today (2014: 88).

In Chapter Three he critiques the same seven arguments. His aim is to show that although the creation of multi-ethnic churches can be justified from a consideration of scripture; there is no valid argument that scripture requires their creation, even where the community in which the church is set is multi-ethnic. His conclusion is that:

> Scripture offers no injunction to be multi-ethnic or monoethnic. As the church labors to take the gospel across cultures, it can do so by trying to establish a multi-ethnic church or by planting or partnering with a church that is a different ethnicity (2014: 152).

It is my view that Hardison in his thesis effectively highlights areas where proponents of multi-ethnic church overreach in their theological arguments. It is important to note that

GBC, as was explored in the previous chapter, made the decision to intentionally move towards the creation of a genuinely multi-ethnic church in response to what it believed was the leading of Christ. At the same time it recognised that the Bible portrays heaven as a genuinely multi-ethnic destination and that in the New Testament a Christian's primary identity is found in Christ not in ethnicity. Therefore, for GBC, it was not a belief that becoming a multi-ethnic church was required by the Bible, but a belief that it was required by God for GBC at that point in time, that lay behind the intentionality of the development.

Paul Mbandi's doctoral thesis is entitled *Toward a theological understanding of the unity of the church in relation to ethnic diversity*. Mbandi notes from Genesis 1 v 26-27 that human beings are created in the image of God. Mbandi argues that 'cultural diversity is a result of God's image in humans and his blessing on humans … cultural diversity was not intended for creating disunity among humans, but for God's glory.' However, as a result of 'the fall' '"culture" as a characteristic of ethnicity unites humans, and at the same time, caused disunity among people' (2004: 92-94). Mbandi asserts that any belief 'that one's own ethnic group or culture is superior to another contradicts the biblical teaching that all peoples are created in the image of God' (2004: 96). Drawing from Jesus' example as described in Philippians 2 v 1-8, Mbandi argues that believers should have a humble acceptance that although different ethnic groups have different practices and beliefs, none should be regarded as inferior or superior (2004: 159-160). Further he argues that 'Christ identified fully with humanity without stopping being God' which 'implies the possibility of Christians from different ethnic groups identifying with one another, in the sense of

unity in worship or services for the Lord, without losing their ethnic or cultural identity' (2004: 162-163). He consequently takes issue with the idea of 'assimilation' in some form of 'melting pot' to produce 'one new people', often meaning the adoption of the strongest group's culture. He sees 'assimilation' as contrary to what was witnessed in the incarnation where 'Christ did not lose his identity as God, yet he fully identified with humanity' (2004: 163).

Drawing on Paul's appeal to the Corinthian believers to regard everyone who is in Christ as a 'new creation' (2 Corinthians 5: 16-17) Mbandi extends it to the modern day context of 'multi-ethnic communities':

> Rather than judging one another based on ethnic origin or affiliation, believers are to judge one another according to their common standing and spiritual service in the body of Christ. This would foster visible unity and consequent fellowship among Christians from different ethnic groups (2004: 201).

Mbandi also draws on the biblical metaphor of the church as 'God's household or large family (1 Timothy 3: 15)':

> God is viewed as the heavenly Father and Christians are his sons and daughters (cf. 2 Cor 6:18). Thus, believers are brothers and sisters with one another (cf. Matt 12:49-50; 1 John 3:14-18). The imagery of God's family describes the nature of unity which God's people should have with one another. The unity of the members of the new creation, the church, must be similar to the unity of the family (2004: 215).

Commenting on the image in Revelation 7 of the church worshipping in heaven, Mbandi asserts that 'the depiction of the consummated church as composed of the redeemed from diverse ethnic groups has a theological implication for the unity of church in a multi-ethnic context' (2004: 255). He argues that if this outcome is to be the destiny of believers 'churches in a multi-ethnic context should strive for integrated mutual fellowship that

transcends worldly divisions, prejudices, and discriminations that are rooted in ethnocentrism or "racism"' (2004: 256).

From the brief survey above it is clear that a cogent theological case can be argued for creating multi-ethnic churches in areas where people from a variety of ethnicities reside. The final section of this chapter will engage with Andrew Draper's *Ecclesiology of Joining* while drawing together the theological reflections on racism and the reflections on aspects of the ecclesiology at GBC.

2.8 Disrupting Racism through *An Ecclesiology of Joining*

The Rev. Dr. Andrew Draper is the 'founding senior pastor of Urban Light Community Church' in Muncie, Indiana, USA (Urban Light Community Church, no date: para. 1) He describes himself as 'a white pastor living and ministering in an urban community that is primarily black and white' (2016: 3). His book *A Theology of Race and Place* (2016) engages with the work of Willie James Jennings and J. Cameron Carter. The concluding chapter is entitled *An Ecclesiology of Joining*. Draper's work is relevant to this research as he develops a conceptualisation that is used here to draw together aspects of GBC's ecclesiology and understand some ways that it enabled people to be joined together. Although Draper was writing of his church in the USA there is a parallel to GBC in that he was a White pastor seeking to build a congregation where people from different ethnic backgrounds were joined together.

Draper exegetes the parable in Luke 10 commonly called 'The Good Samaritan'. A Jewish legal expert posed a question in order to test Jesus. Draper argues that Jesus in telling the parable expected the legal expert to identify with the naked, half-dead man

robbed, beaten and left in a ditch. Draper comments that the legal expert would have understood that the priest and the Levite passing by without offering any assistance was appropriate because of their observance of Jewish ceremonial law (2016: 276-277). The Samaritan was, 'A man of mixed ethnic ancestry whose lineage in the prophetic imagination represented the unfaithfulness of the northern kingdom in forsaking YHWH and intermarrying with the *ethnos* … a symbol of impure hybridity' (2016: 276).

It was the Samaritan in the story who took care of the naked, half-dead Jewish man. Draper comments that Jesus' final question to the legal expert was not '*to whom* the wounded man was a neighbor' but who 'proved to be a neighbor *to the* man' [italics original]:

> This is a critical distinction. Jesus was not putting the lawyer in the driver's seat of being able to choose his own neighbors or in the powerful position of being the one to help another, thereby becoming a good neighbor (2016: 278).

The legal expert had to respond that the '"other" of mixed ethnic ancestry' was 'the one' who helped the 'broken' Jewish man, with whom the legal expert identified. The standard Christian interpretation of this parable views Jesus' injunction to 'go and do likewise' as an 'exhortation for helping the poor and broken out of their own self-sufficient means' (2016: 279). Whereas Draper argues that Jesus' exhortation was a call for the Jewish legal expert to go and 'allow himself to be helped by the unlike other' (2016: 280).

Draper's reading of this parable is unconventional. However, the point he draws out has resonance with the experience of GBC. At GBC there developed a willingness on the part of many of the White British members to be vulnerable to the views of people from other ethnicities, allowing themselves 'to be helped by the unlike other'.

Draper's interpretation also resonates with the *FCVs* outlined in section 2.6.1. Core value two includes the text, 'to welcome and accept those on the margins of life and learn from them.' Core value three includes practicing 'vulnerability' rather than operating out of a mind-set that believed it had little to learn from 'others'. The practice at GBC of the willingness to not only accept 'others' but to 'learn from them' will be seen in the presentation of the research findings in Chapters Four and Five and will be further discussed in Chapter Six.

Draper also considers the image of the body of Christ in 1 Corinthians 12:

> For Paul, the scandal of the body of Christ is that people who have no business being together are intentionally intermeshing their lives in a shared space so as to constitute a new creature (a new "people"), an inseparable whole in which difference is maintained while being conjoined (2016: 281).

Draper's language here has strong resonance with the tapestry metaphor for the body of Christ used at GBC. The metaphor of 'intermeshing' is similar to the metaphor of 'weaving'. The maintenance of difference while being in unity resonates with the tapestry metaphor concept of the individuality and distinctiveness of different threads joined together, forming one image or picture.

For Draper, the body passage is not primarily about the way that 'spiritual gifts' operate in the church. Instead, it is about the assertion that 'if various body parts -representative of socioeconomic and ethnic designations- are not physically joined together in particular local space there is no body' (2016: 282). If 'similar body parts' are joined together by themselves 'it does not constitute a body' but rather 'a dismembered corpse … Neither assimilation nor separation … amount to a proper ecclesiology' (2016: 282-283). Fiddes

application of 1 Corinthians 12 has a similar emphasis to Draper, 'The point is that the members join to make the whole body visible' (2006: 67).

> Engagement in the life of God means an experience of 'otherness' … to be part of a community which participates in the relationship in God means that we are brought up against the challenge of the … radically different, the unlike (2006: 81).

At GBC this approach to interpreting the 'body of Christ' image in I Corinthians 12 was featured in the regular 'Reaching Your Potential in God' workshops described in Chapter One. As a part of exploring what it meant to be a part of GBC, 1 Corinthians 12 was read and it was emphasised that it was in the radically different parts being joined together and working in harmony, that the body of Christ became visible and effective in the local community.

In moving towards his conclusion, Draper explores 'eating together' as a part of his *Ecclesiology of Joining*. Draper describes the development of the church community eating together in the congregation in which he is the pastor. He notes the experience that 'people who should not be eating together receive their daily bread from the unlike other'. This practice includes the dissolving of 'socioeconomic distinctions' and also the way that 'foods which are commonly served only in homogeneous familial settings are now extended throughout the family of God' (2016: 288-289). In Chapters Four and Five the significance for research participants of eating the foods of people from other ethnicities, and of having their own ethnic food eaten by people from different ethnicities in regular, frequent events at GBC is described. It will become clear that the practice of gathered church eating together foods from many ethnicities was an important aspect in the development of GBC.

Draper also identifies the importance of 'mutual participation', which he saw as suggested by the biblical 'concept of mutual submission'. Fiddes, already quoted above, observes that 'True ecclesiology is an ecclesiology of participation' (2006: 66). Draper asks 'if Christ is the New Human who inaugurates a new way of being in the world for all peoples … how can the Incarnation be embodied in anything other than a joined life?' (2016: 311-312). Having settled as a part of a Baptist church outside of London I am now acutely aware of the difference between the sharing of life joined together that was our experience at GBC and being friendly but keeping entirely separate lives that is the norm in my new church context.

Draper's suggestive *Ecclesiology of Joining* is a helpful way of conceptualising the ecclesiology in use at GBC. Draper's work was published a year after the end of the period being examined at GBC so had no influence on GBC. However, the concept of an *Ecclesiology of Joining* is in harmony with standard Baptist ecclesiology and the emphases of the *FCVs*. It is highly significant that such an ecclesiology undermines racist views as it stresses that all are equally part of the body of Christ, there is no one who is 'other', in some way less a part of Christ's body. At GBC, as will be seen through the lived experience of the research participants described in Chapters Four and Five, as the congregation embraced and lived out the tapestry metaphor it seems that racist views arising from a 'diseased social imagination' were displaced.

2.9 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter began with noting some recently published perspectives on the problem of racism within the UK church. Drawing on the work of Willie James Jennings, an African-

American Baptist theologian, his concept of a 'diseased social imagination' was identified as being a helpful way of viewing the source of racism today together with his hope that theology could provide resources for tackling 'diseased social imagination' and thereby racism and White Supremacy. Baptist ecclesiology, and how this had helped facilitate changes within GBC during the period being researched, was explored. In addition to looking at Baptist ecclesiology in general the *FCVs*, which were a key part of Baptist culture from 1998, were outlined and assessed for their potential impact within GBC. It was concluded that although there is no documentary evidence of a direct influence on GBC from the *FCVs*, it is probable that these values did influence GBC's development.

The 'diseased social imagination' was identified as a key concept that helped explore the significance of the tapestry metaphor, apparently uniquely used at GBC. The crucial significance of the metaphor at GBC for disrupting the 'diseased social imagination' and enabling the creation of a united church congregation where ethnic difference was maintained was observed. Andrew Draper's *Ecclesiology of Joining* was seen to be a helpful way of conceptualising the ecclesiology that developed at GBC, which provided a way to help build a genuinely multi-ethnic congregation.

In Chapter Six there is further theological reflection that returns to, and develops, the thinking in this chapter through the lens of the outcomes from the research. In Chapters Four and Five the key themes that emerged from the focus groups and interviews with the forty-seven research participants will be presented.

In the next chapter the research design, methodology and the implementation of that design will be presented.

3 Research Design, Methodology and Implementation

3.1 Introduction

This research investigates the transition of GBC between October 1987 and January 2015 from a predominantly White British congregation to a genuinely multi-ethnic one. By January 2015 there were people from more than forty-five different countries within the congregation and the worship, prayer, Bible teaching, leadership, in fact every aspect of church life drew on and reflected the many cultures/ethnicities represented in the church. The objective of the research was to increase the understanding of this transition. The aim after completion of this research is to produce resources that will help others in their navigation of a similar transition. The research sources that were available were official church documents, alongside other original documents that I had kept over the years, people who had been present in GBC during the transition and my own lived experience as a pastor within GBC for the whole of the period. The official church documents were a complete set of the minutes of both leadership and 'church meetings' (these, as described in Chapter One, are decision making meetings of church members). The research was designed to enable the generation of good quality data from each source and then to enable the combination of the different types of data to generate insights into the process of congregational transformation.

The methodology of other researchers was examined to see how they had approached data collection and analysis and how their approaches could be both drawn on, and improved, for the GBC context. For example, Doreen Morrison, as a part of her PhD, conducted research within Cannon Street Memorial Baptist Church in Birmingham, UK. The focus

of her research, the 'worship and personal experience' of 'British Caribbean Christians' (2012: abstract) is different to mine, but the context of looking in depth at the experience and views of members of one Baptist church is similar. The methods Morrison chose to use were participant observation, description, focus groups, interviews of members holding leadership positions, documentary analysis and audio analysis of sermons using a Grounded Theory approach (2012: 137-144). She argues that using a variety of methods to generate data enabled a 'greater degree of accuracy' (2012: 143).

The methods that I chose to use were documentary analysis, a workshop, focus groups and interviews using a Grounded Theory approach along with autoethnographic reflection. Morrison came from outside to conduct her research whereas I was in post as a pastor throughout the period covered by this study; in this sense, the investigation is partially auto-ethnographic in nature hence the inclusion of autoethnographic reflection instead of participant observation. In the initial design for this research, only key leaders were to be interviewed, however this approach was later broadened based on observations from the first two focus groups. This adaption is discussed in 3.6.

This type of research, studying what people think and how they understand/interpret the world around them, sits inside the interpretivist research paradigm (Thomas, 2013: 108). In this context it is important to make clear that I came to this research not as a 'detached observer'; I was deeply involved in shaping the development of the congregation as it transitioned, as well as involved as a pastor in the lives of all those who were a part of the congregation and therefore a pastor to all of the research participants. For some this engagement had been a passing involvement, for others I had been very closely involved

in aspects of their lives over extended periods of time. Autoethnography, which 'has become an important and legitimate method in many disciplines and research contexts' (Adams, Jones and Ellis, 2015: 18) is a key part of the research design. Autoethnography is 'a method for exploring, understanding and writing from, through and with personal experiences in relation to and in the context of the experience of others' (Adams, Jones and Ellis, 2015: 22-23).

The research design, in overview, is a structured approach based on the foundation of the 'official' narrative, the way that the transition had been recorded in official documents with reference to newspaper and magazine coverage as appropriate. This narrative, supplemented by a Timeline Workshop, identified the themes for exploration in the focus groups. The focus groups identified areas for investigation in the interviews. Each individual interview provided further data for exploration in subsequent interviews. At each stage of this structured approach, further insight arising from my insider knowledge and autoethnographic reflection was included. This design enabled original, deep, insightful views to emerge of the transition of GBC as seen by those who participated in it. The overview of the research design is summarised in Figure 3.1 below. The various stages outlined in the figure will be described in detail in sections 3.4 to 3.7 below.

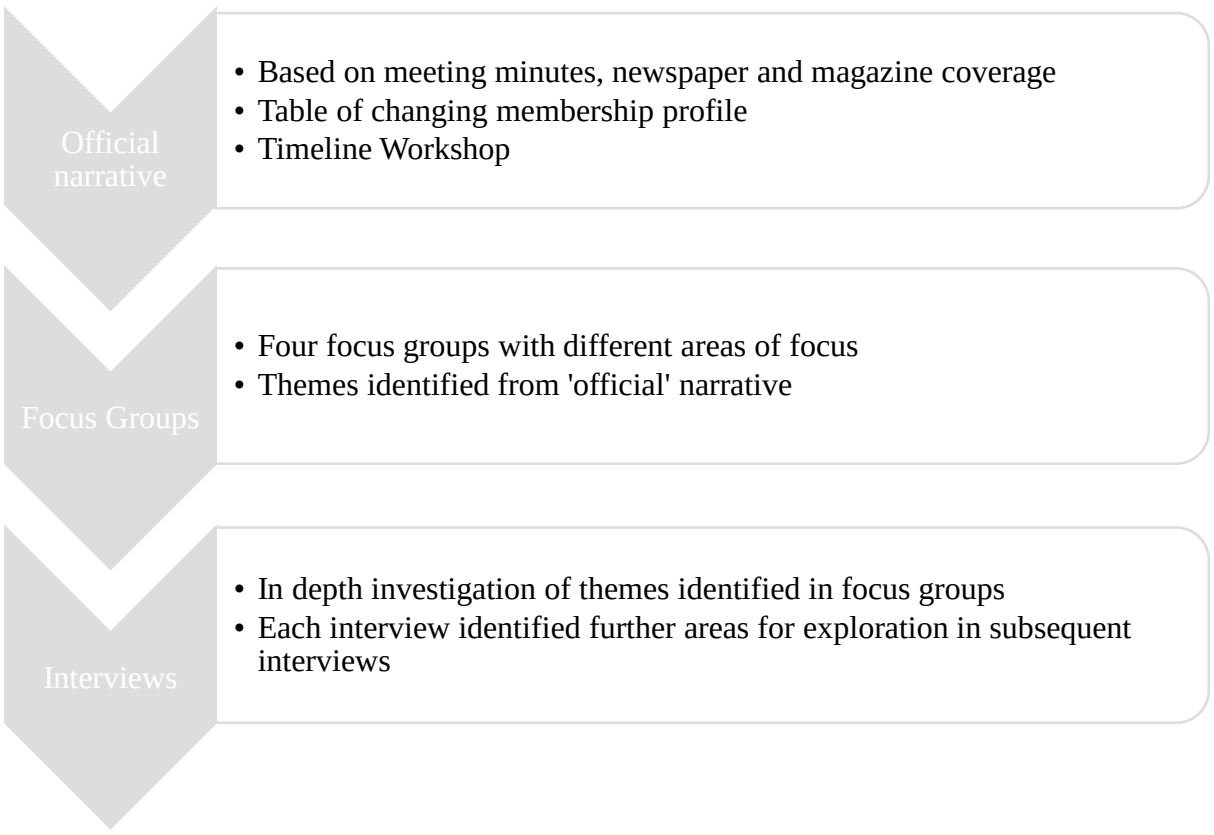

Figure 3.1: Overview of Research Design

3.2 Situating the Research

This research sits centrally within Practical Theology as I critically and theologically reflect on the transition within GBC from October 1987 to January 2015. John Swinton and Harriet Mowat define Practical Theology as '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 redemptive practices in, to and for the world' (2006: 6). The GBC leadership and congregation sought to live out their Christian lives faithfully engaging with God, their brothers and sisters in Christ and the surrounding society. The desire to faithfully serve God was a motivation for the changes that took place at GBC. The research is focussed on the practices at GBC, to understand what took place

within the congregation, rather than examining whether GBC succeeded in its intention of faithfully serving God. The research critically interrogates the events as they are described in documents, related by the research participants and recalled in my memory.

Practical Theological research is a multi-disciplinary activity. Cartledge helpfully observes that 'Practical Theology conceived as an empirical discipline uses the tools and methods of the social sciences to map out the beliefs and values, attitudes and practices of individuals and communities' (2010: 15). Such research is by its very nature qualitative, 'qualitative research focuses on human intentions, motivations, emotions and actions' (Adams, Jones & Ellis, 2015: 21).

The originality of this research is not in the development and application of entirely novel approaches. The originality is in the application of standard approaches, adapted for the local context, to critically examine the transition that took place from a mono-ethnic to a multi-ethnic congregation over a twenty-eight year period. This research is also original in that, as far as I am aware, there is no equivalent longitudinal study of a single congregation.

3.3 Ethics

Ethics approval was received from the University of Roehampton for this research. See Appendix 3. All the research participants were over 18 years of age; all completed the University's Participant Consent Forms, which are in Appendix 4. Each participant was given a pseudonym that reflected their self-described ethnicity and gender. However, there is no attempt to disguise the fact that the research was based at GBC, as an internet search

would quickly connect me with the church (Moschella, 2008: 95). The consent form therefore included the statement:

> I intend to do all I can to protect your identity however the name of Greenford Baptist Church will appear in the research and in publications and it may therefore be possible for readers of the research to work out the identity of people who have been interviewed (Appendix 4).

A detailed description of the various stages of the research design that were outlined above is provided in the following sections.

3.4 Documentary Analysis

As outlined in the diagram above, the initial phase of the research was an examination of the documents that were available in order to gain an overview of the church's transition. This was to help create a framework to draw on when designing focus groups and interviews. Although I had been a leader in the church for the whole of the period the research covered, this examination was the first retrospective look at the overall transition and the first assessment of the significance of specific events in that transition. The documentary sources that were available were a complete set of minutes of the monthly meetings of the church leadership and a complete set of minutes of the bi-monthly members' meetings, also known as 'church meetings'. In addition, various other original documents were found to be significant for the research, including newspaper and magazine articles and original correspondence relating to a serious racially motivated assault on a church family and the subsequent investigation by the Police Complaints Authority. This event had a profound effect on GBC at the time.

The documentary research from the two sets of minutes (one from leadership meetings and one from membership meetings) that covered the period from October 1987 to

January 2015 was intended to create a structure of events from an 'official' point of view. Other original documents that were available and relevant were also integrated to help build the structure. The minutes are an official record of decisions taken in meetings so there was rarely any attempt to relate conversations or discussions. The minutes were written and agreed in the knowledge that they were 'public' documents, so care was taken not to include anything that might be misconstrued. Charmaz observes that 'documents do not stand as objective facts … people create documents for specific purposes … within social, economic, historical, cultural and situational contexts' (2014: 46). However, I was present at, and usually chaired, most of these meetings so I could draw on my own insider knowledge to supplement and interpret the written account.

3.4.1 Analysis of the Changing Profile of the Membership

At the start of the research period GBC was overwhelmingly White British and at the end was Black Majority. This change in membership had never been tracked. As a part of the research it was decided to produce a table to show how the ethnic composition of the membership of GBC had changed over time. It would have been illuminating to have been able to also produce a table that showed the change in the ethnic composition of the *congregation* over time, but this was not possible. In Baptist churches people have to apply to become members, and at GBC it was expected that normally church members would have been baptised as teenagers or adults by total immersion. This meant that there were significantly more people who were part of the congregation than those who were formally members of the church. Additionally, there was a time lag between changes in the make-up of the congregation and changes in the make-up of the membership. However,

there were no records kept of the congregational makeup whereas new and leaving members' details were recorded in a membership book. There was no information recorded in the membership book concerning the ethnicity of members. Therefore, I used my memory of each member to classify him or her. As I did not consistently have sufficient information as to whether someone was, for example, Black British or Black Caribbean I classified each member as White British or Other than White British, as this would give a picture of the changing profile of the membership over time. In the group classified as 'Other than White British' as well as people born in many other parts of the world there are people who are British born but other than White and there are a few White people who are not British, for example there is one Hungarian. This table can be seen in Appendix 1 and it provides a picture of the changing membership over time. It identifies that from 2000 to 2005 the White British proportion of the membership declined from 65% to 45%. Putting this fact alongside information from the minutes where the period of 2000 to 2005 was identified as a period of rapid major and significant change within the congregation, this period was chosen as the subject for a focus group investigation and for questions in interviews to those who were present at GBC during this time.

In order to clarify the story told through the minutes, and the table of change in the ethnicity of membership, a Narrative Account was written following the themes that emerged from the documents such as membership, welcoming new people, leadership, staff and the intentional addressing of multi-ethnic issues. The Narrative Account was used to identify the themes to be explored in the focus groups and to shape questions used

in subsequent interviews. A revised version of the Thematic Narrative Account is included in Chapter One.

3.5 Key Events Document and Time-Line Workshop

Nancy Ammerman et al in *Studying Congregations* (1998), suggest the production of a Congregational Time Line as one of the methods for investigating the story of a congregation (1998: 209). The production of a Key Events Chart leading to a Time-Line Workshop was therefore included in the research design to produce a clear and accessible tabulation that would frame the subsequent focus groups and interviews.

Drawing on the notes from the minutes, significant developments during the transition towards a multi-ethnic congregation and other key events in the life of the church were entered into a Key Events document. Ammerman et al suggest that bringing congregational members together for a workshop can generate useful data. A workshop involving members who had been a part of GBC during all, or most, of the period covered by the research was held to investigate what they considered key events during this period. This data was used to supplement the 'official' version recorded in the minutes. The primary aim of the workshop was to generate 'a historical rendering of the life of the congregation as recalled by its members' (1998: 209). This included exploring how members saw themselves and the congregation as a whole within the wider context of the area, denominational developments, the nation and the world.

The target size for participants for the workshop was ten to twelve people, which was the optimum number for engagement with the process during the evening. The participants were mainly current members who had been attending GBC for all of the period covered

by the research. Some current members born in Africa, who had joined GBC a few years after I arrived, were added in order to get a better ethnic mix as there were no Africans attending the congregation until 1991. Recruitment stopped when eleven members agreed to participate. Of these eleven, six had previously attended a Focus Group and none had so far been interviewed. Between them they had attended GBC for 381 years, with a mean average of just under 35 years each.

The design of the evening, including the layout of the room, was based on Ammerman but amended for our local context (1998: 209-210). The workshop was held in the room that GBC had used for worship, prayer and church meetings over the years as it might help prompt memories. After filling in a demographics form (which was shredded once the data had been tabulated) and a briefing, the participants were divided into three groups. To ensure that each group had a wide breadth of experience each group included people who were attending GBC in October 1987 and a mixture of White British and Nigerian or Jamaican born. The Key Events Document was divided into three sections each of which had its own data capture materials. The chart showing the change of the proportion of the White British membership year by year was on display. During the workshop each group worked in turn on a section of the Key Event Document recording what they considered important events both within GBC and in the wider world, each group covered the three sections. They were encouraged to use their phones to confirm dates on events outside of GBC.

After the sessions were complete there was an opportunity for discussion and debrief. This was not in Ammerman's design but it was added to create an opportunity to hear any

memories or observations that had arisen during the evening. Subsequently all the data gathered during the evening was added into the Key Events document, which appears in Appendix 5. The workshop did not produce any surprising new insights; however, there were events identified as significant because of the personal involvement of someone present in the workshop.

3.6 Focus Groups

The three sources of data for the research were documents, people and my own memory. Having first examined all of the documents that were available to me and written an account of the transition of GBC based on those documents, and also drawing on my memories, the next stage in the research design was to collect data from people who had been a part of GBC during the transition. The initial research design was to conduct ten focus groups followed by three interviews one with each of the other most senior leaders at GBC. However, experience and observation within the focus groups led to a significant change in the research design.

I had initially chosen to mainly use focus groups for data generation from people as I believed that the interaction between group members would result in richer data being generated than that purely from interviews. Cartledge describes his use of focus groups as 'a way of getting people with a common spirituality to talk together in depth … in a non-threatening environment' (2010: 24). Within a focus group the interaction between group members as they talk about their memories, their experiences and their interpretation of events itself generates data (Denscombe, 2010: 353). As the research was

exploring events from as much as 30 years earlier, the use of focus groups was intended to prompt interaction between members that would allow memories to surface.

There was good interaction between group members, with comments from one person prompting memories from another and differing views being expressed and discussed. However, not everything that someone might have shared was expressed in the group. I observed that there was avoidance of exploring some painful topics that were mentioned, leading me to the view that there seemed to be scope for deeper exploration of issues than was appropriate within focus groups. As the focus group facilitator it was not my role to lead the discussion or to ask probing questions of individuals in the group (Thomas, 2013: 203). In the light of this observation I decided to only hold an initial four focus groups and then to interview more people drawn from a wider spread of participants than in the original research design.

One focus group was run every two weeks from 10th February 2019 to 24th March 2019. Appendix 6 contains the schedule and the questions used to shape the discussions. Appendix 7 contains the combined demographics of the focus group participants. Arranging the groups two weeks apart gave time for me to review and code the data from one group before the next one took place. Each group was intended to have between six and nine people participating. This number was recommended as giving the most productive interaction (Denscombe, 2010: 355, Thomas, 2013: 204). Each group met in a room at the church building, was scheduled to run for between sixty and seventy-five minutes and was audio recorded using hand-held microphones. The person employed to transcribe the focus groups was also employed to set up and monitor the audio recording

so that I could concentrate on facilitating the group. Participants were asked to arrive fifteen minutes before the group was due to start. On arrival each person was given the participant consent form to complete, when they had returned it they were given the participant data form. Cake and hot drinks were available to help generate a welcoming atmosphere. The participants sat in a circle and I began by briefly explaining the research and how the group was going to be conducted. Prior to the session an aim had been set for each focus group and a series of open questions had been devised to shape the discussion. Participants needed to raise their hand when they wanted to speak so that the audio assistant or the person speaking previously could pass them a microphone to ensure that their contribution was recorded. Each of the groups was a locus for intercultural communication which can be challenging to facilitate (Branson and Martinez, 2011: 189-209). However, my 'insider' status, the fact that I already knew each of the participants and that most of the participants had previously seen each other in the GBC congregation made this task easier. During the group, I was very attentive not only to the person speaking but also to the reactions of those listening. I asked individuals who I noticed were reluctant to speak if there was anything they would like to say. Because a person could only speak when holding a microphone this made it easier to prevent a confident individual from dominating discussion. I had previously used this technique (prior to commencing this research) when chairing expert panel discussions. Clarifying questions were asked as the discussion developed and the discussion was moved onto a new subject when I felt that it was the right time to do so. Towards the end of the session, I indicated that the focus group was almost at the end and gave opportunity for any final contributions.

The approach to setting up and facilitating the focus groups drew both on my experience of planning and running numerous small groups over many years and on the advice in the standard texts on research methods. There was nothing novel in the design but my insider knowledge and years of experience facilitated an environment that felt safe to participants and produced insightful comments and the freedom for people to disagree with each other.

Immediately after the group a copy of the audio file was made so that the transcriber and I both had a copy. Within one or two days the participant data was tabulated, the data sheets shredded and I listened to the recording and wrote my initial reflections. Within seven days, I received the transcript. This was checked both for accuracy and to ensure that the pseudonymisation was complete (the transcriber was provided with pseudonyms to use in the transcript). Once the check was complete, the transcriber deleted his copy of both the audio file and the written transcript. Using NVivo the transcript was coded looking for themes (this process is described below in more detail). After completing the coding my copy of the audio file was deleted thus protecting anonymity.

Each focus group was designed with a different aim, looking to explore different areas identified from the previous research that seemed to be significant. For the first group the aim was to elicit people's memories/understanding of the time when I started at GBC and the following couple of years. This was to generate data particularly concerning what people were thinking and feeling at that time. Those invited were all people who had been a part of GBC when I had arrived in October 1987. Of the ten who had agreed to participate seven attended. People seemed to speak freely, disagreeing amicably and people's memories were prompted by other people's reflections. This focus group

included one person who had left GBC because of unhappiness with the changes towards developing a multi-ethnic congregation.

The documentary research had suggested that 2000 to 2005 had been a time of rapid change within GBC. During this period there had been a leadership policy of intentionally working towards GBC becoming more multi-ethnic, new ministry staff had been appointed and a new structure for Sunday meetings had been adopted. The proportion of White British people in the membership had changed from 65% in Jan 2000 to 45% in Jan 2006. The aim of the second focus group was to elicit people's memories, feelings and their understanding of this period. The invitees were people who had been a part of GBC during 2000 to 2005, but people who had participated in the first group were excluded in order to enable fresh perspectives and to ensure that all had the same level of knowledge of the process. All ten of those who had agreed to participate attended. Once again, a variety of perspectives were shared with everyone participating in the discussion.

It was after reflecting on the outputs from the second focus group that the change to the research design to include more interviews and to use fewer focus groups was made. At that stage the remaining two focus groups described here were mapped out.

The aim of the third focus group was to explore the impact for 'Third Culture Kids' of growing up as a part of GBC (definitions of this term are discussed in section 5.1). I was aware from conversations with some of GBC's 'Third Culture Kids' prior to the research, that they considered that their lived experience at GBC had given them educational and professional advantages over their peers. Their view that their lived experience growing up as a part of GBC, experiencing the multi-ethnic church community, had led to them

being different from their peers that had not had a similar experience, seemed relevant to the research. The invitees were people 'born into' GBC with parents both of whom had been born outside of the UK, plus two of their peers 'born into' GBC with White British parents. This enabled exploration of whether White British children growing up within GBC felt similarly about their experiences to the 'Third Culture Kids'. Those attending this focus group were of a different, younger generation to all the other focus group participants. All seven of those who had agreed to participate attended. They all engaged quickly and positively. Most of the group had been to university and so were used to thinking critically, reflecting and articulating their perspectives, which enabled deep insights to emerge. As will be seen in Chapter Five, this focus group generated particularly rich data which gives an insight from the perspectives of some of the 'Third Culture Kids' into what they consider to be a significant impact on their lives from their lived experience at GBC.

The aim of the fourth focus group was to explore the experience within the congregation of multi-ethnic, multi-lingual sung worship and prayer. The invitees were people of a variety of ages, drawn from different ethnicities with a variety of first languages and with a range of arrival periods within GBC. However, all had to have been a part of the GBC congregation for at least a year prior to Jan 2015 (which was the end of the research period) and none were invited who had participated in a previous focus group. Eight of the nine who said that they would come attended. All participated well but there was not the reflective depth that had been observed in previous groups. This may perhaps have been because this was the first time that the participants had considered or talked about

the issues under discussion and they did not seem to have the skills to do much reflective work within the group. I remain puzzled at the apparent lack of reflective skills being used in this focus group as several of the participants work in occupations (teaching and nursing for example) where reflective practice is expected.

3.7 Interviews

Denscombe notes that:

> when the researcher needs to gain insights into things such as people's personal opinions, feelings, emotions and experiences, then interviews will almost certainly provide a more suitable method [than questionnaires]- a method that is attuned to the intricacy of the subject matter (2010: 174).

Interviewing was a natural and appropriate method to use in order to gain insight into the lived experience of those who had been members of GBC during at least part of the period under research. The personal rapport between the interviewer and the interviewee are crucial for a productive session; as I already knew all of the research participants this put me in a good relational space for quality data to be generated. I was conscious of a power differential as I had been a pastor to all of those I interviewed. However, for the previous four years I had not been visibly involved in the life of GBC and every participant knew that in the summer of 2019 I would be moving away from Greenford permanently. Therefore, I had both the advantage of an insider in terms of my knowledge and relationships, and the advantage of an outsider as people knew that whatever they said to me would leave with me and their contributions would be anonymised in the thesis and subsequent publications.

As the interview research was planned, the three basic approaches to interviewing were considered. Structured interviews, where each interview follows the same set of questions,

was rejected because I wanted the opportunity to draw on my specific knowledge of each individual interviewee and to draw on my developing understanding from previous interviews in order to generate specific questions for the next interview. Unstructured interviews were also rejected as there was a research question that set the overall agenda for the interview process and I was seeking data relevant to that question. Semi-structured interviews were chosen as this method gave the flexibility to approach each interview with clear questions and issues for investigation as well as giving the freedom to follow up any unexpected issues that emerged (Thomas, 2013: 198).

The interviews were designed drawing on the approach of Brinkmann et al (2015). They 'approach interviewing as a craft, as a knowledge-producing activity, and as a social practice' (2015: 22). They take a phenomenological approach 'to understand themes of the lived daily world from the subjects' own perspectives' (2015: 27). Their metaphor of an interviewer as a 'traveller' is helpful. The traveller metaphor is in contrast to their alternative metaphor of an interviewer being a 'miner' looking to unearth 'facts'. These are not mutually exclusive options. However, the traveller metaphor suggests that as the interviewer/traveller interacts with the interviewee/person they meet, knowledge and understanding is produced (2015: 57-58). This concept was used as a guide when preparing for each interview. On several occasions during interviews I noticed that as I interacted with the interviewee we both understood their lived experience in a new way.

In the amended research design the plan was to interview approximately fifteen people who were at the time of the interview, or who had previously been, members of GBC. After fifteen interviews, new relevant data was still emerging so the point of 'saturation'

had not been reached (Charmaz, 2014: 213-216). A further five people were identified who were available and willing to be interviewed. There were no others identified who might have useful data to offer who were available to be interviewed. So, in total twenty interviews were conducted.

The interviewees were from a wide variety of ethnicities and backgrounds, a mixture of ages (although all were adults) and had been a part of GBC at different times. Some of those interviewed were, or had been, in some form of leadership within GBC, others had never held any leadership responsibility within GBC. A summary of the demographics of the participants is in Appendix 7. Some people who had left GBC during the transition because they were unhappy with the changes were contacted to be interviewed, however only one of them agreed to participate.

The interviews were planned to last around an hour; however some were completed in forty minutes and a few lasted longer. There is a schedule of the interviews in Appendix 8. The decision was made to use a different mix of questions for each interview. This allowed each interview to be crafted in such a way as to give the best opportunity to generate good data. The questions were devised drawing on themes that had arisen from the documentary analysis, the Key Events Document, focus groups, previous interviews and my knowledge of the interviewee. The questions that were used to shape each interview are in Appendix 9. During the interview I kept in mind that 'interviews are performances that research participants give for particular purposes … the result is a construction – or reconstruction – of a reality' (Charmaz, 2014: 78-79). One interview was usually conducted each week and most of the interviews took place in my office at

GBC; this room was familiar to most of those interviewed. The exceptions were where people had moved away from Greenford. In order to gain their consent to be interviewed I needed to travel to their home to conduct the interview. Although all of the people interviewed were well known to me I followed the University protocols regarding my safety. Each interviewee completed a consent form and a participant data form. Each interview was audio recorded. A copy of the recording was passed to the transcriber on the day of the interview and the transcript was back a few days later. Once the transcript had been checked and anonymised the transcriber deleted both the audio and text files from his laptop. I usually listened to the interview and wrote some initial reflections the day after I had conducted it. After receiving the transcript it was coded using NVivo before the questions were prepared for the next interview. Once the coding of the interview was complete, the audio copy was deleted so only the anonymised transcript was retained.

3.8 Coding/Data Analysis

An important part of the research design was that the data was analysed as soon as possible after each focus group/interview so that what had been discovered could be used to help frame the questions for the next group/interview. My initial reflections were usually written the next day while the focus group or interview was fresh in my mind. As the sessions were only audio recorded this also gave me the opportunity to note anything that I had observed that would not have been captured by the recording. This included noting anything significant that had been said after the recording had stopped.

The decision to use a different mix of questions for each interview meant that direct comparisons between answers from two different interviewees was not possible.

Consequently, a carefully nuanced approach to the analysis of the interview data was required.

The research was to investigate and understand the transition of GBC towards becoming a genuinely multi-ethnic congregation. There was no hypothesis or theory about why this transition seemed to have been successful to prove/disprove. A method of analysis was needed that gave me the ability to closely follow the data as I developed concepts and theories. The 'constant comparative method' which 'entails a commitment to comparing and contrasting new codes, categories and concepts as they emerge' was used (Denscombe, 2010: 116).

Use of the constant comparative method suggested using a Grounded Theory approach for analysis as this approach closely connects the emerging data with emerging theories (Denscombe, 2010: 118). Denscombe notes the two divergent streams of Grounded Theory. One, emerging from Glaser, leans towards positivism with the belief in a 'neutral observer'. The other, emerging from Strauss, 'accepts that researchers cannot be entirely neutral' and recognises that the researcher will be interpreting the data (Denscombe, 2010: 119). Given that the research design draws on autoethnography there is the built-in assumption that I am not a 'neutral observer', which fits with Strauss' approach.

Kathy Charmaz, in *Constructing Grounded Theory* (2014), takes and develops Strauss' approach. She describes her approach as 'constructivist' 'to acknowledge subjectivity and the researcher's involvement in the construction and interpretation of data' (2014: 14). Charmaz's approach fitted well with the sort of data that the research was expected to generate, my role as an autoethnographic researcher and the rest of the research design.

Her approach is 'to code with words that reflect actions' (2014: 116). I chose to code 'line by line' using gerunds (a verb form ending in -ing that functions as a noun) rather than topics as this 'is a heuristic device … [that] … helps to define implicit meanings and actions' (2014: 121). Significant insights which occurred to me during the coding process were recorded in memos. Part way through the interviews an initial analysis of the themes and concepts that seemed to be emerging was written and in subsequent interviews confirmation or otherwise of these tentative findings was looked for.

In December 2019, having completed the initial coding of the focus groups and interviews all the coded material was reviewed. During this process new 'child codes' were created where data under one code could be better further interpreted with sub-codes. Some codes where nothing useful had been generated or where material was already better categorised elsewhere were deleted. Some codes were merged and others renamed. A document summarising the key findings was written, this was subsequently used to shape Chapters Four and Five where the key findings are presented.

3.9 Journaling

Throughout the research I have kept a reflective journal making entries most weeks. I chose to journal in order to enable 'continual reflection on practice by turning lived experience into a written account' (Cameron, 2015: 32). My journal followed the same pattern each week. First, I listed what had taken place since I last wrote and then I recorded what I was feeling and thinking about those events. I then evaluated my thoughts and feelings and reflected on their theological significance. Finally, I considered what I had discovered or learnt before noting anything I now needed to do.

Although there are no direct quotes from my journal in this thesis, the weekly discipline of intentionally stopping to engage in reflection and journaling has contributed to the autoethnographic work as I have consciously interrogated my feelings and thoughts. The reflective practice has also created space for memories to surface. My writing has been richer because of my reflective journaling.

3.10 Discussion of Research Limitations

This research was conducted in one local church in a particular location in West London. The findings relate to the experiences of people within that single context. The findings are not simply transferable to different contexts. The research focuses on issues concerning ethnicity. I did not investigate issues concerning gender, physical or mental disability or sexuality.

There were other limitations that became clear as the research design was implemented. The voices of those at GBC who became sufficiently uncomfortable with the church's transition that they left GBC are largely not heard in this research. Only one of those whom I managed to contact who had left because of their unhappiness agreed to be interviewed and only one other both agreed to participate in a focus group and actually turned up.

Some of the documents that would perhaps have been useful for the research were not available. For most of the period covered by the research a monthly or bi-monthly magazine had been published at GBC, publication had ceased around five years before the research commenced. Unfortunately, no archived copies had been retained. No copies of the weekly newssheet had been retained either. The lack of this material has meant that

perspectives that might have emerged from analysing them were not available. The impact of this is not known.

During the research there were some issues that arose concerning the apparent accuracy or inaccuracy of memory. It was anticipated that during the process of examining the minutes I would re-discover events that I had forgotten, this was part of the reason for reading them at the start of the research. I additionally discovered that I had remembered events as happening in a different order to when they actually occurred and that other events had taken place years before or after I had 'remembered'. What was not anticipated was that I would discover that my memory was at times completely wrong. Details of the most significant occasion that this occurred are recounted in section 1.5.3. Collins in *The Ethnographic Self as Resource* explores the use of memory in ethnography. He writes about 'narrative memory' noting that one of the ways we remember is to 'construct stories' as a part of making sense of what we observe (2010: 237). He notes that 'Generally, we tell stories to certain people, in certain ways, in order to give them a certain sense of the way we wish them to perceive us' (2010: 238). When I had been asked to write or speak about the transition towards a multi-ethnic church it is now clear to me that I had unconsciously revised the narrative to tell the story I wanted people to hear. What is true of me is also true for all the research participants. During focus groups there were differences of memory concerning when something took place, or indeed what it was that took place. During interviews sometimes what one interviewee remembered contradicted the memory of a different interviewee. The research design, with the decision to draw data from different types of source (documents, my memory, and forty-seven research

participants), means that I was less likely to be led astray by a false memory or a misleading document.

The Narrative Account, written from the documentary analysis surfaces some of the tensions, difficulties and opposition that occurred during GBC's transition. However, these challenges were rarely mentioned in the focus groups or interviews. In part this near silence was because only two of those who had left GBC because of unhappiness with the transition agreed to participate in the research (one interviewee and one focus group participant). Most of the research participants were current members of GBC and were happy with the changes that had taken place so it is not surprising that they did not mention the unhappiness of others. It is possible that perspectives from people who left GBC because they were unhappy with the changes might yield helpful insights. This alternative set of perspectives is a potential area for further research perhaps by someone not strongly identified with the reasons for potential participants' previous distress.

3.11 Chapter Conclusion

The research design was one that integrated all the different data types that were available to me. It commenced with an analysis of 'official' documents and other original printed documents. The data extracted from these documents was used to frame the themes for exploration in the focus groups and in a Time-line Workshop. From the focus groups, which were informed by data from the documents and workshop, areas for investigation in the interviews were identified. Each interview provided further data for exploration in subsequent interviews. Overlaying each of these stages was further insight arising from my insider knowledge and autoethnographic reflection. I amended the research design

during the research in order to generate the best quality data as some themes were only able to be drawn out in interviews rather than in a focus group. The next two chapters will describe the themes that emerged from the research. As will be demonstrated in these chapters the research design used enabled original, deep, insightful views to emerge of the transition of GBC as seen by those who participated in it.

4 Themes Emerging from the Research

4.1 Introduction

This chapter is the first of two presenting themes that emerged from the analysis of the four focus groups, with thirty-two participants, and the individual interviews, with twenty interviewees (five research participants took part in a focus group and then were subsequently interviewed). The research design and methodology for this research were described in the previous chapter. This included details of how church, and other, documents were analysed and the way that the focus groups, the workshop, and the interviews were planned and conducted. As discussed in Chapter Three, for each of the focus groups and interviews a specific set of questions was devised that drew both on the findings from the analysis of documents, previous focus groups, the workshop, interviews and on my personal knowledge of the group members and interviewees. Between each focus group or interview the transcript was coded and reviewed to identify themes. Analysis of the themes helped shape the questions used in subsequent groups and interviews. Autoethnographic reflection is also included in this chapter.

This chapter, and the one following, present results in the context of the narrative account of the period from October 1987 to January 2015 (during which time I was a pastor at GBC) that is described in Chapter One alongside the theology that was behind the ecclesiology at GBC; in particular the tapestry metaphor that was used for the church, that is set out in Chapter Two. There will be further theological reflection presented in Chapter Six on the emergent themes that are described in this and the next chapters.

4.2 Lived Experience

The lived experience of the research participants is the subject of the research described in this and the next chapters. This description itself is, of course, a hermeneutical enterprise. The concern is not so much to produce a factual account, although where possible events described are linked to dates and to other events. The aim is to understand and interpret the meaning ascribed to the reported experience/events described by the forty-seven people who were interviewed and/or participated in focus groups. The task has been 'to construct a possible interpretation of the nature of a certain human experience' (Van Manen, 1990: 41).

This chapter first describes racism as experienced by some of the research participants both in the Greenford area and also within GBC itself. The lived experience of people born overseas feeling welcome, safe and fully accepted at GBC is then explored. The process of the change in attitude of existing church members to those arriving from overseas is clearly seen in this section. Next, the role of the use of first language, the role of dance and of flags and artwork in the experience of feeling welcome, safe and fully accepted is examined. This section is followed by looking at how relationships were formed and in particular the role of 'Connection Time' at GBC. Finally, before the concluding remarks for this chapter, there are brief sections looking at how some of the research participants experienced worship at GBC being 'part of something bigger' and/or an anticipation of heaven.

As explained in the previous chapter, pseudonyms are used for all the research participants. Each pseudonym was chosen to reflect the self-described ethnicity and gender of the participant.

4.3 Racism in Greenford

This section is set in the context of racism in the church in the UK and in wider society as discussed in Chapter Two. The section begins with the lived experience of Anthony, an interviewee, who in the late 1980s was in his early twenties. Anthony was one of the few Black people at GBC when I arrived as the new pastor in October 1987. Anthony was born in the Caribbean and came to the UK as a child. In his interview he talked about how he experienced racism at school in Greenford, with other students and outside "skinheads" trying to "beat me up" because he was Black. He recalled experiencing at school and college "people thinking Black people couldn't achieve educationally". He described his experience of "always being aware that groups of White boys might be in Greenford High Street, so you might be having to run, fight or whatever. Just always being on edge". He vividly remembered older White people "crossing the road when they saw me walking on the same side of the road as them". In church prior to my arrival he described how he was "very wary and cautious". He heard comments made by church attendees that he considered reflected the racism evident in wider society. Anthony experienced the town of Greenford as a place where he, as a young Black man, was not welcome and was continually under threat.

Bumni, who also grew up in Greenford in the late eighties and early nineties, recalled in her focus group:

> When you are at school you are not as British as the other people there. They know you pronounce things differently, eat different food, or you can't go and do the same things that they do. So, it was quite tricky … Some people see your background as being different and they see you as lesser … you didn't really belong and you weren't the same as other people and that was seen as a bad thing.

Anthony and Bumni's comments give a powerful perspective on what it was like for them growing up as Black people in Greenford during the late eighties and early nineties. The fact that they were different, not just in their skin colour but in the way they spoke, what they ate and what they did, meant that Anthony became a target for physical abuse and Bumni for emotional abuse. She believed that she was seen as "lesser", as someone who "didn't really belong" because she was different to "other people".

Such events were the daily-lived experience and therefore the lens through which Anthony and Bumni viewed every interaction with White people, including interactions at church. I know from other conversations over the years that their experience as Black people in Greenford was not unusual at that time. This viewpoint naturally framed the experiences and expectations of these two members and other Black people at GBC. In 1987 the church membership of 93 was 91% White British, so those who were Black were a small minority. Although Anthony did not feel physically under threat within GBC, he was fearful and believed that White people who attended GBC shared the racist views held within wider society.

In his book *Staying Power, The History of Black People in Britain* first published in 1984, historian Peter Fryer traces the presence and influence of Black people in the UK since Roman times. His account supports Anthony and Bumni's perspectives. In the book's final chapter, written in the early 1980s, he paints a bleak picture of the situation for Black

people in the UK at that time. He describes discrimination and prejudice against Black people in employment, housing, education and especially in their treatment by the police. He notes:

> the use of the Special Patrol Group and the Illegal Immigration Intelligence Unit to harass black people; police refusal to give black people any protection against racial violence, unwillingness to prosecute attackers, misguided advice to victims, hostility to complainants, and treatment of victims as if they were the aggressors; bias in police evidence; the treatment of black self-protection against racial violence as if it were criminal activity; the arbitrary arrest of black people; the use of unnecessary violence in arresting black people; the harassment of juveniles; the arrest of black people merely for asserting their rights; the harassment of witnesses to police malpractices; repeated arrests of individuals on frivolous grounds; the entry of black homes and premises at will; and, inside police stations, the flouting of Judge's Rules, the use of brutality and intimidation, the forcing of confessions, the medical neglect of detained suspects, and the use of pressure or force to obtain photographs and fingerprints. To the black communities the police had become, in effect, an army of occupation charged with the task of keeping black people in their place (2018: 393-394).

Southall is immediately adjacent to Greenford. Fryer recounted an event that took place there on 23rd April 1979:

> To protect a handful of National Front supporters, 2,756 police, including paramilitary Special Patrol Group units, horses, dogs, vans, and a helicopter, poured into the area. The police violently broke up a crowd of 5,000 protesters, drove their vans into the crowd, bludgeoned people at random as they scattered and ran, vandalized the premises of Peoples Unite, a black meeting centre, arrested 342 people, injured hundreds - and beat Blair Peach to death with unauthorized weapons. 'If you keep off the streets in London and behave yourselves, you won't have the SPG to worry about', were the reassuring words of the Metropolitan Police Commissioner afterwards (2018: 397).

Discrimination and prejudice against Black people were present within churches as well as in wider society. In 1988 the seminal book *Struggle in Babylon: Racism in the Cities and Churches of Britain* by Kenneth Leech was published. While writing the book he was serving as an Anglican Priest in West London only a few miles from Greenford, and he was writing around the same time as my arrival at GBC. He would have recognised

Anthony and Bumni's experiences as being not unusual for Black people at that time. Leech commented, 'It is at the neighbourhood level that its [racism's] effects are most deeply felt' and that in his experience many parish churches chose to ignore racism rather than tackle it (1988: 184). John Wilkinson writing from a predominantly Church of England perspective, in the early 1990s quoted testimonies published in the mid-1980s from Black people who attended White Mainstream churches and concluded that '(with rare exceptions) Black Christians were greeted with … humiliating rejection' (1993: 78).

The accounts above from Fryer, Leech and Wilkinson (although Wilkinson was writing from his context in Birmingham) give a snapshot of the situation for Black people in West London in the early 1980s just a few years before I arrived at GBC. It is clear that Anthony's caution about White people at GBC was well founded in Black peoples' everyday experiences.

A caveat is needed here as the sections above and below could be read as implying that GBC was alone as a church in welcoming Black people in the late 1980s. As Sivakumar Rajagopalan makes clear in his historical account, as early as 1964 Willesden Green Baptist Church and Kenyon Baptist Church (both in London) were working to welcome and support Caribbean Christians (2015: 255).

4.4 Racism Within GBC

Given the local context as described above it is not surprising that in the early years of my ministry at GBC racism *within* GBC was an issue. During the interviews I routinely asked a question about whether the person I was interviewing was aware of any racism or instances of White Privilege within GBC. I was already aware, from conversations prior

to commencing my research, that in those early years of my ministry the racism that was evident in society outside of GBC was sometimes reflected within GBC. I clearly remember that in late 1991 the first time a Black African led prayer in the Sunday morning service a church member phoned me in the afternoon to complain.

One of the White British interviewees (not the person mentioned above) who was a part of GBC when I arrived was Betsy. Betsy explained during her interview how she thought White English people (including herself) viewed people who were not White English:

> I think our ways were what we had been brought up with and what we were used to … We assumed that was the norm and that people who came in from the outside were going to come round to our way of thinking, be English and be the norm like we thought we were, because we thought it is really our church, really our country, so they'd come in and must adapt to what we are used to. I think we might have thought like that in the very beginning and then of course that changed.

There were a few comments from other research participants who had been there in the early part of my ministry who said they had heard or overheard similar perspectives being expressed.

The research did uncover one example of what seems to have been blatant racism within GBC. I knew nothing about this episode prior to the interview. This event took place in early 1991. I will quote the segment from the interview with Ronke, a Black African female, in full:

> When we first joined the church, because back home I was used to belonging to a cell group and the first cell group I was encouraged to join by XXX [a Black member of the Leadership Team], I will not mention the name [of the group leader], but the first meeting and the last meeting I had with them they told me point blank that I don't belong here. They were all White. They told me point-blank. My only child then was a toddler, a baby of 10 or 11 months old and I was told categorically they would allow me to stay here now. It was bitterly cold outside and having made the effort to travel from home, I didn't have a car. I had travelled to where they were to have the meeting and to have fellowship with them

> and they said we will let you stay now, but next time look for somewhere else. I said, "Are we not talking here about God?" And they said, "Yes, but you need to find the right group to belong to". So, I said, "Okay, I'm sorry I won't come back" and I never went back to that group. So, I went back to the person that introduced me to that group and said to her, "Is there any group for the Black minority?" And she said (laughs), "No, why are you asking?" Then I shared my experience in tears. It was the only time I felt discriminated against in that church. That didn't put me off because I knew those sorts of people were not the whole church at large. We'd been very well received by the church Reverend and that was enough for me and that kept us going.

Ronke did say more about this incident after the device recording her interview was turned off. She identified who the group leader was who had turned her away and the fact that it was only because of the intervention of some of the group members, who took pity on her arriving on foot in the cold with her baby, that she was even allowed to stay for the meeting. Neither the group leader nor the Black leadership team member were research participants so there is no further information or other perspectives on what took place. Ronke's account is evidence that the caution that Anthony, and presumably other Black people, had about White people within GBC was well placed.

It is important to note that at GBC racist views were not only held by White British people. Honoria, a Latin American who arrived at GBC in 2005, in her interview said that she "came from a quite closed society … so my family is … quite closed … my mother is quite a racist person". Naturally, this shaped her own approach to others, which was transformed by her lived experience as a part of GBC.

4.5 A Change of Trajectory

As already described in Chapter One the GBC Leadership Team minutes of 20th June 1989, a little less than two years after I started at GBC, state that 'David intends to begin a monthly meeting with five young men to train them as leaders for the future'. This was

the first Leadership Training Group (LTG) and commenced in July 1989. Anthony was one of the five young men I invited to join. As explained in Chapter One, four of the five men I invited were Black. I asked in the interview if he remembered how, at that time, he thought that I saw Black people. He responded:

> I would have thought your values meant you would have put Black people into a similar light as you saw yourself in that they can be educated and can be in leadership. They have potential … if you chose to choose them, certainly in the society as it was at that time, you must have had some value of them.

Anthony believed that I saw Black people in a similar way to how I saw White people. They were people who could be trained for, and could exercise, leadership, even in a White Majority Church. This perspective was particularly significant for him as it was I, the church minister, who was setting up this LTG. His perception of my view was in stark contrast to his perception of his experience at school and college and how wider society viewed people who were Black. In Anthony's own words, "Black young men were to be feared or treated, regarded very suspiciously".

I am now conscious that I came to GBC with no awareness of White Privilege and little understanding of racial prejudice in a UK context. Anthony Reddie, a leading Black British theologian, comments that in his experience 'most White people when asked have usually failed to acknowledge the significance of being White in a world where the very act of being White has marked material, social, cultural and political advantages' (2009: 48). He further comments that in his view 'acknowledging one's Whiteness is crucial in the struggle for racial justice' (2009: 50). My own lack of awareness meant that I had no understanding of Anthony's, Bumni's or other Black peoples' experience of White people or how this affected their engagement with GBC. Therefore, I was not able to take any

steps to address these issues. However, I had been conscientised to Apartheid and the oppression of Black people in South Africa, Angola and Mozambique via my reading of journals about this and of various radical and far left materials as a teenager. Although I do not remember making any direct connection between the experience of Black people in Africa and the experience of Black people in London, it is possible that the understanding that I had gained from my reading shaped the way that I viewed Black people at GBC; that they were visible to me as potential leaders. As mentioned in Chapter One I had not had any contact with any Black people that I remember during my childhood or teenage years. It did not seem significant to me at the time that four of the five young men who appeared to me to have most potential for leadership were Black. I simply saw them as young men with leadership potential. I did not share the views described above by Anthony (the research participant), which, from his perspective, were usually held by White people. Branson & Martinez at the end of a chapter on 'leading change' in an intercultural context, where they draw on their extensive experience and research, comment that, 'leaders do not need to know the way—we just need the capacities to encourage and guide connections, to link Scripture and context, to engage neighbors and members, and to sanction questions and insights and innovations' (2011: 231). Looking back at these early years of my ministry at GBC it is clear that I did not realise that the trajectory we had embarked on would lead to the creation of a multi-ethnic congregation.

As noted in Chapter One, at the end of the first LTG three of the Black members, including Anthony, were appointed onto the church Leadership Team taking up their roles on 1st January 1991. Recalling this event Anthony commented; "For me it was quite a radical

step to take to introduce (laughs) three young black men into an older, white, say middle-class type environment, when society around you tells you what young Black men are like". He saw my leadership in proposing these appointments, which were supported by a majority of the church members, as "radical" and standing in stark contrast to the values held by wider society. The role of my leadership will be further explored in the next chapter.

4.6 People from Overseas feeling Welcome, Safe and Fully Accepted at GBC

From the first focus group, and some comments in interviews, it became clear that before I arrived at GBC, and in the first few years afterwards, GBC was not experienced as a welcoming environment. There was fear of what others might think, of getting it wrong and being disapproved of. Grace was the first Black person to attend GBC, arriving in the late 1970s, she recalled in the first focus group that reflected on what GBC was like when I took up the post of Pastor:

> When I first came to Greenford Baptist Church it was really white – no coloured people. I was the only coloured person, so I felt uncomfortable … nobody talked to you much and it wasn't friendly until you [Pastor David] came and things started to change.

Others in the focus group mentioned experiencing fear of what others might think. Dianne said, "I can remember the first time I took communion … I was petrified, it seems ludicrous, I was petrified that I'd got it wrong". Dianne first took communion in the spring before I became Pastor. Tambara was one of the first Africans to attend GBC, remembering when she first started attending she said:

> You would come to church, but you would be really fearful and you would be looking to see people's reactions. I would say it was awful to be thinking "Oh my

> goodness, what are they going to say". We were wary and looking over our shoulder at everybody's faces just to see reactions and I didn't think that was right.

Natalie, referring to the end of the service said that "people who were new and didn't know each other tended to look around and nervously leave".

This atmosphere gradually changed. During the interviews I routinely asked interviewees about how they felt when they first started attending GBC and whether they had experienced, or were aware of, racism or White Privilege within GBC. There were no examples reported to me of racism or noticing White Privilege within GBC in the interviews apart from those in the early years already discussed. In contrast, people arriving both in the UK and at GBC during 2003 to 2005, reported being welcome in ways that took them by surprise.

Alvita came from the Caribbean; when she arrived in West London it was her first time outside her country of origin. In her interview reflecting on her first visit to GBC in 2003 she said; "Coming in was a bit daunting as I came by myself, the first time … I don't know anybody, but it was really good. I felt right at ease and comfortable with the people there". After some months she was invited to join a LTG. Reflecting on that experience she said:

> I left everything and came here. So, to come somewhere, be a stranger in a place and then to, in a sense, find myself fitting in and then being given opportunities I never, ever would have thought about; it was shocking (voice breaking).

Alvita experienced welcome and acceptance at GBC. She experienced being invested in through a training programme and being given significant opportunities for ministry and leadership within GBC. This was so unexpected and life changing that twelve years later she was overcome with emotion as she recalled what had taken place.

Panha also came to GBC in 2003; she had grown up in Southeast Asia. She came from a Buddhist background and was not committed to Christianity when she started attending GBC. In her interview she described how straight away: “I just feel at home. I feel that I’m not a stranger to this place … I think it is just that welcome, that friendliness, people smiling. It just made a huge difference to making you feel welcome into the community life”. Commenting on events a few years later she said “I don’t feel at that time there is prejudice against anybody around that time, you know. We are all equal in God’s eye.”

Honoria came to the UK from Latin America in 2005. She attended GBC within a few days of her arrival in the UK. In her interview, she said that when she arrived she believed that British people were “hostile” to people like her because “it was around the time the Brazilian guy was killed in the station” (Thompson, Hinsliff, Xavier, 2005). However, her experience at GBC was very different to what she expected:

> I think what really caught my eyes is like acceptance and respect. Acceptance regardless of where you are from, your skin colour … whatever our differences it was just accepting … to have this acceptance was something that captured me … I didn’t need to be tense or pretending … I always be myself here. It was always a place where I really felt at home ... because of this mixture of cultural differences where everyone is really open to accept people.

One of the themes that I observe in the lived experience of the research participants, both in the interviews and in the focus groups, is that GBC was experienced by them as a social and relational space where people who had migrated to the UK were treated as equals. GBC was a space where they were able to grow, to use their gifts, where they were invested in through training and being given opportunities for ministry and leadership. Anthony was already at GBC when I arrived. He noted what he experienced as my treating Black people as my equals. Alvita, Panha and Honoria arrived between 2003 and 2005.

From their experience, the cultural change I introduced in the way that people who were other than White British were treated at GBC, seems to have become the norm. GBC had become a place where people from every ethnicity were welcome, not just to attend but to be fully involved in every aspect of church life.

Ben Lindsay's book *We Need to Talk about Race* (2019) has an interlude where five Black women write of their experience of White Majority church. He asserts that Black women are 'most likely to be on the edge of church life … are almost certain to be ignored for leadership and not given the opportunity to shape church culture in a multi-ethnic church' (2019: 71). Lindsay's assertion is arguably an oversimplification; however, it does reflect the lived experience of the five Black women he quotes. The experience of Black women at GBC, as evidenced in the interviews and focus groups, was very different from what Lindsay, based on his experience, considered normal in multi-ethnic churches in the UK. As we will see below the experience of Black women at GBC has had significant implications for their lives both inside and outside of church.

Gerardo Marti's doctoral research explored Mosaic, which was in 2002 'one of the largest multi-ethnic congregations in the United States' (2002: *ix*). The church is situated in Los Angeles and had at that time an ethnic mix of roughly one-third Caucasian, one-third Hispanic, one-quarter Asian. Less than 2% attending were African American in contrast to 9.8% of the local population (2002: 19-20). For Marti the term 'multi-ethnic' had a very different meaning to the way that the term is used in this research. Marti defines a multi-ethnic church as one that 'has at least two distinct ethnic groups sharing a common congregational life and governance' (2002: 19). In this research the term, as defined in

Chapter One, is used to describe a congregation consisting of people from multiple ethnicities where the worship, prayer, approach to understanding the Bible, leadership, pastoral care, in fact every facet of congregational life draws on and reflects the ethnic backgrounds of those who are a part of the congregation. Within Mosaic 'ethnicity is more often obscured than emphasized' (2002: 155) whereas, as explored in Chapter Two, with the tapestry metaphor, ethnic difference was deliberately accentuated and celebrated at GBC. Those from other ethnicities at Mosaic were second or third generation migrants who were assimilated to American culture (2002: 155-156). In contrast at GBC the overwhelming majority of the adults from other ethnicities were first generation migrants. At Mosaic the members, who had been born and who had lived their entire lives in the USA, to a large degree shared the same American cultural values. Again, in contrast, at GBC by 2005 most of the members had been born and lived the formative periods of their lives outside of Europe; consequently there were significant differences in the worldview and values held amongst church members. Many of those differences in perspectives held by members at GBC will become clear in the remainder of this chapter.

In summary Mosaic and GBC are two very different 'multi-ethnic' churches set in very different contexts. However, in his study Marti used a conceptual construct of 'haven' that seems to be helpful in exploring GBC.

In Marti's view people at Mosaic found 'a refuge or a sanctuary for a significant aspect of their religious desires, personal identities, and value systems. Havens provide shelter in the context of escape' (2002: 85). In his thesis Marti explores five 'havens', theological, ethnic, artistic, innovator and age (2002: 95-317). 'Haven' is a helpful way to view what

attracted people to GBC. Many of the research participants drew a sharp distinction between their experience of racism in wider society and the welcome and acceptance they found within GBC. GBC was a space where they felt safe, a place where they could be themselves, knowing that they would be accepted with all their ethnic differences. Honoria expressed this very clearly: "to have this acceptance was something that captured me … I didn't need to be tense or pretending … I always be myself here. It was always a place where I really felt at home ... everyone is really open to accept people".

The way that the research participants experienced this 'haven' in practice will now be examined. The first aspect to be explored is language.

4.6.1 The use of First Language at GBC

Mark Branson and Juan Martinez in their book *Churches, Cultures and Leadership* (2011), which looks at multicultural churches in the USA, explore the significance of language. A significant difference between the churches that they took examples from and GBC is that their churches are mostly bi-lingual, whereas in GBC among the research participants alone there were ten different first languages spoken. However, Branson and Martinez's observations on the way that language functions in church are highly relevant to the GBC context.

Branson and Martinez quote with approval the Whorf hypothesis that states that 'language largely determines how we understand reality' (2011: 116). They point out that the grammar of a language 'shape[s] how its users understand their world' (2011: 119). They also explore how 'nonverbal communication', 'social relations' and 'power differentials'

affect the understanding and use of language (2011: 121-123). They reflect on the relationship between 'dominant and subordinate languages' and conclude that in the USA 'how minority languages are used in ministry gives a clear message as to the relative value given to that language in relationship to English' (2011: 123-127).

At GBC there was freedom for people to use their own first language in prayer and worship, which meant people were able to express themselves in ways that would not have been possible if they had been restricted to English.

Branson and Martinez note that Christians believe that 'the gospel can be proclaimed and lived out in any culture and that God speaks all languages' (2011: 127). However, in a multilingual context 'this confession can be severely challenged' (2011: 127). They explore issues of Bible translation, the dominance of English and the way that 'using English as a common language among people who do not use it as a first language will also make being church together more challenging'. They then identify the key task of finding 'new ways of both recognising the influence of English and the role of other languages in the process of being together' (2011: 127-130).

Roberta King was Associate Professor of Communication and Ethnomusicology at Fuller Theological Seminary, having previously worked for twenty-two years at Daystar University in Nairobi, Kenya. In an interview that was focussed on Frontier Mission, King reflected on the importance of using words and musical forms from 'indigenous' people:

> My passion is to help people understand that God is for them within their own cultural context … Songs should use the language that speaks to us. They should also use the musical sounds that we know and respond to … If you don't make a translation for them, then they think that God belongs to somebody else and is not for them. So, ethnic forms of worship music open them up to listen (2001: 12-14).

Elsewhere, when being interviewed by Ian Collinge, King asserts that unless people can 'draw from their own heritage in worship … [they] are forced to deny certain aspects of themselves' (2011: 55).

King's perspectives in the context of mission in Africa are equally true in the context of a multi-ethnic church in West London. Unless people who have grown up using a different language in a different culture are able to use that language in prayer and to draw on musical and other cultural components in congregational worship, they are not being fully welcomed and accepted within the congregation.

In January 2015, the end of the research period, the routine use of languages other than English was an established part of GBC life. English remained the primary language used in Sunday meetings, midweek groups and for pastoral care. Using English as a common language facilitated the building of community. When someone in the congregation did not understand English a church member was asked to sit with them and translate. However, in Sunday meetings it was normal practice for several songs to be used that were in languages other than English. These songs were sung in the style that was used in the context they originated from. For example, when a Hindi song was used the singers and musicians, along with many of the congregation, would sit on the floor. The only instruments used were a tabla drum, bells and a drone sound (Wise, 2015a). When a Yoruba song was used only drums accompanied it and there was a lot of dancing. When someone led in prayer, either from the front or from the congregation, they were free to use whatever language they were most comfortable with. During prayer ministry (when individuals came forward to be prayed for by members of the prayer ministry team) those

praying were free to use their first language whether or not the person they were praying for understood it. Similar practices took place in midweek and small group meetings. GBC had found, to use Branson and Martinez's words, 'new ways of both recognising the influence of English and the role of other languages in the process of being together' (2011: 130).

The development of the use of first language at GBC will now be explored through data from the documentary analysis and then through the words of some of the research participants drawn both from interviews and focus groups.

As related in Chapter One, in April 2003 the church unanimously appointed a part time 'Prayer Co-ordinator and Worship Facilitator'. Among the responsibilities for this role were 'to integrate and develop multicultural prayer and worship' (Church Meeting Minutes, 30th April 2003). The person appointed was still serving in this role in January 2015. The minutes of the church leadership team subsequent to his appointment record that there were regular discussions about the development of multi-ethnic worship. In January 2008 a Worship Co-ordinating Group was created. Apart from the GBC staff member all the initial members had been born outside of Europe.

The freedom to use first language and the significance of this for people at GBC was discussed in both focus groups and interviews.

Lavanya:

> My first language is Punjabi, so when I hear the worship in Punjabi, I understand all the words … I am uncomfortable to pray in English with some words I don't understand. So, I start praying in my own language and I say that's good.

Panha:

> I think like, you know, people feel free to talk in their languages, you know. Like, people pray in their languages, you know. People are not ashamed or shy. They will say it in their languages, you know. And people don't feel exclusive also, you know, like you will all be included. I think it's the freedom to speak. The freedom to worship in the way that you want to worship. Yes, so I think that is what make people comfortable.

Bunmi, "If you want to pray in your language then pray in your language. If you want to prophesy in your language then prophesy in it. It is not everything needs to be made more British to be acceptable".

For Bunmi, Lavanya and Panha the use of other languages at GBC was a clear indication that one did not need to use English to be acceptable at GBC. The way they talked about this implies that in other contexts they had felt that they had not been accepted. They each talked about being free to be themselves in worship and prayer at GBC. In other words they were free to be the person God had created them to be. This connects with Branson and Martinez's observations described above. At GBC a way of being together that both recognised that English was shared as a common language and that alternative languages were valued had been established.

For Jayanti, who moved to the UK from India as an adult, hearing a Hindi song the first time she attended GBC was very significant:

> When I came to Greenford Baptist, the first time the congregation sang *Amrithawani* I said, 'Oh gosh, I can't believe it,' because that is a typical, Indian worship song and the style is typically Indian whereby people sit on the floor and one person is leading while others join in it. And the music, the Sitar, the guitar, all that music, it just took me by surprise. I couldn't believe it because in this country I'd never, ever heard an Indian worship song like that in the same style as they do in India, sitting on the floor with everybody joining in. That was awesome.

She immediately felt that she was welcome at GBC as an Indian.

For some the significance was profound. Ronke:

> To be able to be part of a church which not only embraces free worship, but also allows people to worship and pray in their first language and also puts a system in place to embrace different types of songs in different languages to allow me to come on stage to the podium and share testimony and break out in choruses in my language but also at the same time translating so people understand and you can carry people along. That is huge, that is deep. So, it's very refreshing and has been very helpful.

Tambara:

> When we were talking about somebody speaking your language, singing songs in your own language, when you speak or when you sing in somebody else's language, when they are not expecting it, it is such a wonderful, beautiful feeling. They think "Oh!" (voice raised excitedly). "He is singing in my language." It is just so lovely, such a beautiful feeling. So, to have a church where your language is being spoken in the songs and the prayers, you feel welcome … [people] feel like they are human beings and not just second-hand citizens or whatever.

Tambara's description that people "feel like they are human beings not just second-hand citizens" when their language has been used is striking. Her phrase calls to mind the experience of many Black people as being treated as less than fully human. At GBC, through the use of songs and prayers in languages other than English, people felt that they were recognised as being fully in the image of God, fully accepted, fully human. Ronke described her experience as "huge" and "deep". This sense of acceptance was not superficial but something that resonated at a very deep level.

One finding from this research came as a surprise to me. I knew from previous observations and conversations that the use of 'other' languages was important to people whose first language was other than English. I believed that this was because worshipping in their first language enabled them to connect with God in a deeper way than when using English. The research found no evidence of such thinking despite asking specific questions designed to explore the impact of the use of first language. Instead, the evidence

suggests that the significance was about people feeling accepted by GBC as equals with their culture and language. The research findings indicate that at GBC people from a wide variety of ethnicities perceived that they were wholly accepted both by the church congregation and by God

4.6.2 The use of Dance at GBC

Dancing during worship had gradually evolved over the years with some encouragement from the leadership. For example, in 1993 during a church weekend there were workshops on movement in worship. By January 2015, dancing during the Sunday meetings was a normal component of the worship. When songs were used that had a Caribbean or African rhythm members of the congregation would dance in their places. Often people would also use the space in front of the platform or behind the congregation to dance. It was common for the offering to be received accompanied by the entire congregation in turn dancing down the aisle to place their gifts in the offering plate or to touch the plate in recognition that all they had was given to God. The teaching on giving at GBC encouraged people to tithe and make offerings in the context of recognising that everything that each person possessed had come from God. Further, it was taught that Christians are stewards of their possessions, which ultimately belong to God. Even though most church members made their financial contribution to the life of the church through bank standing orders rather than giving cash on a Sunday, the meeting leader usually encouraged everyone to dance to the front and touch the offering plate. Members of the congregation, especially those who had grown up in West Africa, saw this as an important part of their worship,

presenting themselves and their gifts before God. The style of dancing was exuberant drawing particularly on movements usual in West Africa and the Caribbean.

Khalia Williams is the assistant dean of worship and music, assistant professor of worship, and co-director of the Baptist Studies Program, Candler School of Theology, Emory University, Atlanta, USA. She notes from her research among African American women and her personal experience how dance as a part of worship allows 'the entirety of my being' to be fully engaged (2020: 3). Additionally, she observes that 'By its very nature, embodied worship opens the door for inclusion and recognition of marginalized bodies' (2020: 5). By 'marginalised bodies' Williams was referring to African American bodies in her context. Both engagement and inclusion appeared in comments from the research participants. Dance at GBC, as will be shown below, had the role of enabling people to feel that they were totally engaged in worship with every part of their being. However, as also will be shown below, being allowed to dance was additionally an aspect of being included and accepted as a full part of the worshipping congregation.

Bernard Appiah researched the way that traditional Ghanaian culture is integrated into UK Ghanaian churches. He observes that 'music and dance permeate every aspect of life of the Ghanaian, and neo-Pentecostal churches have fully taken advantage of this phenomenon' (2014: 214). For most GBC members who had grown up outside of Europe, dancing at home as well as in church is a normal part of expressing their devotion to God. Lavanya, "Even at home when I get up in the morning … I put on my Indian worship. Sometimes I love my worship. I'm dancing with it and I enjoy it, all the worship that God gives us." So enabling dance to be a part of congregational worship was important.

Alvita noted that "in Jamaica you are accustomed to lots of the tambourine, lots of drumming, lots of clapping … I'm accustomed to seeing people running around in the Spirit and things like that, shouting Hallelujah." Alvita is a worship leader at GBC; when she leads, she uses Caribbean rhythms such as calypso and reggae. She commented that when she is at the front she sees "people dancing, people raising their hands. It's just the whole-body movement that you don't get if they are maybe just doing a normal English song". From her perspective when people are physically moving they are more engaged with God than when they are static. She talked about a specific incident she remembered:

> A couple of months ago, when I just changed the rhythm to 'It is well with my soul,' and there was one particular Jamaican lady. She would just come to church and she'd be sitting there and just talk to who she wanted to talk to and that's it. That Sunday was the very first time I'd heard her. She jumped up, she uttered out and that's because that connected with her. So, for me that meant she was really engaged in the worship … There was another African lady and she just ran straight up to the front and she's not somebody who would normally be doing that, but there was something that connected with them. So, the movement that you are seeing there would say people are actually engaging with what is going on.

Oluwasesan:

> I think a lot of Yorubas, Nigerians and maybe Africans generally like to express themselves and when we really express ourselves, we do it by dancing. We see a lot of that in the church and I think it is the same for the people from the Caribbean as well. There is a lot of movement, a lot of joy. I see that in the church and that is one of the reasons I've stayed for so many years now.

For Alvita, Lavanya and Oluwasesan coming to GBC from three different continents dance was a normal part of their worship of God. Being able to dance as a part of their congregational experience was therefore welcome and helpful. However, it seemed that there was a further spiritual significance to dance for the participants. I asked several of the research participants in interviews about the significance of dance in their relationship to God. Here are three responses that are representative of those I received.

Oluwasesan:

> It's expressing yourself to God. It is like when David danced and I like dancing. That's me expressing my joy to the Lord for everything that He has actually done for me. I can praise Him in a different way, not only by singing but also with my dancing.

Ronke:

> The Bible says like I said earlier 'He delights in the praises of His people,' and when you praise in my culture and you praise a king, you sing and bestow accolades. You praise and worship that king. Kings don't dance, they sit down and their congregation will dance in honour and in worship. Now, we are talking of the King of all Kings. We are talking of the Ruler of the Universe. The Creator of Heaven and Earth and everything I have in my life I will use it to worship. My voice, my body, my song, my money, my family. I danced today alone in my room in my bedroom, YouTube music and it was just like I had the whole of the church in that room with me. I knew the hosts of heaven were there. So, for me, dance is integral. I can't keep still when I hear Christian music.

Tabia:

> It shows that you are happy. It shows you are delighted, you are comfortable, so you are able to move your body freely because if you are not, if you are in a strange place and you feel frightened, you're not going to move your body … they feel connected. So, they express their worship through their movement, not only of their mouth, but all their body.

For Oluwasesan, Ronke and Tabia dance is an integral part of their worship of God. It was a normal part of congregational worship in their home country. Dance expresses part of their adoration that for them cannot be communicated without bodily movement. It seems that there may be a similarity here between the use of dance and the use of first language in Sunday worship (Scott, 2000). Both of these mediums allow cultural expression but more significantly, the congregational embracing of these mediums communicates deep acceptance of people from those cultures. This finding connects with Williams above concerning inclusion. Being allowed to express worship via the medium of dance meant that people felt recognised and included. There is a connection here with Tambara's view,

already quoted above, that when the first language of people in the congregation was being used people "feel like they are human beings not just second hand citizens". Dance as a bodily language seems, from this perspective, to function in the same way as first language.

4.6.3 Flags and Artwork at GBC

On three sides of the rectangular worship space there were (in January 2015) 47 full size national flags on display. Each of these flags represented a country that at least one member of the congregation had come from. Each year the flags were reviewed. Flags from countries where no one now attended were removed and members of the congregation whose flags were not on display were given the opportunity to pay for their flag to be purchased and displayed. On the left-hand wall behind the platform, where the meeting was usually led from, was an art installation consisting of 28 large hand painted canvases. The canvases were painted during a workshop at GBC. Each has the name of God in the first language of the person/people who painted the canvas surrounded by colourful decoration, from top to bottom the canvases reflect the colours of the rainbow. A photograph of this installation is in Appendix 2. On the right-hand wall behind the platform was a plain wooden cross that from time to time was surrounded by a colourful seasonal display. Additionally on the walls of the worship area there was other art on display painted by people who attended the church, usually drawing on their own ethnic cultural styles. For example, there were two paintings using traditional Chinese artistic forms and Chinese letters illustrating Bible stories that were painted and donated by a Chinese attendee.

There was no flag displayed on the wall that people usually faced during Sunday worship. This was a deliberate choice on my part. I had noticed that in mono-ethnic churches that I had visited it was common for the national flag of the dominant ethnicity to be on display at the front. At GBC I wanted the displayed flags to be a marker that people from all ethnicities were welcome, the flags in a sense marked out their space. However, I did not want any particular national flag to have pride of place at the front. Instead, I wanted a visual recognition that GBC was united in worshipping the same God. This was visually achieved through the names of God art installation and the bare wooden cross on the wall that the congregation usually faced during the service. Although at GBC God was addressed in different languages, everyone came to relationship with God through Jesus' death and resurrection (the bare wooden cross represented this). GBC was diverse in its ethnicity but united in its acceptance and worship of God through Jesus Christ.

Bumni was at the workshop that produced the large artwork:

> I remember we made some artwork with different languages demonstrating God's name. And it was so beautiful the work that everyone did because everyone worked independently, yet created a rectangle decorated beautifully with the name of God in their native tongue. Then we put it all together … all working together to create that artwork was really beautiful.

Bumni remembered "everyone worked independently" yet "all working together". Each contributed something unique drawn from their own ethnic heritage, but built together it made something "really beautiful". There is here an obvious link to the Tapestry Metaphor, discussed in Chapter Two that underpinned GBC's understanding of congregational church life.

Tabia was one of those who paid for her national flag:

> We were the only Cameroonians before and we paid for the flag. So, when the other Cameroonians came and they found the flag it was "ooh our flag is there," and I'm always beating my chest – I paid for it (laughter). So, when they find their flag there they also have that feeling of "they know my country here – I belong here". I think that also makes them feel at home because they can see their flag here and they are represented here. So, my identity is here.

For Tabia having her national flag on display was a marker that at GBC her ethnic identity was welcome and accepted. It was her view that, at least for Cameroonians, seeing their own flag on display meant that they felt welcome "at home".

Harnoop related an account of a visit to GBC by some Nepalese guests:

> I brought some like people whom I know who are Christians and Nepalese … And the first impression they had was that it was a traditional kind of a British, you know, church and also, they were a bit taken aback because they didn't see much Nepalese except us, but then something caught their eye. It was the Nepalese flag and that really you know brought: "I've never ever seen a church in the UK that has got a Nepalese flag, you know, hung on the wall". So, I told them that, you know, not just the Nepalese flag, but all these flags they bow down to the cross at the front, so they were like: "Wow, really?" … And every time I see that flag, I feel like I am a member of this church and part of Christ's family.

In his account Nepalese people who had never attended GBC before noticed the Nepalese flag on display and it was significant for them to see their flag displayed in what they felt was a traditional British church. For Harnoop seeing his national flag on the wall meant that he felt "like I am a member of this church and part of Christ's family". For Harnoop the displayed flag was a marker that he was an accepted part not just of GBC but of "Christ's family".

Several others expressed the view that the display of flags meant that even people whose flag was not displayed felt welcome. Oluwasesan: "One other thing that caught me was the flags as well. I thought, "Yes, okay, there are representatives from all these countries".

It gives you that feeling that, yes, you are welcome here whatever country you come from".

Anthony commented:

> If someone comes in … if you saw a load of flags, even if it may not be yours personally, but you saw other ethnic groups represented or nation's flags, you would feel more welcome. You know, it's that significance in what you see visually.

The visual impact of the flags, in Oluwasesan's and Anthony's view, meant that people felt welcome whether or not their own national flag was on display.

4.6.4 Connecting with People and 'Connection Time' at GBC

In the first focus group and in most of the interviews, observations about the way that people first connected with each other at GBC was sought. There were also questions seeking memories about how friendships, particularly ones that crossed ethnicities, were formed.

In August 2004 GBC adopted a new pattern for Sunday morning meetings (this change was discussed in Chapter One). Two of the changes are directly relevant to this section. The first change was that, after the conclusion of the first section of the morning meeting and before the adult teaching section and the crèche, children's Sunday Club and youth programme, GBC had a 25-minute 'Connection Time'. The intention was to create a space and an opportunity for people to interact and get to know each other. Using this title to describe this 25-minute period each week reinforced the objective of people intentionally initiating or building on relationships with other people in the congregation. There were hot and cold drinks available and some snacks. There were always plenty of biscuits but if people were celebrating a birthday or other special event they often brought along cake

and sometimes savoury snacks such as samosas for everyone to share. Other than the physically infirm (who were provided with chairs) everyone stood while they ate and drank and talked to people. The fact that people were standing made it easier for them to wander around and to talk with multiple people during the 25 minutes available. During the first section of the meeting people who were present for the first time were always asked to raise their hands so they could be welcomed. GBC had a small team whose task it was to remember who these people were and to ensure that they were helped to get their refreshments and engaged in conversation during Connection Time. The importance of looking out for, and including in conversation, anyone who was standing on their own was regularly emphasised to church members. I, and other staff, kept a look out for people on their own or looking uncomfortable and either engaged with them ourselves or made sure someone else did.

Kunle was a member of the Leadership Team when it proposed the introduction of Connection Time:

> It [the previous pattern] did not give us that opportunity to actually connect with people that were in the building as a lot of people just go out immediately [the meeting ends]. … So, the new system with the Connection Time provided us with the opportunity to connect with each other, to relate to each other and ask questions about how people have been.

Natalie was a part of the church when the change was introduced:

> The Connection Time in the middle meant that people couldn't escape. When it was at the end of the meeting then people, and particularly people who were new and didn't know each other, tended to look around and nervously leave. But, because it was in the middle of the service it meant people had to stay, they had to engage and I feel connecting is an important part of the service. It is not just drinking tea and coffee and having a chat, I think it is an important part and the new format literally reinforced that.

Both Kunle and Natalie, who were part of the GBC congregation when Connection Time was introduced, believe that people connecting with each other "is an important part of the service". During the previous format people could, and often did, leave without speaking to anybody. With the new format "people had to stay" and engage.

Felix, in his interview, contrasted his experience at GBC (where he had grown up) with that at other churches he had visited after moving away from Greenford:

> It also means you have an enlarged portion of the congregation that is going to be there for that 'Connection Time'. So, it is going to make people feel welcome. I've had it when I've been trying to find new churches. You wait until the end of the service to try and catch people or see how you fit in with the church and people are in a rush to go, or they've got their own friendship groups already.

In Felix's view 'Connection Time' led to people feeling welcome, in contrast to his experience at other churches.

Several interviewees recalled their first visit to GBC. Alvita, "And my very first time coming here, I was welcomed in during 'Connection Time'. The people who met me, there was just this sense that people were genuine about what they were saying to you". Shanice was asked specifically about her first visit to GBC and whether at 'Connection Time' people come up and talked to her and made her welcome. "Yes, they did, yes. People just came and talked to you, so it was easy to just mix and talk to people and have coffee."

It was clear from some of the interviewees that the impact of 'Connection Time' went beyond simply feeling welcome when they first attended but that it was a context from which friendships had developed.

Harnoop, “What I really liked about the people in the church is when we had a ‘Connection Time’ that was one of the best times within the church … you can actually relate to another member of the church”.

Panha, “In ‘Connection Time’ when you get a chance to speak to people and you kind of build relationships from there … just to get to know a bit about them and them about you. You build in from there”.

Oluwasesan:

> The one thing I did enjoy was ‘Connection Time’. Erm, it was an opportunity to actually talk to people. A lot of churches, you go in, you walk in, you have the service and you walk straight out. That doesn’t help build relationships … that [Connection Time] in itself then was somewhere where you could start building relationships, by getting to know people.

For Harnoop, Oluwasesan and Panha ‘Connection Time’ was a context where their initial conversations with people led to the forming of deeper relationships.

For Kunle there was a particular significance for “non-White” people:

> I will harp back to when I was in Nigeria when after the church meeting you would have your different groups that you had meeting. Actually, everyone in the church would have a group that they belonged to and they would attend meetings. Part of the meeting was for people to relate and find out how people were doing. Yes, there was erm a business context to it, but also it enabled people to actually relate with each other, do things together, celebrate with each other and in a way, having the ‘Connection Time’ brought that aspect back into the life of the church rather than come in, finish meeting and shoot out. It brought back into context for a lot of the non-white, particularly for the Nigerians the opportunity to be able to meet and talk and relate and interact with other people.

Tabia, in her interview, gave an illustration of how this worked:

> I knew somebody else who comes to church now, who when they came, they were introduced to us because as soon as they knew they were from Cameroon they came and told me there was a Cameroonian here, so I went to speak to them. And because I’ve been here for a long time, they asked me “how can I find a job – what

> can I do?" I asked "what do you want to do?" and they said they wanted some kind of help like working in a care home. I knew someone who was working in a care home inside the church, so I connected them up and straight away they see the benefit of the 'Connection Time'. It is not only helping them spiritually, but economically and socially.

For Kunle and Tabia, both from West Africa, Connection Time enabled the sort of interaction between people that they were used to from their home context. It gave the space for interaction between people that 'at home' had been a normal part of meeting on a Sunday at church.

The research highlighted the significance of 'Connection Time' for visitors feeling welcome at GBC, for the starting of friendships and for the conducting of social business. Set within the wider context of an emphasis on making sure visitors were welcome, and the culture of creating community within GBC, the weekly 25-minute 'Connection Time' set in the middle of the morning meeting was a key component that encouraged and facilitated relational connection between people from all ethnicities who attended GBC.

There were other features of the morning meetings that were mentioned by research participants as being significant for developing relationships. Several mentioned the fact that every week the congregation celebrated the birthdays of people present. People with birthdays either in the previous or in the coming week were invited to the front they were asked their name, when their birthday was/will be and how old they will be. Happy Birthday was then sung to all those assembled and the worship leader then prayed for them. Janice, "I think recognising people and their birthdays is something that was positive and good for the church for bringing people closer and connecting people more so together". Natasha, "It's a family thing celebrating the birthdays of people and it is

good to have knowledge of people's anniversaries and to pray for them. I think that was significant, not just singing Happy Birthday, but praying for them as well". For Janice and Natasha the celebration of birthdays was a "family thing" that brought "people closer" and connected people. Other interviewees commented that they would talk to people whose birthdays had been celebrated during Connection Time. There were similar comments about the practice of allowing people to 'give a testimony'. This is where there was an 'open microphone' for people to share something about what they had experienced of God's activity in or around their lives recently. Interviewees commented that during 'Connection Time' there would be conversation around what had been shared.

The second relevant change to Sunday meetings was the introduction of monthly church lunches. The format varied but the most common was 'bring and share' where people were invited to bring some food that would be put out on tables for people to take. Generally, people brought food that reflected their own ethnic background. The numbers of people who stayed for lunch varied but it was rarely less than 60 or more than 100. Eating together was mentioned as a significant aspect of the way that people connected with one another (Ortiz, 1996: 49). In the view of some of the research participants eating each other's food meant accepting each other's culture.

Oluwasesan:

> I like my food and I like tasting different things, different food from different places. It was another way of getting to know people and different cultures as well … And then I'm happy to explain what it is, when it is eaten, how it is eaten, how it is prepared. So, it's just erm, sharing my experience of Nigeria and just letting people know a bit more about the foods and the culture. I'm very happy when people try Nigerian food and then ask questions about what it is and how you actually prepare it … So, it's a way of saying, "Yes, this is what we do in Nigeria".

Graham:

> I think we have embraced things like church lunches and international evenings which always express integration and something of an introduction to other cultures … I think the fact we have a long table with food from however many cultures on offer and people fill their plates with it, for those who are bringing and preparing the food there is massive acceptance. A massive sense of belonging.

Tabia:

> It makes you feel very proud. You feel appreciated. They don't just like me; they like what I eat and they are eating it too, so they are connecting with me. They are connecting with me; they are acknowledging me. It's very important.

For Oluwasesan, Graham and Tabia eating food prepared by different members of GBC led to a "massive sense of belonging", united in their diversity through eating together. For Tabia when someone ate her food they connected with her and acknowledged her. So sharing her food involved being accepted in her ethnicity by others. As Ronke expressed it, "So, the impact of food is very, very significant. I think it brings people together".

My wife and I used food to help us welcome new people at GBC. It was our practice to invite all new GBC members to our home for a meal. This was either as a small group for a midweek evening meal or for a larger group for a barbeque at the weekend. Melanie recalled, "When you [Pastor David] used to invite the new people around to your place there were different nationalities who would be there again, so you would talk to them and then you can form friendships that way". In the cultural understanding of most of those from an African or Asian context, being invited for a meal at the Pastor's house was the climax of being welcomed and accepted within GBC. As related above despite being discriminated against at a home group, Ronke chose to stay at GBC because she and her husband "had been well received by the Reverend". She was referring to the fact that they had been to our home for a meal. Our hosting of new people also set an example for church

members about welcoming others and the importance of eating together. It was my observation that White British church members did not naturally extend such a welcome to new arrivals.

Being a part of a group was also recognised by some of the research participants as being significant for them in developing relationships within GBC. At different times GBC ran a wide range of groups. These included groups for Bible study and prayer. Some of these groups were conducted in other languages (Arabic, Polish and Portuguese) others were age specific (twenties, retired). Other groups were more social for example, craft-based groups. Other groups were more task-orientated, for example evangelism, singers, musicians or sound system.

Luke recalled, “In that group, itself I would have met various people that I wouldn’t have encountered in the church, like XX and another couple of people in that group. So, the groups felt natural”. Oluwasesan, “And it was through getting involved in the various groups that I then began to know more people and relationships started up”. Melanie, “Something might have happened in the service and if you’ve split into the groups for prayer or things like that. You might follow that up with a conversation afterwards. That’s how I would describe natural relationships building really.”

For Luke, Oluwasesan and Melanie their experience of encountering other people in a group led to the development of relationships.

4.7 Experiencing Something Bigger at GBC

For a few of the research participants worshipping as a part of the multi-ethnic GBC congregation meant that they felt "a part of something bigger" than GBC. Shanice, "Yes, it's that part of something bigger. It is more than just yourself, more than just a small group. There is this whole host of us worshipping together …I feel a part of something bigger – yes, much, much bigger." Debbie, "For me again I suppose it's also feeling part of one world … that sense of belonging to God's world rather than just having like a national identity as it were".

Graham:

> It develops our relationship with each other. It develops our relationship with God. It goes against the flow of ugliness like the rise of nationalism we are seeing in this country and across Europe at the moment. So, it cuts across all those horrid things that happen and it is a fantastic example of the way … we can be united in diversity and I love it. I absolutely love it. It is just a brilliant expression of family.

For Debbie, Graham and Shanice the experience of worshipping God as a part of the multi-ethnic GBC congregation meant that they tangibly felt that they were a part of the worldwide church. Additionally for Graham the experience flowed against the "ugliness" of the "rise of nationalism" almost as though it was an antidote to it.

Oluwasesan experienced this sense of being a part of something bigger in a different way:

> It was as if, yes, I'm part of something bigger, rather than just living in London and staying in Greenford … For me it – I seem to get transported to those cultures. I feel when I'm singing in Swahili, I put myself in the churches that will be singing those songs and sort of the culture. So, it's, for me it's different. I place myself when we are singing in Arabic, for example, I sometimes feel we are singing these songs freely. There are some people who will be singing these songs who can't sing them loudly or proudly because of persecution and things like that. I've got the opportunity to sing this song, so I've got to sing, get it out and actually enjoy the song. I put myself in the position of the people who can't sing it how they would want to sing the song … When we are singing the songs, it is not just singing

> a song for me. It is identifying with the people from where those songs have originated.

For Oluwasesan as he worshipped at GBC he experienced an intense identification with people in other parts of the world "identifying with the people from where those songs have originated" an identification with the worldwide church in the present and a feeling that he needed to sing for those people who were unable to sing for themselves.

4.8 Anticipating Heaven at GBC

For some of the research participants being a part of the congregation at GBC felt to them to be an anticipation of heaven. Isabelle:

> To be in a church where we sing in different languages is a privilege. It reminds me of the fact we are like, what do you call it, heaven on earth? Because, at the end of the day we will be worshipping God in different languages and this is what we are doing and I think that is very, very, important.

Bumni:

> I have even sat in services … and I've felt this is going to be like how heaven is and it brings so much joy to know that every single person's nation will be represented there and no-one's will be more important than any other. That is what I feel a bit of perspective from heaven is in our church. And as I say that is within myself and that makes me feel like I matter.

Oluwasesan:

> It's a taste of what to look forward to in heaven, different voices, different nations, different songs all the time … it's difficult to explain but it's just [sic] fills me with joy that it is a foretaste of what is to come. How joyful it is going to be in heaven, singing different songs with different people.

For Isabelle, Bumni, Oluwasesan, and several others, the Sunday worship experience at GBC was a foretaste of their future in heaven. This was a source of encouragement and joy for them in the present. Malcolm Patten had a similar finding in his analysis of another multi-ethnic Baptist Church in London (Patten, 2011: 164-165). Bumni's reflection that

no group “will be more important than any other” shows that ideological perspectives that privilege a specific ethnic group were undermined.

4.8 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has begun the presentation of the key findings from the research. It has been seen that people from overseas who joined GBC felt welcome, safe and fully accepted, often in contrast to their experiences outside of GBC. Different ways that aspects of different ethnic cultures were incorporated into GBC and how people connected together have been examined. Looking back over the findings described in this chapter the biggest surprise for me was the significance of ‘Connection Time’. I knew that it was a space where people encountered others, I did not realise the full significance in the subsequent development of relationships, and I had no idea of its role in providing a space for the conduct of ‘business’. However, the most striking finding for me is encapsulated in Tambara’s description that people “feel like they are human beings not just second hand citizens”. The lived experience described by some of the Black research participants who were born overseas is that they felt that at GBC they were welcomed, fully accepted and affirmed as of equal value to White British people.

The next chapter continues the presentation of the themes that emerged from the research by looking in depth at the experience of Third Culture Kids at GBC and also some incidental data that emerged concerning my leadership.

5 Further Themes Emerging from the Research

5.1 Introduction

This chapter continues the presentation of the themes that emerged from the research. Firstly, the experience of Third Culture Kids is examined. This research data is different from that examined in the previous chapter. The research participants in this section all grew up in the UK, most were born here. They are younger than most of the other research participants and a focus group was conducted to explore their lived experience at GBC. As explored in section 3.6 this focus group generated particularly rich data. Secondly, my leadership is examined before the themes that have been explored in the last chapter and this chapter are drawn together.

5.2 The Experience of Third Culture Kids at GBC

Some of the first-generation migrants who became part of GBC arrived with very young children; others soon started families. These children grew up in a different culture to the culture of their parents. In the academic literature people born in the UK to parents who were born and grew up in a different country are called 'Third Culture Kids'. Linton states that the term 'Third Culture Kids' originated in the work of sociologists Ruth and John Useem examining the expatriate community in India during the 1950's (2015: 190-191). He also quotes the 'standard definition' produced by Pollock and Van Reken:

> A Third Culture Kid (TCK) is a person who has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years outside of the parents' culture. The TCK builds relationships to all of the cultures, while not having full ownership of any. Although elements from each culture are assimilated into the TCKs life experience, the sense of belonging is in relationship to others of similar background (1999: 13).

Hardy and Yarnell (2015) in their book aiming to promote church based 'multicultural partnerships' consider the challenges facing those they prefer to call 'Third Culture Children' (TCC). The context they are seeking to address is that of children growing up in the UK in mono-ethnic churches made up of migrant adults. They outline five specific challenges faced by TCC but afterwards comment that there are 'advantages' in being a TCC. 'TCC learn how to relate better to people from different cultures' (2015: 125).

I will use 'TCK' as this is the usual term in the literature. The TCK at GBC were actively engaged in children's and youth programmes. They also regularly attended Sunday meetings and participated in a wide range of GBC activities with their families. Prior to commencing the research, I was aware from conversation with some of the TCK at GBC that they considered that their experience of growing up as a part of GBC had given them advantages over their peers who had not had a similar experience. Their experience was explored in a focus group consisting of five TCK along with two White British (Elliot and Cathy) who had also grown up at GBC. I also subsequently interviewed Felix, who had been unable to attend the focus group as he was working, who is also White British and had grown up as a part of GBC. Additionally, during some of the interviews with research participants who were parents of TCK, comments were made that are relevant here. The sections below need to be understood in the context of the nature of GBC as a space that, as was explored in the previous chapter, was considered 'safe' for people who had grown up outside of the UK to be themselves. It was a faith community where people were comfortable expressing their own culture through language, movement, food and art as described in the previous chapter.

5.2.1 Comfortable with Difference

The term 'TCK' is used below to include the seven who took part in the Focus Group plus Felix. A strong theme that emerged was that all the TCK considered that as adults they were more open to, and comfortable with, ethnic/cultural difference than their peers who had not shared their experience at GBC. Several talked about meals eaten together at church. Bunmi was typical remembering "our church lunches again, learning about other people's cultures, people's foods, learning to love foods you didn't grow up with in your house, but which became familiar". The "learning to love" unfamiliar food and learning about unfamiliar culture shows that ethnic differences were embraced and enjoyed. There was reflection on the experience of Sunday services. Gbemisola:

> For me, I just think about Sunday services to be honest when we would just sing songs from a variety of different countries, songs in Hindi, songs in Yoruba, songs in Swahili. I just think it was amazing that it was such an important part of our service. And even prayers sometimes there would be a time when someone would pray in their native tongue and you would still just feel God's presence, even though you might not be able to understand what they were saying you could still feel God's presence there … So yes, I just remember like the worship and the services and actually even that the church was so mixed. It was just lovely to be in a place where the congregation was just full of people from lots of different countries.

Here there is appreciation and positive experience of difference even when there was no understanding of what was being said.

Felix commented:

> I think growing up within Greenford [throughout his interview Felix used the term 'Greenford' to denote GBC] it was the place I got to understand and meet people of different ethnic backgrounds … I think it probably helped shape my understanding that different cultures were really interesting and different religions and different things that made up people from different backgrounds made them interesting.

For Felix regularly, over a period of many years, engaging with people from a different culture to his own shaped the way he responded to ethnic/cultural difference. Other TCK mentioned their positive memories of clothes from different cultures being modelled, of dance and artwork reflecting different ethnic origins.

Oluchi, who is the mother of two TCK who were not research participants commented:

> What I find very helpful is being in a multi-cultural community within the church - a multi-cultural family. It has helped me to help my children to know that the world, it's not just the Nigerian community in England, but there is diversity. And they are growing up in a world where it is getting smaller where we all have to interact and integrate with one another and learn to relate to one another, but still understanding the different traditions and cultures. By acknowledging them we are giving room to accommodate one another. To me that was so important in bringing up my children and it will hopefully give them the confidence to be in this global village we're developing as a world.

For Bunmi, Felix and Gbemisola the way they repeatedly, over many years, encountered difference arising from various ethnic/cultural contexts represented within GBC was viewed with hindsight as a positive experience. Even when they did not understand or did not like the experience at the time, as they look back they now see it as having enriched them and left them being open to, and comfortable with, difference. Oluchi's comments, as a parent of two TCK, support the findings above that the lived experience at GBC led to GBC TCK being more open to, and comfortable with, ethnic/cultural difference than their peers who had not shared their experience at GBC. In a multi-ethnic context such as London this experience has given them important skills, which will be explored in more detail below, that help them relationally and professionally.

5.2.2 Understanding that there are other Valid Ways of 'Doing Things'

The TCK reported feeling and understanding that there are other valid ways of seeing/doing things than those of their own culture. Folarin "relative to people who haven't grown up in a church like this, but are still Third Culture Kids, I feel as though … I have more of an openness to different ways of doing various stuff". Folarin made a comparison between himself and another male student at University who came from a very similar family context. The other student observed Folarin talking with Asian girls and White guys and asked "How do you know how to speak to all these different groups of people?" Folarin reflected that "it just came naturally to me … part of it is because I grew up in this context where there were all different types of people".

Elliot (White British) contrasted his outlook and experience with that of his wife who is also White British. She grew up without exposure to people of different ethnicities. He reflected:

> In being forced to as a young person and a child to understand and be exposed to other people's cultures it draws us closer together when you don't necessarily understand why they are like that or the way they do certain things and you think what is that? But that draws you closer together and I certainly felt growing up a very powerful sense of the Spirit moving amongst us and God's love being amongst us as we were drawn together through overcoming our cultural differences and learning to understand and love those different things.

As an adult he feels that he now has "a real richness that I've gained in my life of and for other ways of doing things" which he attributes to his experience at GBC. Later he added:

> The powerful thing for me, which has shaped how I view the world, is the thought actually there are other cultures, there are other ways of doing things. It doesn't mean that one is right and one is wrong. It just means understand that, get to know that person, why they are like that, why they do that. Celebrate it and just enjoy it.

Cathy (White British) related a story from her school and reflected, "I've definitely been at an advantage [over other pupils] because having been exposed to different cultures on a weekly basis, it has made me more culturally aware definitely". Bolade added, "being in a multi-ethnic church has definitely helped me to assimilate in different life environments".

Bolade, Cathy, Elliot and Folarin all reflected that growing up within GBC had exposed them to different ways of doing things. As they repeatedly encountered different ways of doing things as a part of GBC over many years, they realized that other ways to the ones that were normal in their own families' culture were equally valid. This enabled them to more easily relate to people from different cultures whom they encountered outside of GBC.

Felix talked about the way that the experience of growing up as a part of GBC meant that he was not "judging people by pre-conceived ideas". Reflecting on how this is affecting him now in his adult life he said:

> I now have a lot of the issues I have to deal with at work, a lot of the ideas of erm, racism and things like that comes from people not knowing anything about the cultures, anything about the people. They've never had the lived experiences I had growing up of just being able to sit and chat over food or over a cup of coffee on a Sunday morning. Erm, they've not really had the same ability to be involved in groups or the same activities where you get that understanding that yes, they might be different, but they are still people … understanding that just because they are from different places and seen different things, doesn't mean they are not people.

Gbemisola:

> From growing up in the church and having friends who were from many different countries in the world I think that has potentially given me skills to be able to interact with different people at work, at school and at university ... it was so normal as part of church life, probably interacting with people that maybe I would never have interacted with before. Like having friends from India or Sri Lanka or

> China ... or someone English. I think it is so easy in this world to form cliques, where people who are the same tend to stick together. But I feel that at church that didn't really happen ... [instead there was a] community of people from all different countries all interacting with each other, not being different sub-sets or cliques, but people being family like the family I feel I got at GBC.

Alvita, although not a TCK, commented:

> Had it not been for being here [at GBC] and those interactions, I would only be seeing things in one way, wouldn't I? Just from my view and understanding things from my view. Now, the people I work with, I work in a multi-ethnic department as well, and that has helped me to understand different things about people, the way that they behave and why they do things like that. So, it definitely has enriched my life.

For Alvita, Felix and Gbemisola their experience of interacting with people from other ethnicities, who were a part of GBC, meant that they have developed skills and understanding that have equipped them for having positive encounters with people outside of GBC from different ethnic contexts. They reflected that they understand that people from other ethnic contexts see situations differently; they have different values and therefore interpret situations in different ways. Their lived experience as a part of GBC means that rather than simply dismissing someone that they encounter who is 'different' they have the ability for positive engagement. They realise that there are other valid ways of interpreting situations than only the one that is natural to them; this enables them to better understand and communicate.

This effect was experienced by older people within GBC also. Debbie who is White British and at the time of her interview was retired and had moved away from Greenford, gave an example from her own life in her new location of being better equipped to engage with people from different ethnicities:

> I think it makes me – thinking again now in life – look for people from other ethnicities when I'm walking along the seafront. If I get into conversations, I will

> tend to gravitate towards someone who is not White British … I'm not afraid to talk to someone whose background or skin colour is different from my own. I feel quite bold and I'm not a person who can easily connect with people and talk to them. I think that is from coming from this kind of environment.

The experience of growing up at GBC and having a positive experience of ethnic/ cultural difference meant the TCK did not, in their view, hold stereotypical views of others who were different. Folarin:

> I just think growing up in this church has actually helped me treat other humans like humans rather than the stereotypes that have been associated with them. We have had people from so many different nations come to this church, be members of this church, be part of the worship, cook for International Evenings or whatever. And so, when people are making broad brush statements about this group of people or that group of people I already have in my mind, 'Well that person doesn't actually fit that or that person kind of does or whatever. It helps to lay a layer of humanity over the cynicism that we see on an everyday basis.

Cathy added:

> I think it has definitely prepared me for the wider community … treating every other human as a human rather than a stereotype … I think growing up in an environment where I was embracing that on a weekly basis has made it a lot easier for me to do that comfortably and to enjoy doing it.

Bunmi, "I like to live my life embracing all cultures and knowing there's beauty and special things in each culture. I do think that came from this church".

Bunmi, Cathy, Elliot, Felix, Folarin and Alvita's lived experience at GBC was that their regular exposure to different cultures resulted in them being more open to other ways of seeing/doing things than they observed in their peers who did not have the experience of growing up in an environment such as GBC. There was a richness in their encounters that meant that they were not bound by stereotypical interpretation.

There is evidence above that for the TCK at GBC their experience of encountering difference went beyond merely being open to it. Elliot said he was initially "forced" to

encounter ethnic/cultural difference but later he came to "celebrate" it. Bunmi talked about "learning to love" unfamiliar foods. It seems clear that the initial stage of being unsure of unfamiliar cultural components developed into an enjoyment of them. This meant that their orientation to the unfamiliar became one of positive anticipation rather than uncertainty or even fear.

5.2.3 Formation of a Positive Self-Identity

The positive engagement with cultural/ethnic difference also seems to have had a significant impact on how TCK saw themselves. Gbemisola:

> Being part of a multi-ethnic church has inspired me ... seeing Greenford Baptist Church so mixed and some of those from other cultures being in areas of leadership, talking at the front, or praying at the front and having different roles that has just inspired me in life.

Gbemisola contrasted this with her experience of other mixed churches where people from only one ethnicity are in leadership.

Bunmi:

> I think being brought up in this type of church it really helped me to kind of navigate my way through that third culture kind of space because we were loads of people from different countries, with that shared identity … I think it was a place where you felt safe and that you are not on your own. I definitely struggled with that third-culture identity through my teens because, especially because of the school I went to as well where there were White British people and there was only one other Black person in my year. So, you don't really feel you fit in that well … at school you are not as British as the other people there. They know you pronounce things differently, eat different food, or you can't go and do the same things that they do. So, it was quite tricky, but I think things like being at this church and at university helped me to accept myself for who I was. It helped me to know you aren't the same as everybody else. You have your own unique experience and that is what makes you, you … [at school] until they get to know you well, they have a certain perception of you. Whereas, people in church … never made me feel like I was lesser or I was different. They acknowledged we had different cultural backgrounds, but we were family and it didn't matter where

> you were from. Actually, we embraced it. It was celebrated rather than a bad thing. So that is why I would say this was a safe place for me because we acknowledged there were differences … that really differed from my school experience where … at the beginning it was very, very hard to adjust to where you felt you didn't really belong and you weren't the same as other people and that was seen as a bad thing, rather than a good thing, whereas in church I always felt differences were celebrated and you worked together in grace to have an understanding.

Bunmi's experience at school and in wider society was, "people who were a bit different from the average person in England or came from a certain type of background it was like, "You are not included," and so you are kind of invisible in a way". However, at GBC the situation was very different for her:

> I felt very visible in this church. I felt like the unique things about me were great, God-given and to be celebrated. That gave me a sense of belonging and a sense of feeling loved and er like I mattered … knowing that within myself, I then have that confidence that this has value and maybe not everyone else believes it but my church family believes there is value in it. It just gives you that confidence to think I can overcome a lot and I am not by myself. And actually, it is God-given, it is not just an opinion. God actually loves that we are all different.

Although not a TCK Honoria's experience was also transformational for her life:

> I came from a quite closed society … so my family is … quite closed … my mother is quite a racist person … she is very traditional, having been brought up in a very traditional Portuguese cultural background … then I came here and been spoilt with all this beauty of differences. So, for me it has helped me to develop a passion to understand human beings and why you behave the way you behave… understanding why the person behaved like that and why their culture is that way, it is amazing. It is a fabulous way of looking into God's creation with all of its diversity because it's from God who created the world in that way. So yes, it really contributed to the person I am today, definitely and for my career choice [as a mental health nurse] as well because I couldn't do the work I do today if I didn't have this passion for these things from my early years in London. So today, all I do is about that. It is about acceptance. It is about respecting people the way they are … For me it is an amazing thing and it is such a wonderful journey to be involved in this to be honest with you, to understand God doesn't see those things as a barrier that we struggle with as human beings. For God it is nothing because He created all of us and all those differences. So, actually we contribute to each other.

Bunmi, Gbemisola and Honoria each attribute a key part of the positive development of their self-identity to their lived experience as a part of GBC. One aspect of this was seeing people who looked like them in leadership/ministry roles at GBC encouraging them to aspire to leadership in their careers. Another component was the positive message that they were different from White British norms but that this was good and to be celebrated. They felt affirmed in their difference. Together these things helped the formation of a strong and positive self-identity. This enabled them to be confident and secure in themselves.

5.2.4 Impact on Professional Life

This leads into the final theme in this subsection, which is the way that, in the view of the TCK research participants, the experience of growing up at GBC has had an impact on their professional life. All but one of the GBC TCK who participated in the research were established in a professional career at the time of their participation. The professions included company director, media entrepreneur, legal professional, General Practitioner (doctor), civil servant (strategy manager), police officer and project manager. There was a unanimous view expressed by the TCK that in their view they had been more able to advance in their careers because of their lived experience at GBC. In their view there were two components to this. One was the set of skills, outlined below, they had learnt to help them understand and navigate situations of cultural difference. The other was the self-confidence that they had built up from their lived experience as a part of GBC. Their view does need putting into a wider context; because they believe that it was their lived experience at GBC that assisted them in their success, this does not mean that this

necessarily was the case. Below their belief is further discussed but first the voice of the research participants needs to be heard.

Duna:

> [My experience at GBC] has helped shape the kind of career I have taken, which is again honing in on that skill and that ability to work with people from different walks of life, er, you know. So not only has it shaped the way I interact with people, but it has helped me hone in on a skill other people saw I had. And that skill was only there because I grew up in GBC. Which yes I think I speak for everyone that growing up in GBC has 150% x 60 played a big part in the way we interact with - I don't want to say the outside world - but in certain situations it has definitely given us the advantage whichever profession we are in now, be it lawyers, project management, musicians, medical things as well. We definitely have the advantage that, you know that we can deal with situations seamlessly because we were given the tools and we had the upbringing and direction at GBC.

Felix reflected on the impact of his experience of growing up at GBC on his professional life/work:

> All of those sorts of things very much influence or were influenced by my time growing up in Greenford [GBC] and by my ability to engage with other communities and not assess everything by White British standards. And, to accept different communities and where they are coming from as what they are and for what may be normal to them. It may not be what I would find normal when I was growing up, but it doesn't mean it isn't normal for them and that is an important distinction to make because you need to understand what is culturally normal for them. And that impacts on how you deal with whatever you have gone to deal with.

Elliot drew a contrast between his own views and those of other White British people he knows. "I have a very different viewpoint on certain political issues such as immigration … and how those other cultures have enriched our society in my opinion. So, I think that has really helped me." Elliot, who is White British, has successfully worked in contexts, such as a gospel choir, where he was the only person who was not Black.

In the views of Duna, Elliott and Felix, which echo views above from all of the quoted research participants, the experience of growing up as a part of GBC has given them skills, understanding and experience that now give them significant advantages in their professional lives. Skills such as being able to appropriately interact with other people from different ethnicities/cultures, to be able to assess situations and form professional judgements from perspectives other than White British norms and being able to see the way that people from other ethnicities/cultures with different perspectives can enrich a working environment or some other context. These skills were able to develop as a result of their understanding and acceptance of ethnic and cultural difference, their understanding and acceptance of the view that there are different valid ways of doing and interpreting things and from their development of their own self-identity and confidence in themselves.

The importance of this understanding in business life is reflected by Neeley writing in the Harvard Business Review in October 2015, drawing on his 15 years of research into how Global Teams work. In a section headed *Learning from one another*, he refers to what he calls ‘a case in point’. He describes a lively interaction between an Israeli team member and a Latin American team member discussing strategy. The team leader was concerned about their interaction and that one or both of them might have felt that they were not being heard. They responded that they had worked together on a previous project and established ‘their own style of relating to each other’. Neeley comments that ‘their ability to acknowledge and navigate their cultural differences was beneficial to everyone on the team’. The GBC TCK who participated in the research said that they have brought the

abilities that they developed during their time at GBC into their professional working lives, not only benefitting themselves but also those they now work with.

5.2.5 A Wider Context. Yvonne Channer's Research

Yvonne Channer's work helps to provide a wider context for the views expressed by the GBC TCK about the way that their lived experience at GBC had helped them achieve professional success. Channer's twelve research participants were aged between 25 and 40 at the time of her research in the early 1990's. They were all 'African Caribbeans' with involvement in the Seventh Day Adventist Church (SDA) as children and teenagers and, when she conducted her interviews, they all had a first degree and half of them had a Master's degree (1995: 63). At the time of her research there was a prevailing narrative, extensively illustrated in her book, that 'West Indians' educationally underachieved; Channer wished to express a counter-narrative. Of particular relevance to this research is her exploration of the impact of 'religion' on her research participants' educational achievements (1995: 123). In Chapter Five of her book Channer identified five 'religion related themes' that emerged from her research participants. These will be briefly summarised along with the impact she believed they had on their educational progress.

'Self discipline': Her research participants reported that in contrast to many of their peers, in the face of 'racial stereotyping or racism by teachers or children' they continued to aim to be 'good pupils' by drawing on the values of 'self-respect, respect for adults and property' which they had 'internalised' from their SDA upbringing, thus avoiding 'negative consequences' (1995: 101-103).

‘Religious observance and Church attendance’: When reflecting on being church members ‘social and psychological benefits appeared to be central to their experience. Conscious external discipline as well as the sense of, being valued and cared for by humans and the divine were often recalled’ (1995: 104-105).

‘Determination and Resilience’: ‘all of the respondents spoke of religion as a source of strength in their academic success’ this was especially true when facing difficulties ‘they reported the capacity to cope with negative and oppressive experiences’ part of this was ‘the need to please God by ‘doing well’’ (1995: 106-111).

‘Disenchantment with Religion’: for some of Channer’s research participants they started to question belief in a compassionate powerful God ‘when they became aware of the suffering of Black people’ (1995:103).

‘Owning their parent’s religion’: Channer’s research participants viewed their ‘religious upbringing’ as ‘providing guiding principles’, this included believing ‘that they could speak with God, asking him for whatever they need’ ‘religion was a personal relationship with a caring God’ (1995: 115-121).

Discussing these observations later in her book Channer noted that her subjects:

> identified areas of their religious upbringing which they rated as beneficial in the advancement of their academic careers … while they were still children they had been introduced to a wide range of conceptual frameworks. They regard these concepts as to some degree extending their intellectual capacity for further study. The philosophical and psychosocial aspects of life, self-confidence, encouragement of the work ethic and self-discipline were all cited as contributing factors to their academic development. Moreover, the religious community provided … a setting where they could relate to others sharing, consoling and reconciling the many and regular problems of living in a racist society’ (1995: 135).

There are some clear differences between Channer's research participants and the participants in this research. Her participants were all of Caribbean heritage whereas the TCK who took part in the focus group were mainly of African heritage. Her participants were older at 25 to 40 years in contrast to 18 to 30 years for the GBC TCK. Most significantly, her research took place more than 20 years before this research, during which time society and educational practice have changed. However, there are some similarities in the themes that emerged. For both sets of research participants their participation in a church environment, where they were accepted and encouraged, helped them to overcome the overt and covert racism they experienced in their school environment. This helped them to feel accepted and affirmed in who they were as Black people with potential. This in turn helped the formation of a positive self-identity. The focus of this research was different, so some of the themes Channer observed did not appear directly in this research. However, from my personal knowledge of the research participants I am confident that had they been asked they would have given evidence for the impact on their upbringing as a part of GBC on their 'self-discipline', their 'determination and resilience' and their 'owning of their parent's religion'.

Channer's findings support those of this research in that there is evidence of a positive impact on the educational achievement, and therefore on subsequent professional life, of growing up in a church context that affirmed values of 'self-confidence, encouragement of the work ethic and self-discipline' alongside the acceptance and affirmation of their ethnic/cultural heritage. At GBC there was the additional advantage of the positive exposure to a variety of different ethnic/cultural heritages which helped the TCK learn

how to successfully navigate these in wider society. For the GBC TCK research participants, GBC was the only church context they knew while growing up. It is clear from their comments that they believe that their lived experience within GBC was a significant factor in their educational and professional success. Of course, what they chose to do with the affirmation and support they received was their own responsibility. GBC did not make them successful. However, it is clear that in their view GBC provided an environment where they could, and did, flourish.

It is important to acknowledge that the TCK made a substantial contribution into the life of GBC. Two served as part of the Leadership Team, several have led in different ways in the youth programmes, two have been regular leaders of Sunday worship. It is easy to identify ways that all but one of those who participated in the research have contributed into GBC. For parents like Oluchi, quoted above, seeing TCK thriving in their lives both within GBC and in the wider world has been a huge encouragement in their commitment to GBC.

5.3 My Leadership

In 1992, John Finney published his research into how people across the UK became committed to the Christian Faith. More than 500 people over the age of 16 who had made a 'public profession of faith' between March 1990 and March 1991 participated in the survey (1992: *viii-ix*). The respondents were asked what they considered the main factor and what they considered supporting factors 'in their becoming a Christian'. 'The minister' was described as the main factor by 16% and a supporting factor by 42% of respondents (1992: 36-37). Finney noted that 'the research showed that ministers are significant not

only in the running and the morale of the church but also in the personal lives of the people they encounter' (1992: 51). As described in Chapter One, during the early nineties and subsequently GBC saw many new converts join the church. From Finney's research it seems likely my role as minister at GBC was a significant factor in the decisions made by people to convert and join GBC.

Manuel Ortiz conducted ten case studies of multi-ethnic churches in the USA. He comments that his research 'strongly suggests' that 'proper leadership is essential to establishing the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the ministry' (1996: 107). He observes that the 'senior pastor' was the 'visionary' and 'carried the full burden of this process for many years' (1996: 108). Marti in his doctoral research looking at the development of the Mosaic church (already discussed above) comments that 'The importance of weekly sermons given by the Lead Pastor of Mosaic cannot be neglected in how they shape the congregation as a whole, especially in the ideological elements that have contributed toward the ethnic diversification of the church' (2002: 109). Writing in a UK context Malcolm Patten in his book *Leading a Multicultural Church* states that there are four things that a 'good leader of a multicultural church will be able to' do. These are to 'model and encourage vulnerable leadership', 'foster friendship, loyalty and concern for one another', 'encourage the interchangeability of roles' (which is to ensure that marginalised people are included) and to 'show patience and clarity when discussing difficult issues, ensuring that all feel able to participate openly' (2016: 134).

I believe that my leadership at GBC has been an important component in the congregation's transformation. However, I decided that it was not appropriate to ask the

research participants any questions about my leadership either in the focus groups or during the interviews. Although I had been seconded to other churches for nearly five years, and every research participant knew that I was soon to be permanently leaving both Greenford and GBC, my role both as researcher and church pastor would have made it difficult for any honest evaluation to emerge. Nevertheless, some unsolicited comments were made. I recognise, for the reasons given above, that these do not give a rounded assessment of my leadership however they do give examples of some ways that some of the research participants viewed aspects of the impact of my leadership.

One theme concerned 'fostering friendship' and 'concern for one another'. Betsy, an older White British lady who was at GBC when I arrived, commented that White British people can be somewhat "standoffish" but that I taught people to "integrate and to build relationships with one another". Tabia remembered that when I noticed a new person I would talk to them and

> find somebody in the congregation who had some kind of connection with them. So, people saw you come and make connection with them and then introduce them to somebody else who was in some way connected to them. It made them feel at home and in that way, many of them stayed.

Here I was noticed as modelling welcoming and 'fostering' connection between people. Ronke, a Black African, experienced significant racial prejudice within GBC (this was discussed in section 4.4) but decided to stay at GBC because "we'd been very well received by the church Reverend and that was enough for me and that kept us going".

A second theme was about modelling listening when looking at the Bible. This links to Patten's 'ensuring that all feel able to participate openly'. It was my practice when teaching from the Bible on Sundays, or at other times, to ask questions of the congregation.

I would walk around with a microphone allowing people in the congregation to participate.

Debbie commented:

> The sort of interactivity of the church in terms of your style of asking questions and getting response, so that kind of dialogue going on …it encouraged the dynamic of the congregation having a voice and their thoughts and feelings being important and shareable. So, I guess that made us more of a listening church as well.

The third theme was around enthusiastically encouraging the church to try new things.

Olivia recalled a meeting she thought took place in 1993:

> I remember, erm, David was leading the meeting and it was about this type of thing [using languages other than English in GBC worship]. It wasn't really happening, but was about how we saw worship in the church in the future, what were our ideas and how did we feel about it. And I actually said yes, I think it would be good to have not only worship in different languages, but different styles of worship representative of the people groups.

Tabia remembered:

> You went out maybe to a few countries. One of them I think was Jamaica and when you came back the style of worship – there was a trial period with a different style of worship, a lot of singing and dancing and I think that attracted more people. People felt more involved, more relaxed and I think that … maybe made other Black people feel more comfortable to come and also stay.

As the sole pastor and then as the Senior Pastor as the staff grew in number I naturally set the tone for the church (Branson & Martinez, 2011: 231). These incidental comments illustrate aspects that some of the research participants observed as positive impacts of my leadership on the development of GBC. As explained above if there were also impacts that were seen as negative by the research participants they probably would not have emerged during the research.

5.4 It's All About Community

On the 14th September 2018 as I was in the early stages of the documentary analysis, and months before I commenced focus groups and interviews, I wrote a memo. The context was my discovery, discussed in the previous chapter, of the document laying out my thinking for creating the first Leadership Training Group and the fact that there was no mention of recruiting Black members for the group. I wrote:

> After I started at GBC we almost immediately saw people becoming Christians and wanting to be baptised alongside other local people who had been attending other churches outside the area asking to join us. By Feb 1989, only 16 months after I arrived, one third of the membership, 35 people, had been members for one year or less. 29 of these were White British. 26 of the new people became members following baptism (22 of those baptised were White British). So the integration of new people was a significant challenge.
> In seeking to address this challenge we, without thinking, worked to welcome and integrate those who were not White British, not because they were not White British but because they were new to us.
> I now wonder if the early welcome and integration of people born outside of Europe into the membership of GBC was just a part of the general welcome and integration of new people, many of whom were unchurched. There was a lot of mention of the need to make new people welcome.
> Perhaps it was only as we noticed what had been taking place that issues around Afro-Caribbean culture and racism came to be seen. As I/we reflected on this we began to take intentional actions.
> If this is correct it changes the shape of my research (Memo written 14th September 2018).

Looking back now having fully reviewed and written up the research this memo seems prescient. When I came to GBC the dominant metaphor for local church for me was the Body of Christ from 1 Corinthians 12 with its emphasis on the connection between each of the members and each member having its own place and making its own unique contribution to the Body. As new people started attending we worked to see them relationally joined into GBC. When I became aware of issues of racism blighting the lives of GBC members it was clear that for the GBC community to continue to develop these

issues needed tackling. As I got to know new people who had come from ethnic contexts that I knew little about, the tapestry metaphor emerged and became the dominant image that I used to guide the further development of GBC. As explored above we moved to an intentional enriching of our life shared together by drawing on the rich flavours in food, song, movement, dress, language and art brought by the different members of the GBC congregation. A community was built where people felt welcome, safe and fully accepted for who they were. A community where people could contribute drawing on their own cultural heritage. This research has attempted to map out this transition through the eyes of 47 research participants while drawing on my own memories and various documents. The theological implications of this will be further discussed in the next chapter.

It is important to note again that the voice of those who did not accept the way that GBC welcomed and integrated people who were not White British was not heard in this, or the previous, chapter. In the narrative in Chapter One I recounted the story of the one group within GBC that opposed changes to worship and noted that other individuals had left during the transition as they were unhappy with the changes within GBC. In Chapter Three I explained that with two exceptions those I contacted who had left GBC because of unhappiness with the developments declined to participate in this research. This has resulted in the counter-narrative of their experience being absent from this research.

5.5 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has built on the themes explored in the previous chapter with an in depth look at the lived experience described by Third Culture Kids who grew up as a part of GBC. Their description of their lived experience provides a vivid view of what they

consider to have been the impact on their lives of growing up within GBC. It has also looked at data that emerged concerning leadership and some autoethnographic reflections on community.

The next chapter will reflect theologically on the themes that have emerged from the research and will consider potential implications for other contexts; there will also be recommendations for further research.

6 Further Theological Reflections and Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

This research set out to examine the apparently successful transition of GBC from a predominantly White British congregation to a genuinely multi-ethnic one, in contrast to other contexts known to me where the transition was abandoned because of conflict and division within the congregation. Although there was, as described in Chapter One, opposition that did lead to conflict and division within GBC, the transition continued. The lack of published research investigating such a transition was noted in Chapter One, as was the expression of the need for such research by the council of the Baptist Union of Great Britain. As noted in Chapter Three my intention, after this research is completed, is to produce materials to help others attempting a similar transition.

The overarching theme that emerged from the research conducted through the focus groups and interviews was that the lived experience of people who were a part of GBC was that they felt welcome, safe and fully accepted within GBC. This was set in the context of the experience of individuals of often not feeling welcome, safe and accepted in wider society and, for some, in other Christian contexts. Key components of GBC that were identified by research participants were the way that the use of their first language was welcome within congregational gatherings, the way that they were encouraged to engage in congregational worship using their whole body, not just their voice, and the sharing of food, dress, art and other aspects of their culture of origin. The 'Third Culture Kids', from their lived experience growing up within GBC, believed that they were better

equipped to navigate both professional life and general life than their peers who had not had the experience of growing up in a context like GBC.

Whilst reflecting on the research findings I have realised that there are several interlocking components that seem to have enabled the transition that took place at GBC. I have grouped these under four headings. The first is thinking that enabled transition. Under this heading is the tackling of racial prejudice and in particular the role of the tapestry metaphor. The second is attitudes that enabled transition; this surfaces in the practices of hospitality and vulnerability. The third is structures that enabled transition; here the key components are the Sunday morning meetings especially 'Connection Time', also the numerous social events with food and conversation. Finally, leadership that encouraged thinking, attitudes and structures that enabled transition.

6.2 Thinking that Enabled Transition: De-Centring Whiteness

In Chapter Two some aspects of the way that the ecclesiology at GBC enabled the transition to progress were examined. The particular significance of the tapestry metaphor for the congregation was explored. The insight that this metaphor had seemingly overwritten what Jennings describes as a 'diseased social imagination' (2010: 6) is perhaps the most significant finding of this research. We turn now to some further reflection on the impact of the tapestry metaphor.

Willie Jennings' most recent book *After Whiteness* (2020) 'reflects on the distortions wrought by whiteness' (2020, back cover). Although the context for this book is the theological academy in the USA, the conceptualisation he develops seems to be a helpful way of further reflecting on the transition that took place at GBC. Jennings notes that the

distortion he observed in the American theological academy is a 'microcosm' of problems in Western Education and as a result in Western Society as a whole (2020: 7). Jennings draws on the understanding he developed in *The Christian Imagination* (aspects of this were examined in Chapter Two) to assert that the goal of Western Education/Society is to promote 'white self-sufficient masculinity' (2020: 8). In contrast, Jennings claims God's goal is the creation of 'the crowd, that is the gathering of hurting and hungry people who need God … people who would not under normal circumstances ever want to be near each other' (2020: 13).

The central part of *After Whiteness* gives numerous examples and illustrations from Jennings' lived experience of how 'the tragedy of distorted institutional practice … steals from people what God gives to every creature … the desire to build together' (2020: 99). In Chapter Two of this thesis the reality of racism and White Privilege in UK society was noted. At various points throughout this thesis the lived experience of research participants who have faced racism in the UK has been described.

In the final two chapters of *After Whiteness* Jennings sought to develop an alternative way forward for the theological academy in particular and for Western education in general. What is significant for this research are the parallels between Jennings' suggestive concepts and the findings of the research at GBC.

Jennings wrote of a 'diseased centeredness … sickened by whiteness' growing from 'the pedagogical imperialism of the Euro-colonialists' that shaped education, language, ideas and 'rituals of evaluation' (2020: 140-141). He describes the 'consistent refusal … to place oneself in the journey of others … where I am willingly changed … by non-white peoples'

and thereby ‘to release oneself to the crowd’ (2020: 141). It is striking, from the findings of the research at GBC, that people did allow themselves to be changed and enriched by their encounters with people from different ethnicities. Jennings further comments that ‘in the long histories of Western colonial education, rarely if ever have people or peoples been allowed to name and voice … disagreements separate from the refereeing positioning of whiteness’ (2020: 142). Again, the research has shown evidence that within GBC the ability to disagree without Whiteness being the reference point was developed.

Writing of friendship Jennings comments that:

> Friendship is a real thing where people open their living to one another, allowing the paths of life to crisscross … making possible a reality of intimacy, communication, reciprocity and mutuality that builds from a deepening sense of connection’ (2020: 147).

Jennings comments that ‘we inhabit a social world constricted through whiteness that has left us with limited options for imagining how we might be with each other’ (2020: 151). However, it seems to be easier to critique Whiteness and the way that it distorts relationships and communities, than to envisage what a healthy multi-ethnic community might be like. This research has shown that the research participants at GBC had developed friendships that allowed ‘the paths of life to crisscross’. From these friendships a community was built where Whiteness as an organising conviction had been decentred. At GBC a viable and stable genuinely multi-ethnic church congregation seems to have been formed. Although practical and structural changes were clearly important, the prominent role of the tapestry metaphor in the life of the church seems to have been a crucial element in enabling this process. It is significant that the tapestry metaphor envisages engagement that moves beyond just Black and White. The ethnic landscape in

Greenford was far more complex than a binary construct of Black and White with Asians, Chinese, Eastern Europeans, Latin Americans and Middle Easterners also among the church members. The tapestry metaphor, with a diverse range of colours, is a visualisation of the inclusion of people from any ethnic group.

In Colossians 3, as part of a challenge to the readers to live holy lives by putting off lying, immorality, filthy language etc. and instead putting on compassion, gentleness, forgiveness etc. the writer makes the statement, 'Here there is no … barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all' (3: 5-14). James Dunn observes that 'the thought is clearly that Christ makes irrelevant ethnic, cultural and social distinctions … in the church' (1996: 223). Dunn points out that the term 'barbarian' 'carried a derogatory significance' referring to someone who only spoke an 'unintelligible language'. 'Scythians' were 'synonymous with crudity, excess and ferocity … Josephus … refers to Scythians as "… little different from wild beasts"' (C. Ap. 2: 269; Dunn, 1996: 225-226). In Chapter Two there was reflection on the way that some White people view Black people. Historically many were treated as slaves and still today in the UK Tyler asserts that many White people see themselves as 'culturally superior … to Others' (2012: 222). I preached on Colossians 3 at GBC on 25th June 2000. My hand-written preaching notes, which include most of the points already noted, conclude with the statement:

> Point is NOT that in Christ all distinctions vanish – People still circumcised or not! BUT that in Christ all are equal, no group is superior/inferior, we are all equally made in God's image (Wise, 2000a: 3).

In Chapters Four and Five research participants recounted how they felt that they had been fully accepted within the GBC congregation with their ethnic difference. For those who grew up within GBC this helped the formation of a positive self-identity. What developed

at GBC seems to be an embodiment of a theological conviction that all human beings are of equal value.

Evidence of the effective decentring of Whiteness as the norm can be seen in Chapters Four and Five, where research participants reported their experience that at GBC you did not need to use English in order to be accepted. This decentring was reflected in sung worship in many languages and in the styles used 'back home' accompanied by dance. The freedom to use their first language in prayer and sung worship is a significant component in feeling welcomed and accepted. Tambara commented, "So, to have a church where your language is being spoken in the songs and the prayers, you feel welcome … [people] feel like they are human beings and not just second-hand citizens or whatever". Similar comments were made by research participants regarding the freedom to use bodily movement/dance within services.

The decentring of Whiteness was also reflected in the clothes people wore, the art on display, the flags surrounding the worship area and the food that was served. In Chapter One the impact of my studies in Biblical Interpretation was described, which led to a move away from a Euro-centric purely cerebral approach, to one that drew on feelings and imagination and drew the congregation into participation in the hermeneutic process. In this way, Whiteness was also decentred in the way that scripture was handled.

6.3 Attitudes that Enabled Transition: Hospitable and Vulnerable

6.3.1 Hospitable

Christine Pohl is Professor Emerita of Church in Society at Asbury Theological Seminary, Kentucky, USA. In her book *Living into Community* (2012) she comments that:

> Communities in which hospitality is a vibrant practice tap into deep human longings to belong, find a place to share one's gifts, and to be valued. The practice of hospitality reflects a willingness on the part of a community of people to be open to others and to share insights, needs, and contributions (2012: 159).

Pohl notes that 'hospitality and shared meals' are found throughout the Bible from Genesis 18, where Abraham and Sarah welcome and cook a meal for 'three men', to Revelation 3: 20 where Jesus offers to 'come in and eat' with any who invite Him (2012: 161). Jesus, in the Gospel accounts, is frequently described as a guest in peoples' homes receiving hospitality. Jesus also is portrayed as a host when he feeds a hungry crowd (for example Mark 6: 30-44) and prepares breakfast for His disciples (John 21: 9). Acts 2: 46 records that the believers ate together in one another's homes (2012: 161).

Pohl highlights two gospel passages that she believes have been 'particularly formative' for the Christian understanding of hospitality. The first, Matthew 25: 31-46, is set in the context of 'final judgement' where Jesus 'will separate the people from one another' based on how they have responded to people in need (v 32). Did they feed those who were hungry, give a drink to those who were thirsty, invite strangers into their homes, clothe those who needed it, look after the sick and visit people in prison? Those who did are considered 'blessed' and are invited to 'take their inheritance' (v 34). Those who did not are sent into 'the eternal fire' (v 41). The startling climax to this teaching is Jesus' statement that 'whatever you did not do for one of the least of these you did not do for me'

(v 45). Pohl comments that, ‘our response to the “least” is tied to our response to Jesus and his response to us’ (2012: 162).

The second passage is Luke 14: 12-14. In this passage Jesus tells ‘a prominent Pharisee’, who was his host for a meal, that he should not invite his ‘friends … brothers or relatives or rich neighbours’ for lunch or dinner but instead invite ‘the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind and you will be blessed’. Pohl notes that this was ‘countercultural’ at that time (2012: 162). Additionally, Hebrews 13: 2 encourages the readers, ‘Do not forget to entertain strangers’. Pohl suggests that strangers are ‘people without a place, disconnected from life-giving relationships and networks’; this may be literally or figuratively true of them (2012: 164). Hospitality includes eating food with others both as a host and as a guest. Pohl comments that, ‘… because hospitality is part of what it means to be human. Every human being flourishes in the context of welcome’ (2012: 164).

In summary, from this brief survey of some biblical passages concerning hospitality and welcoming others, especially strangers, it is clear that prioritising these activities is a Christian calling. At GBC this calling was communicated in preaching and other biblical teaching. At GBC teaching from the Bible was a key motivating factor affecting the attitudes and behaviour of those who were a part of the congregation.

In Chapters Four and Five research participants’ reflections on eating with other people from GBC were reported. It is clear that the experience both of having their own food eaten and enjoyed by others and eating and enjoying even unfamiliar food prepared by others was a significant component in the building of relationships. Tabia commented:

> It makes you feel very proud. You feel appreciated. They don't just like me; they like what I eat and they are eating it too, so they are connecting with me. They are connecting with me; they are acknowledging me. It's very important.

It was noted in Chapter Four that research participants had experienced GBC as a place where they were welcomed, not just with a superficial initial greeting but it was a space where they were treated as equals. It was a place where they flourished through being able to grow, use their talents and a space where they received training and opportunities for ministry and leadership. Many of those who arrived at GBC were migrants who had recently arrived in the UK and had no existing friends or relatives here. They arrived as 'strangers' but found welcome, acceptance, friendship and support, which in turn they gave to others. Honoria expressed this very clearly, "to have this acceptance was something that captured me … I didn't need to be tense or pretending … I always be myself here. It was always a place where I really felt at home ... everyone is really open to accept people". This account from Honoria is especially significant as she came from a family that she described as racist and arrived in the UK expecting to be badly treated because of her nationality.

Research participants reported feeling free to be themselves. Having the national flags and artwork of people who were a part of the congregation hanging on the walls in the hall used for the main meetings was also mentioned by research participants as being significant, as it was a sign that people other than White British were welcome there.

Within GBC, as it was experienced by the research participants, the biblical values of welcoming strangers and hospitality were embedded.

6.3.2 Vulnerable

On Sunday 14th March 2021 I found myself in conversation via Zoom with a man who had served as a mission worker in Nigeria for more than forty years and a Baptist pastor who had served as a mission worker for ten years in Ecuador. We shared our observations on the way that many Christians in Nigeria, Ecuador, and some countries that I had visited, still live today by the European worldview of those who had evangelised their countries. We noted how this was visible in services on Sundays from the clothes worshippers wore and the European hymns, sometimes translated into local language, that were sung. However, it seemed to us that these were superficial indications of a much deeper issue where European cultural values had often been uncritically adopted. Some of these values, such as what clothing was 'appropriate', were unrelated to Gospel values and some, such as the superiority of White people, were in contradiction to them. The three of us also have extensive experience of churches in the UK that consist largely of people who have emigrated to the UK from Nigeria or Latin America. In these churches we have observed similar phenomena. Turning to reflect on multi-ethnic churches in the UK, my two conversation partners asked me how can, in the light of my research, British church leaders learn from people from other ethnicities. Our conversation was terminated at this point by the start of the virtual church service; however, after the service I spent some time in reflection on our conversation.

In Chapter Two, Andrew Draper's conclusion from his interpretation of the so-called parable of the Good Samaritan was discussed. Draper concluded that Jesus' instruction to the legal expert to 'go and do likewise' (Luke 10: 37) meant that he should go and place

himself in a position of vulnerability in order to receive from someone who he viewed as religiously and culturally inferior to himself. It was noted in Chapter Two that at GBC there developed a willingness on the part of many of the White British members to be vulnerable to the views and lifestyles of people from other ethnicities, allowing themselves 'to be helped by the unlike other' (Draper, 2016: 280). In considering how I could have answered my two conversation partners' question, I reflect that being vulnerable to the challenges and insights coming from people from other ethnicities is vital. The practice of not privileging our views and being open to the views of others has been a key component in the development of the genuinely multi-ethnic life of GBC. The intentional setting aside of a Euro-centric approach to biblical interpretation was a key part of enabling the congregation to hear and positively engage with theological, ethical and cultural perspectives arising from outside Europe and North America. In Chapter Two, the third core value in the Baptist Union document *Five Core Values* was noted as being a 'sacrificial community. Following Jesus in… Accepting vulnerability and the necessity of sacrifice'. It was noted that the practice of vulnerability and the willingness to sacrifice British ways of doing things was an important aspect in GBC's development.

Philippians 2: 5-7 reads 'Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant being made in human likeness'. In his commentary on Philippians Gordon Fee notes that this passage teaches that 'discipleship in the present calls for servanthood, self-sacrifice for the sake of others' (1995: 197). Self-sacrifice involves setting aside or giving up something that has value

for us in order to help others. In a multi-ethnic context this involves those in a position of power being willing to give up that position in order to genuinely welcome others. Talking about the arrival within GBC of the first people who were not White British, Betsy commented:

> I think our ways were what we had been brought up with and what we were used to. We assumed that was the norm and that people who came in from the outside were going to come round to our way of thinking, be English and be the norm like we thought we were, because we thought it is really our church, really our country, so they'd come in and must adapt to what we are used to. I think we might have thought like that in the very beginning and then of course that changed.

An attitude that recognises that one's own cultural values and understanding are not automatically superior to someone else's, and that consequently each person potentially can be enriched by learning from someone who might be considered inferior by many in church and society, seems to have been an important factor at GBC in enabling the transition to become a genuinely multi-ethnic church.

However, there is a tension here. On the one hand at GBC there was, as explored throughout this thesis, a desire to affirm, celebrate and incorporate difference. On the other hand, there was at the same time, also as explored throughout this thesis, a desire to affirm, celebrate and incorporate congregational unity. Joe Kapolyo, former principal of All Nations Christian College, in his book *The Human Condition: Christian Perspectives Through African Eyes*, first published in 2005, explores the concept of *Ubuntu.* Kapolyo explains that *ubuntu* is 'a Bantu ontological noun describing what it means to be a member of humankind … *ubuntu* describes humans as created by God' (2013: 19). Kapolyo notes 'the Bantu aversion to individualism, which elevates the individual above the rest of society … each person is clearly recognised as an individual … However, the individual

is a part of the community' (2013: 22). For the Bantu, community is vitally important but this does not mean that individuality is 'obliterated' (2013: 24). However, 'only among other people will a person find security and completeness' (2013: 24). Kapolyo observes that 'the Scriptures too recognize the importance of community' (2013: 24) and that this emphasis on community is in contrast to the 'separation' between people that has been an outworking of Enlightenment philosophy (2013: 25).

Looking at the tapestry metaphor through the lens of *ubuntu* it can be observed that the tapestry, incorporating many different threads, is vitally important. However, this does not mean that any individual thread is 'obliterated'. In contrast, each individual thread makes its own unique contribution to the whole. Most of the time at GBC individuals were willing to accept that for congregational unity their own point of view although heard, acknowledged and recognised would not dominate. As noted in Chapter One the leaders of the music team would not accept that their views concerning one approach to music/singing in public worship would no longer be allowed to dominate and they left GBC. Occasionally other individuals or couples left, usually with good grace, because they felt that they could not accept an aspect of the way that GBC was changing. There is a personal vulnerability in putting aside one's own view for the sake of unity within the community, but as explored above, this was something that members at GBC felt able to do.

6.4 Structures that Enabled Transition: Sundays and Training

The term structure is being used here to refer to several different components of the life of GBC. The most significant findings about structure relate to what took place when the

congregation gathered on Sundays. However, structure that created space for social interaction, structure that enabled the training and release into ministry of members of the congregation and structure that enabled the voices of minorities to be heard were also important.

The decision to first experiment with, and then change, the structure of the Sunday morning meetings in 2004, seems to have been a highly significant aspect of the transition at GBC. The lengthening of the time the congregation was together, the extra activities added and the creation of 'Connection Time' as a central part of the time together, rather than an optional add on at the end; seem to have made possible many of the features that research participants found helpful and welcoming. In Chapter Four, responses from research participants were reported that the time spent within the congregational meeting for the celebration of birthdays and an 'open microphone' opportunity for people to share anything about recently experiencing the activity of God, was important to them. The opportunity to dance during sung worship, which enabled people to worship God with their whole body, was likewise seen as very significant. In the previous structure of Sunday gatherings there was not adequate time for these ingredients to be regularly included.

The most significant addition to the Sunday gathering was 'Connection Time' between the end of the singing/prayer focussed session and the start of teaching in age groups. Research participants commented, as reported in Chapter Four, that this created space for new people to be personally welcomed and introduced to others, for new friendships to begin and develop and for the conducting of business. In Chapter One the inclusion of

numerous social events, from 2004 the frequent Sunday lunches and three church weekends (in 1993, 2008 and 2010) was noted. Structuring these into the life of GBC, in the view of the research participants, created many opportunities for friendships to develop with people from outside of their own ethnic groups.

Ensuring that the voices of ethnic minorities within GBC were heard was also partly about the use of enabling structures. An important element of this was the investment in training with the Leadership Training Group (LTG) described in Chapter One and the use of external training courses. This training enabled people from ethnic minorities within GBC to be equipped for leadership roles. The Leadership Team and Staff Team during the period researched had members who had been born and grown up in Brazil, Grenada, Jamaica, Nigeria, Singapore, and Trinidad as well as UK born Black, mixed race and White. Others holding wider leadership roles had been born, and grown up in, Cameroon, India, Iraq, Malaysia, Sri Lanka and the United States. Such a diversity enabled the voices of those from ethnic minorities within GBC to be clearly heard.

Most of those who were recognised as leaders within GBC, either in the senior Leadership Team or in one of the many other leadership roles, were graduates of the LTG programme. This intentional investment into people, most of whom had no previous experience of leadership, public speaking or Christian ministry, created a significant resource for the development of GBC. It also had a profound effect on those who participated, Alvita commented:

> I left everything and came here. So, to come somewhere, be a stranger in a place and then to, in a sense, find myself fitting in and then being given opportunities I never, ever would have thought about; it was shocking (voice breaking).

The interview with Alvita, who had grown up in the Caribbean, took place twelve years after she was a part of a LTG at GBC. For her, taking part in a LTG not only helped train her for leadership, but also had a significant impact on how she viewed herself being welcomed and accepted as a part of GBC.

6.5 Leadership that Enabled Transition: Learning and Serving

In Chapter Five some research of others into leadership in multi-ethnic contexts was noted. Manuel Ortiz commented that his research 'strongly suggests' that 'proper leadership is essential to establishing the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the ministry' (1996: 107). As noted in Chapter Five I did not ask any questions concerning my leadership in either the focus groups or interviews. However, as I reflect on my role in leading during the developments at GBC in the light of the research and wider reading, there seem to be some significant factors that enabled the transition. The first has been a willingness to learn. In the chapter *Understanding Intercultural Congregations* (Wise, 2021: 84-98) drawing on my experience at GBC and elsewhere I wrote about the importance for me, as a church pastor, of undertaking academic study, of deep listening to members of the congregation, of visiting overseas contexts and of giving and receiving hospitality. Here I add the willingness to take risks alongside the recognition that sometimes relationships and projects will not have a happy conclusion.

GBC's Leadership Team Vision for most of the years covered by the research included the statement:

> The aim of the Leadership is to serve Greenford Baptist Church by seeing her discipled for the work of Christian service, to be built up until we all come together to unity in our faith and in our knowledge of the Son of God, to become mature

> people reaching to the very height of Christ's full stature. (Ephesians 4: 12-13) (Greenford Baptist Church Leadership Team, 2007: 1).

This vision is for servant leadership, leadership focused on building others up in unity. It is important to note that leadership at GBC was always by a team which brought together people with different perspectives and different gifts.

6.6 Further Research: Are the Findings at GBC Transferable?

Over the years, aspects of the developments at GBC have been shared in a wide variety of forums and formats. These have included sessions with key leaders with or without their leadership teams. Most of these have been single or multiple two to three hour sessions, which have been preceded by or followed by some/all of the leaders visiting GBC on a Sunday. Some leaders spent a weekend visiting GBC. I have spoken at numerous conferences in the UK and overseas, as well as having articles published. In general these activities have involved giving descriptions of aspects of the developments at GBC and telling something of the story. No one has ever suggested to me that what has been done at GBC could not be reproduced elsewhere. However, reproducing all that has taken place at GBC elsewhere may not be straightforward.

It is possible that aspects of GBC's congregational life could be introduced elsewhere without much difficulty. For example, adding a 'Connection Time' or singing songs in languages and styles from outside of Europe and North America would not be difficult to do, although in some church contexts there may be opposition to changes to the structure or liturgy of Sunday services. However, this research has indicated that the move to a genuinely multi-ethnic congregation at GBC took many years to achieve and involved a fundamental change facilitated by multiple factors in the way that individuals at GBC

perceived other people. If such a fundamental change had not occurred then it is likely that the open and trusting relationships that underlay the developments would not have flourished.

An issue for the reproduction of a similar multi-ethnic congregation is having the freedom to change. As was explored in Chapters One and Two because of the practice of congregational government in Baptist churches in the UK, GBC's membership had the freedom to make and implement decisions about structure, staff and finance without interference from any national or regional authority. In 2014 GBC ran a three-day course in partnership with Springdale College for a small group of pastors from UK churches that were a part of the Redeemed Christian Church of God. All of the GBC staff presented and opportunities for the pastors to experience multi-ethnic devotional times were created. Although the pastors were very excited by experiencing aspects of a genuinely multi-ethnic church, they were pessimistic about the possibility of developing any of the components they experienced/learnt about within their own churches. They explained that the structure and content of their church services was set by the headquarters in Nigeria and that they had very little freedom to innovate.

The concept of the tapestry metaphor is not difficult to grasp. However, understanding the concept does not automatically lead to a change in the way that the church community is perceived. In section 2.6 it was noted that metaphor is not only a way of communicating truth it can also shape the way that people think. Examining the impact of a metaphor in a local church congregation is an area that requires further research. Perhaps a study in another congregation could assess the impact of the use of the tapestry, or some other

appropriate, metaphor over time. Furthermore, this research has not established the degree to which other factors such as leadership, the particular ethnic mix within GBC or the impact of specific events such as the attack on the Paul family were crucial, or merely incidental, in the developments. Again, further research in other contexts would be helpful.

The tapestry metaphor does have at least one limitation/weakness. It is a non-organic metaphor so it does not easily encompass change. The congregation at GBC was in a continual process of change in terms of its membership. The body metaphor in 1 Corinthians 12 or the bride metaphor in the Gospels, Epistles and Revelation are better suited to reflect a changing congregation as bodies and brides naturally change over time, whereas a tapestry does not. Brian commented 'for me the tapestry imagery doesn't quite work because you are almost de-threading all the time'. The tapestry metaphor does work well with a new thread being added, it is not difficult to imagine how this might enrich the emerging picture. However, it is more difficult to imagine how a thread being removed (in the sense of someone leaving the congregation) might work in a similar way.

6.7 Conclusion

This research has examined the transition of GBC from a predominantly White British congregation to a genuinely multi-ethnic one during the period from October 1987 to January 2015. It seems that there has not been one single component that enabled the transition but several interlocking components; thinking, attitudes, structures and leadership that together enabled transition. Further research is required to determine whether, and to what extent, what took place at GBC might be reproducible in other contexts.

Appendix 1 – Ethnicity of GBC Membership over Time

White British Proportion of GBC membership by year 1987 to 2014

Methodology Used

A picture of how the ethnic composition of the membership of GBC changed over time was seen as potentially useful in the research. Access to the book where new and leaving members were recorded was available. There is no information in the records on the ethnicity of members. I used my memory of each member to classify them. I do not have sufficient information as to whether someone was, for example, Black British or Black Caribbean so I decided to split between White British and everyone else as this would give a picture of the changing profile of the membership. In the group classified as other than White British there are people who are British born but other than White as well as people born elsewhere in the world. There are also a few White people who are not British, for example there is one Hungarian.

Year ending 31 December	Number of Members	% of members that were White British
1987	93	91%
1988	94	89%
1989	122	88%
1990	131	88%
1991	133	83%
1992	138	81%
1993	152	80%
1994	137	80%
1995	129	79%
1996	130	78%
1997	127	77%
1998	130	72%
1999	113	65%
2000	109	64%
2001	122	61%
2002	113	58%
2003	112	59%
2004	119	54%
2005	129	45%
2006	136	40%

Year ending 31 December	Number of Members	% of members that were White British
2007	144	40%
2008	165	36%
2009	181	34%
2010	187	33%
2011	184	32%
2012	189	32%
2013	194	32%
2014	195	33%

Appendix 2 – Names of God Artwork


GOTT
Nyame
OLUWA
Njambe
GOD
DIEU
GOD
PITHA
BÓG
DIEU
DEUS
UBANGIJI

Appendix 3 – Ethics Approval

The research for this project was submitted for ethics consideration under the reference HUM 18/ 035 in the Department of Humanities and was approved under the procedures of the University of Roehampton's Ethics Committee on 30.08.18.

Appendix 4 – Informed Consent

Focus Group Informed Consent

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM (Focus Group)

Title of Research Project: Developing a genuinely multi-ethnic local church congregation: an auto-ethnographic investigation into Greenford Baptist Church 1987-2014

Brief Description of Research Project, and What Participation Involves:

This research project is aiming to investigate the transition of Greenford Baptist Church (GBC) from an almost entirely White British congregation in 1987 to one where people from around 45 nationalities attended and were fully engaged in the life of the church in 2014.

You are being invited to participate in a focus group that will consist of between six and nine people. The group will meet upstairs in the GBC building and the group discussion will last approximately one hour. An audio recording will be made of the discussion (video recording will NOT be used). This will be one of around five focus group discussions taking place between January 2019 and the autumn of 2019.

After the focus group the conversations will be transcribed by Jon Batham, who will be present at the focus group helping with the audio recording. Your name will be replaced with a pseudonym at this point ensuring your anonymity. I will make sure that all of the transcripts are securely stored ensuring confidentiality. Jon Batham will not retain copies of the audio files or transcripts. Once the transcription process is completed the audio file will be deleted. I will be examining all of the transcripts looking for clues to help me with my research questions. My research will be written up in a thesis that will be submitted to the University of Roehampton. I also intend to write some papers for

publication in academic and other journals and in due course to write a book that will aim to help other churches that are looking to become multi-ethnic. I will ensure that all information quoted from the focus groups will be done in such a way as to protect confidentiality.

Investigator Contact Details:

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wised@roehampton.ac.uk

+44 (0) 20 8575 3983

Consent Statement:

I agree to take part in this research, and am aware that I am free to withdraw at any point without giving a reason, although if I do so I understand that my data might still be used in a collated form. I understand that the information I provide will be treated in confidence by the investigator and that my identity will be protected in the publication of any findings, and that data will be collected and processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and with the University's Data Protection Policy. I also understand that although my identity will be protected Greenford Baptist Church's name will appear in the research.

Name …….

Signature ……

Date ……

Please note: if you have a concern about any aspect of your participation or any other queries please raise this with the investigator (or if the researcher is a student you can also contact the Director of Studies.) However, if you would like to contact an independent party please contact the Research Director.

Director of Studies Contact Details:

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Interview Informed Consent

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM (Interview)

Title of Research Project: Developing a genuinely multi-ethnic local church congregation: an auto-ethnographic investigation into Greenford Baptist Church 1987-2014

Brief Description of Research Project, and What Participation Involves:

This research project is aiming to investigate the transition of Greenford Baptist Church (GBC) from an almost entirely White British congregation in 1987 to one where people from around 45 nationalities attended and were fully engaged in the life of the church in 2014.

You are being invited to be interviewed. The interview will be conducted in my office in the GBC building (unless you are unable to travel to the building) and it will be recorded (audio recording only). The questions in the interview concern your understanding of aspects of the development of GBC into a multi-ethnic congregation. The interview will take approximately one hour.

After the interview the conversations will be transcribed by Jon Batham. Your name will be replaced with a pseudonym at this point aiming to ensure your anonymity. I will make sure that the transcript is securely stored ensuring confidentiality. Jon Batham will not retain a copy of the audio file or transcript. I will be examining all of the transcripts looking for clues to help me with my research questions. My research will be written up in a thesis that will be submitted to the University of Roehampton. I also intend to write some papers for publication in academic and other journals and in due course to write a book that will aim to help other churches that are looking to become multi-ethnic. I intend to do all I can to protect your identity however the name of Greenford Baptist Church will appear in the research and in publications and it may therefore be possible

for readers of the research to work out the identity of people who have been interviewed.

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Consent Statement:

I agree to take part in this research, and am aware that I am free to withdraw at any point without giving a reason, although if I do so I understand that my data might still be used in a collated form. I understand that the information I provide will be treated in confidence by the investigator and that my identity will be protected in the publication of any findings, and that data will be collected and processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and with the University's Data Protection Policy. I also understand that although my identity will be protected Greenford Baptist Church's name will appear in the research and it may be possible for readers of the research to work out the identity of people who have been interviewed.

Name …….

Signature ……

Date ……

Please note: if you have a concern about any aspect of your participation or any other queries please raise this with the investigator (or if the researcher is a student you can also contact the Director of Studies.) However, if you would like to contact an independent party please contact the Research Director.

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Appendix 5 – GBC Key Events October 1987 to Jan 2015

1987 October 10

David Wise inducted into pastorate at GBC.

1987 October 20

First deacons' meeting with David in the role of pastor.

1988 January 1

91% of members were White British.

1988 January

First Indian church members welcomed.

1988 April

Launch of GBC Parent and Toddler Group.

1988 July 16

GBC participates in Greenford Carnival with a float etc.

1988 October 23—30

First Partnership Mission with team from USA.

1988 November 30

First Black deacon appointed.

1989 January 1

Married Hong Kong Chinese couple baptised.

1989 June 14—23 Mission 89 (Billy Graham)

Sixty referred to GBC for follow up.

1989 July

First Leadership Training Group started.

1990 October 20—28 Partnership Mission

With team from USA.

1990 November 28 Church Meeting

Three black males were appointed as deacons, taking up their roles on Jan 1 1991.

1991 Jan/Feb Dissension

Church meeting took place where it was alleged that David Wise was unfit to be a church pastor. In the end four couples left the membership.

1991 April 21

First African born church members welcomed.

1991 May 18 West Indian Cultural Evening

The first event featuring a BME culture.

1991 September 8

Carlton Napier preaching at 'Reaping Event'. The first external Black person to preach at GBC.

1991 September

Trainee Youth Minister commences ministry.

1992 May 25 to September 14

David Wise Sabbatical (in South Africa).

1992 September

TIE Teamer (a Pioneer training/internship) starts one-year placement with GBC.

1992 September 17

British National Party wins council seat in Millwall. This seat, taken from Labour in a by-election, was the first BNP electoral success.

1992 October Partnership Mission

With team from USA.

1993 Jan 10 Church Meeting

Decision unanimously made to begin a new congregation on the Smith Farm Estate, Northolt Community Church. The first meeting was on April 11.

1993 January 27 Church Meeting

Decision made to join the African and Caribbean Evangelical Alliance.

1993 September 5

Induction of Youth Minister**.**

1993 Autumn

GBC sends long-term mission worker to Cyprus.

1993 October 8—10 Springboard

The first church weekend away at home.

1993 December 25

First Christmas Day Meal. For local elderly who would otherwise be on their own. This became an annual feature.

1994 June 12

Church Meeting Decision to join Pioneer. The decision to enter partnership with Pioneer led to two members of the Leadership resigning.

1995 October Partnership Mission

With team from USA.

1995 November 29

First African Member of Leadership Team appointed.

1997 September

David Wise starts three-year part-time MA course. This course was taken to enable him to better lead a multi-ethnic church.

1997 December

Racially Motivated attack on Indian church Family**.** This attack led to significant developments in GBC's engagement with the wider community.

1998 July 1

Public Meeting at GBC re Racial Violence**.** Neville Lawrence, Suhkdev Reel, David Haslam and others gave voice to these issues.

1998 July

The London Baptist Association appoints Rosemarie Davidson-Gotobed as their Racial Justice Coordinator.

1998 September 1

Part-time Children's Ministry Coordinator starts.

1999 Jan 1

72% of members were White British.

1999 March

Music Team Leadership resign from GBC membership.

1999 April 18

First non-Nigerian Africans welcomed into membership.

1999 October

First Prayer Vigil held at GBC.

2000 January 1

65% of members were White British.

2000 October 29 to Nov 5 Partnership Mission

With team from USA.

2001 September

Caribbean female appointed as church administrator/secretary. The first Staff Member who was not White British.

2003 April

Part-time Prayer Co-ordinator and Worship Facilitator appointed.

2003 May

David Shosanya and Kumar Rajagopalan appointed as LBA Regional Ministers. The first Black London Regional Ministers.

2003 July

British born Jamaican appointed as part-time Church Evangelist.

2003 August to November

David Wise second Sabbatical looking at cross-cultural mission with visits to Italy, Albania and Jamaica.

2003 December

David joins council of the African and Caribbean Evangelical Alliance.

2004 March 14

GBC begins experiment with changes of structure of Sunday am meetings.

2004 March

A female from Sri Lanka takes on Leadership of Sunday Club.

2004 August

GBC adopts new Sunday morning meeting pattern.

2005 January 1

54% of members were White British.

2006 January 1

45% of members were White British.

2008 January

Worship co-ordination group set up.

Arabic speaking house group starts meeting.

2008 July 11 to 13

'Summer Soak' church weekend at home.

2008 July 20

Church meeting appoints Warren McNeil to start work as Pastor's Assistant in September.

2008 October 12

Portuguese speaking Bible study group starts meeting.

2009 February

Start of Reaching Your Potential workshops.

2010 January 1

34% of members were White British.

2010 May 16

Special members' meeting appoints Warren McNeil as full-time Assistant Pastor and Denise De Oliveira as part-time Assistant Pastor (full time from April 2011 after her visa came through).

2010 July 16-18

'The Furnace' church weekend at home.

2010 September

First Alpha courses at GBC in other languages (Polish and Portuguese).

2011 March to May

David Wise's third sabbatical, spent mostly in Brazil.

2013 November

GBC become partners with Jesus Through Asian Eyes.

2013 November 29

Pastor Denise's last day with GBC.

2015 January 1

33% of members were White British.

2015 February 8

David Wise starts as Interim Pastor at Quaystone Church.

Appendix 6 – Focus Group Schedule

Focus Groups, Schedule and Questions

Focus Group 1, February 10th 2019

Invitees: people who were attending GBC in October 1987 or who arrived soon after.

Aim: to elicit people's memories/understanding of the time when I started and the period soon after.

Questions

Thinking about when I arrived in October 1987 …

What do you remember about the services?

What do you remember about the make-up of the congregation?

What are your memories around new people joining GBC? [First Asian family joined in 1988]

Do you remember any feelings or thoughts, your own or other peoples', about new people arriving?

What do you remember about new people integrating? What helped or hindered this process?

Was there anything different about the way that people born overseas became a part of GBC?

What part did social events play in the life of the congregation?

What do you remember about the impact on GBC of the Partnership Mission in 1988?

What do you remember about Julia [the first Black deacon] being appointed in 1988?

What do you remember about the first Leadership Training Group?

Focus Group 2, February 24th 2019

Invitees: people who were at GBC in the period 2000 to 2005 approx.

Aim: to elicit people's memories/understanding of this period of considerable change where there was a deliberate policy of working to become more multi-ethnic, new staff, new structure for Sunday meetings, White British changed from 65% in Jan 2000 to 45% in Jan 2006.

Questions

What are your memories of the changes to the structure of our Sunday meetings that took place in 2004? **Remind of changes.** How do you think this impacted our ability to welcome people from different ethnicities?

In September 2001 Claudette was appointed as church administrator. She was the first person employed by GBC who was not White British. In what ways do you think this might have impacted the multi-ethnic journey of GBC?

What do you remember about the impact of the appointment of Graham as prayer co-ordinator and worship facilitator? In what ways did his role shape/influence the worship at GBC? [Among the responsibilities for his role were 'to integrate and develop multicultural prayer and worship'.]

What is your impression of the impact of Eddie being appointed as our evangelist and on GBC connecting with the ‘other than White British’ community around us?

The proportion of White British in the membership of GBC declined from 65% in Jan 2000 to 45% in Jan 2006. What do you remember about this time, do you recall any feelings or thoughts about this change?

Ask about people’s memory of the Every Member Ministry programme (it ran from 1991 to 1996).

Focus Group 3, March 10th

Invitees: People 'born into' GBC with parents both of whom had been born outside of the UK, plus around 2 of their peers 'born into' GBC with White British parents.

Aim: to explore the impact for 'third culture kids' of growing up as a part of GBC.

Questions

My research covers the period from October 1987 to January 2015. Thinking back prior to 2015 what are some of the events in the multi-ethnic journey of GBC that you remember?

Which changes were particularly significant for you and why?

In what ways, if any, has being a part of multi-ethnic GBC impacted your self-identity (what culture is yours, where is home located (physically and emotionally), where are your roots)?

In what ways has the multi-ethnic experience of GBC affected your ability to engage with God?

Are there specific ways that your experience of being a part of multi-ethnic GBC helped/hindered you in own spiritual journey?

In what ways, if any, has being a part of multi-ethnic GBC as you grew up prepared you for your life outside of GBC now?

Focus Group 4, March 24th 2019

Invitees: A mixture of people of a variety of ages drawn from different ethnicities with a variety of first languages and with a range of arrival periods within GBC but who were a part of the GBC congregation for at least a year prior to Jan 2015.

Aim: to explore the experience within the congregation of multi-ethnic, multi-lingual sung worship and prayer.

Questions

The questions will focus on the experience of being present during Sunday worship during the period 2008 (approx.) to 2015.

What has been your experience of worshipping at GBC using a language that you do not speak?

What have been for you some of the good things about being part of a multi-ethnic worshipping congregation?

What have been for you some of the difficult things about being part of a multi-ethnic worshipping congregation?

For those of you whose first language is other than English, in what ways has worshipping at GBC using your own first language been a different experience from using English?

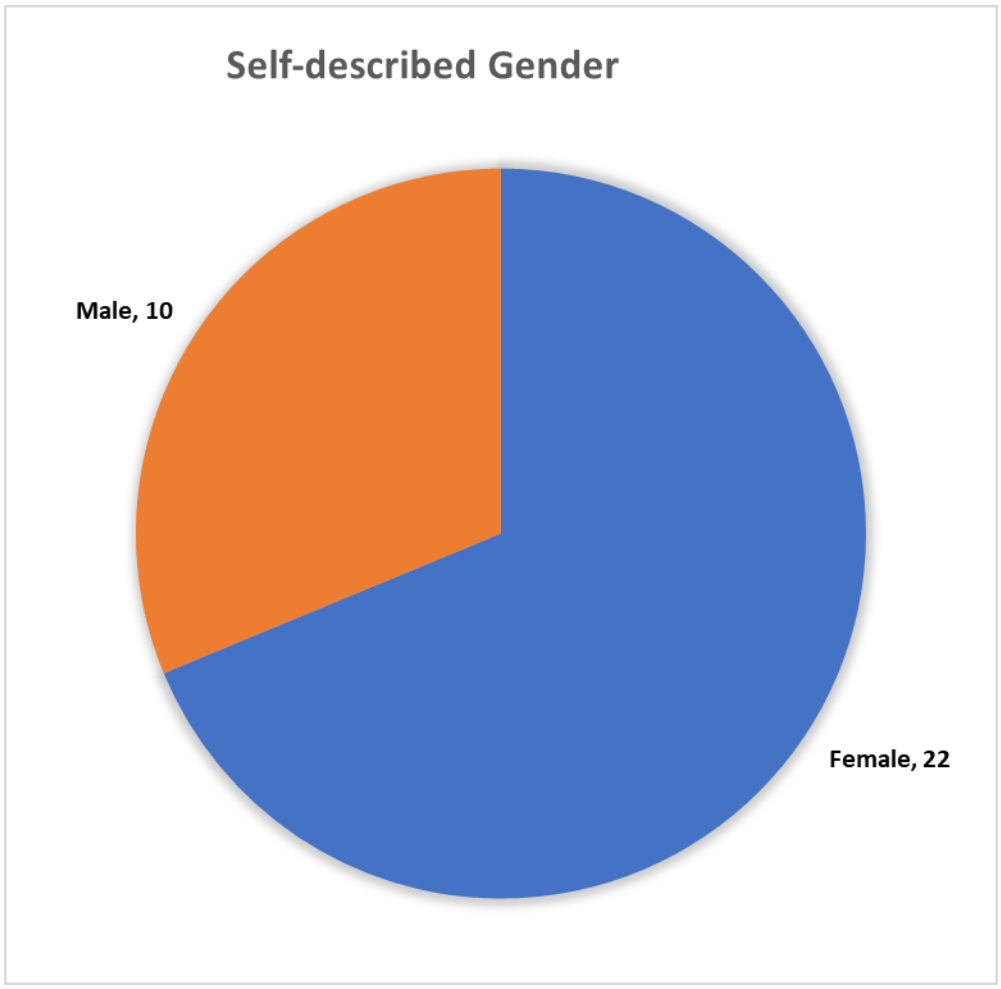
What has been your experience, if any, of leading in prayer at GBC in your own first language (other than English)?

What has been your experience, if any, of being prayed for at GBC in a language that you did not understand?

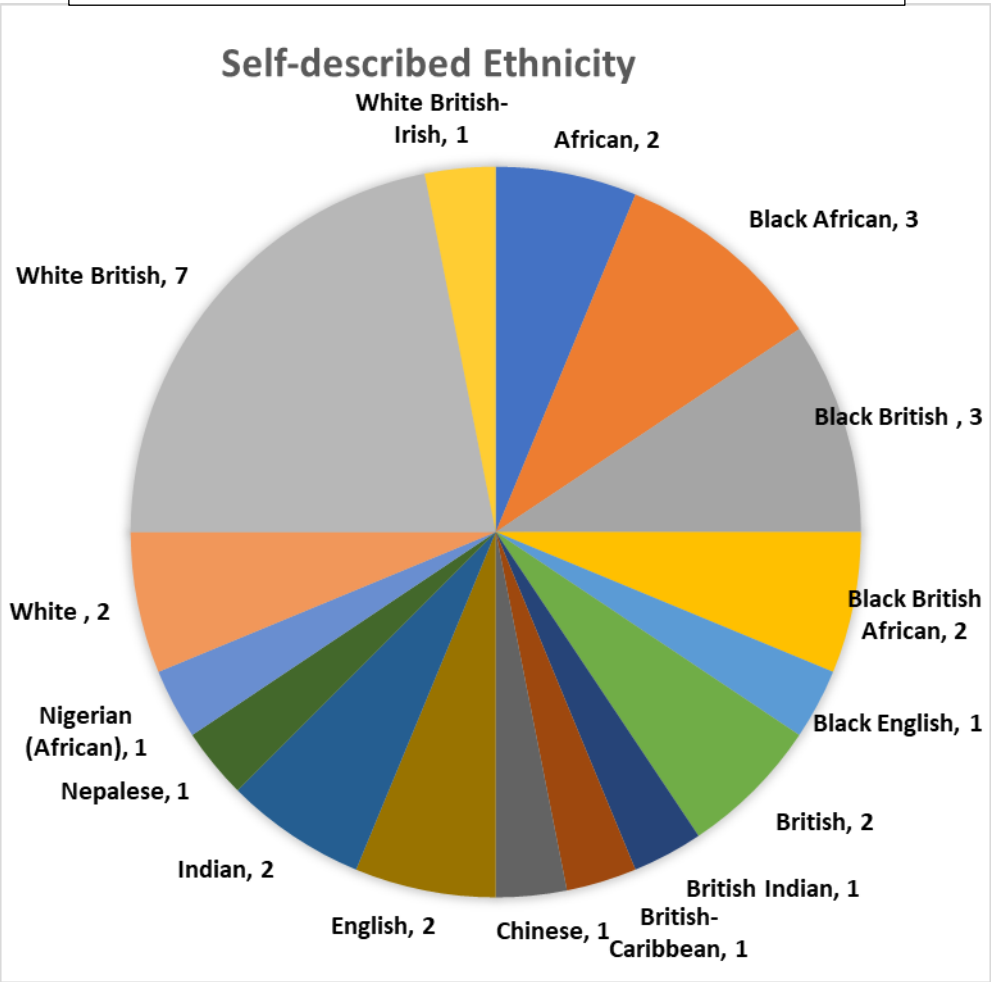
Any other reflections on being a part of a church congregation that uses a variety of languages and worship practices drawn from different cultures.

Appendix 7 – Demographics

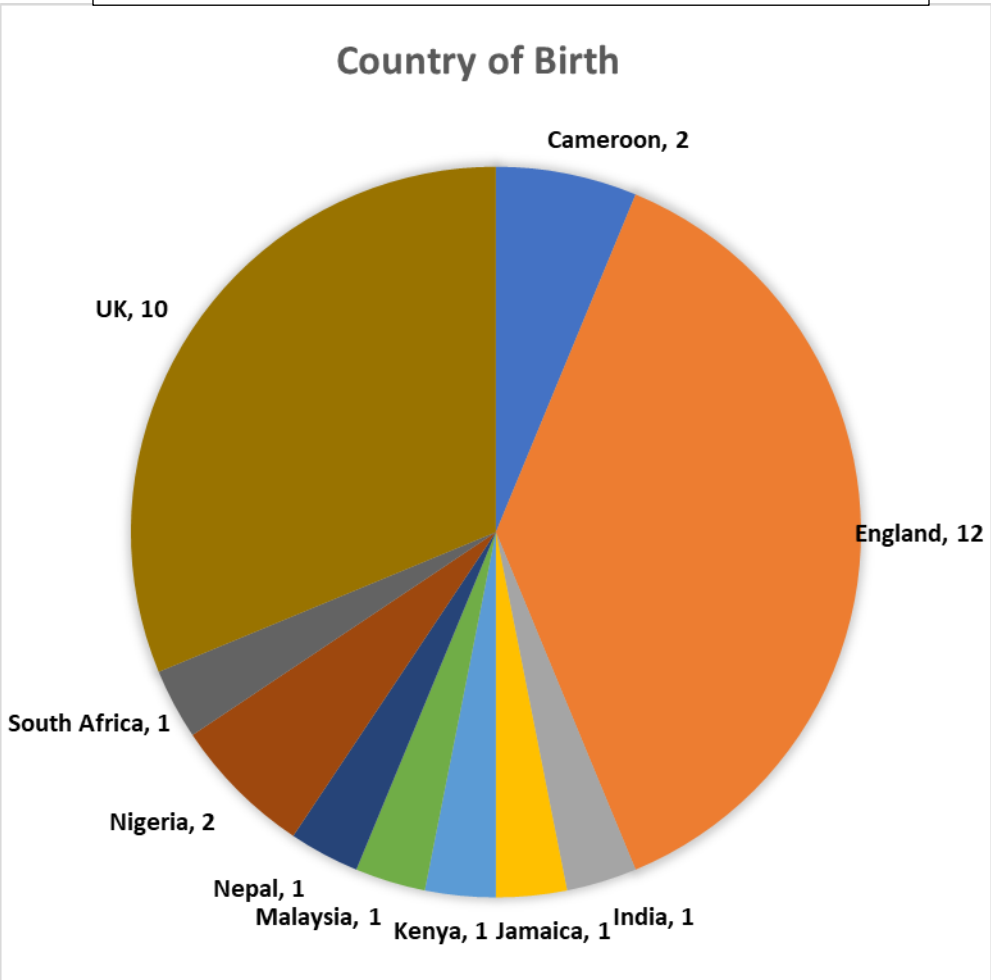
Focus Group Demographics



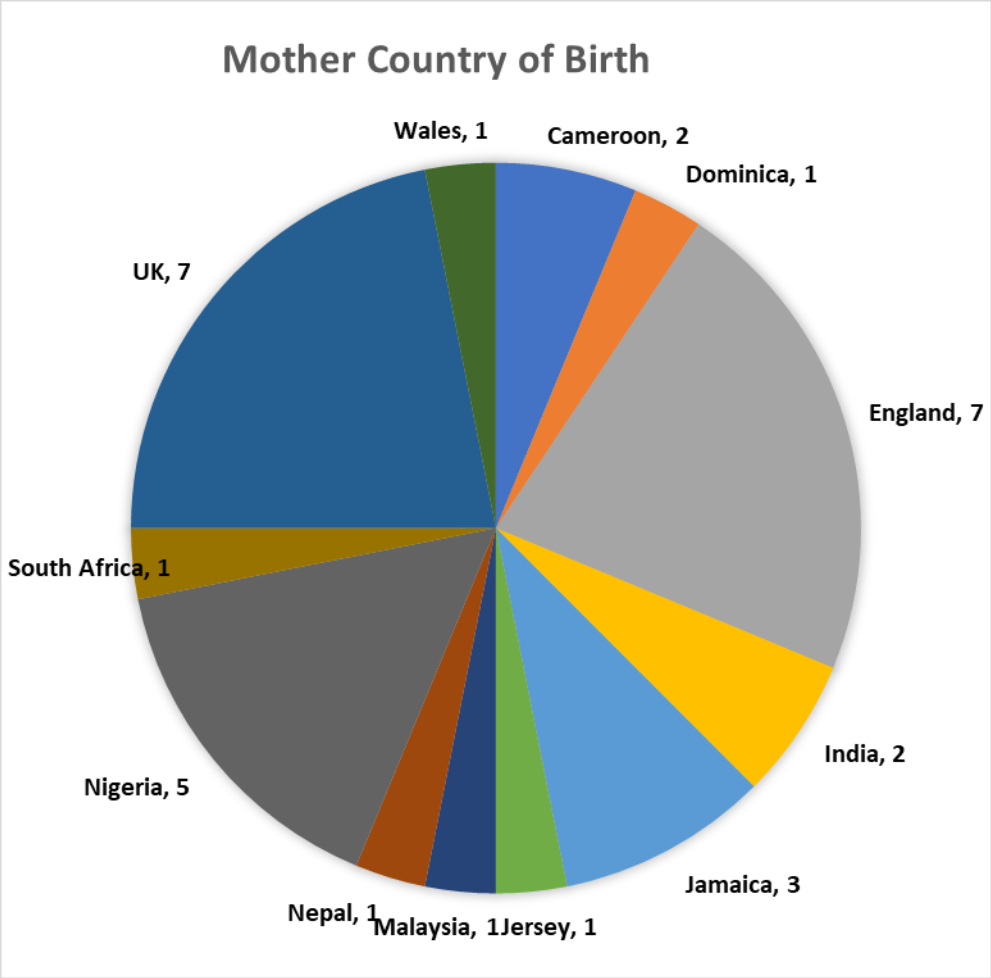
Focus Group Demographics



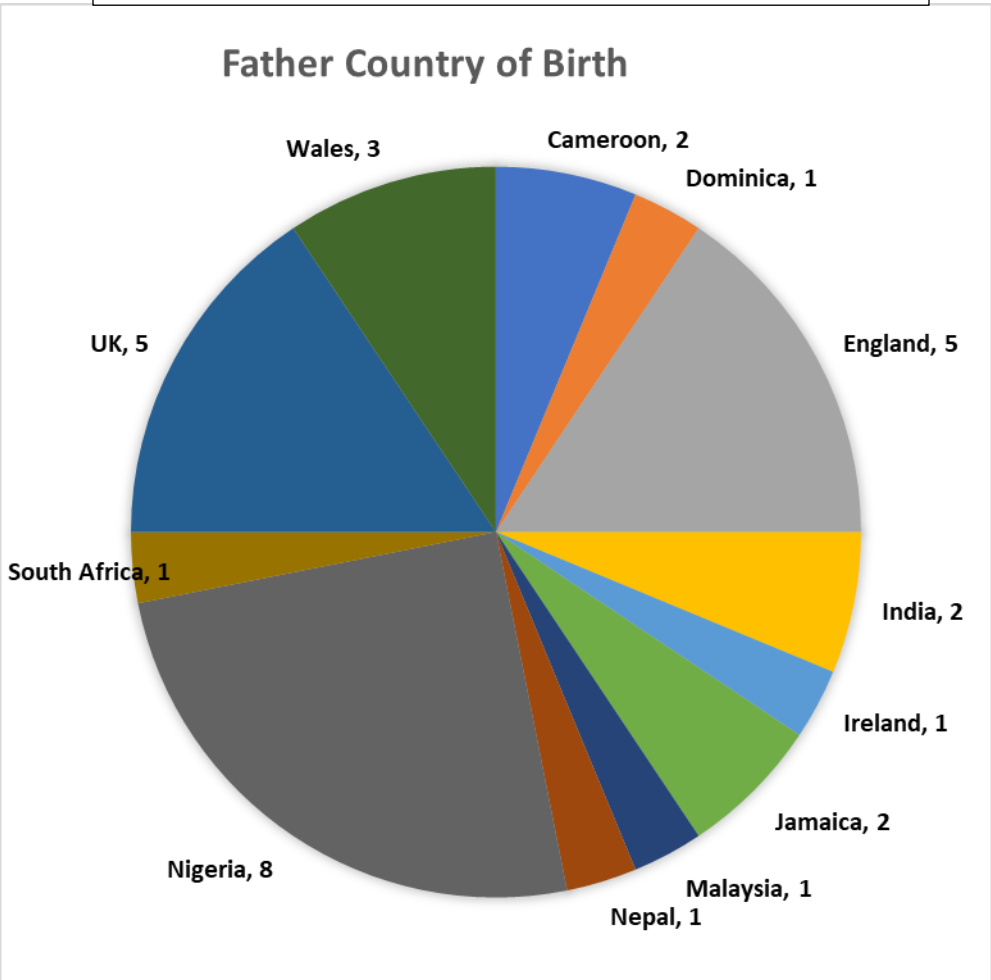
Focus Group Demographics



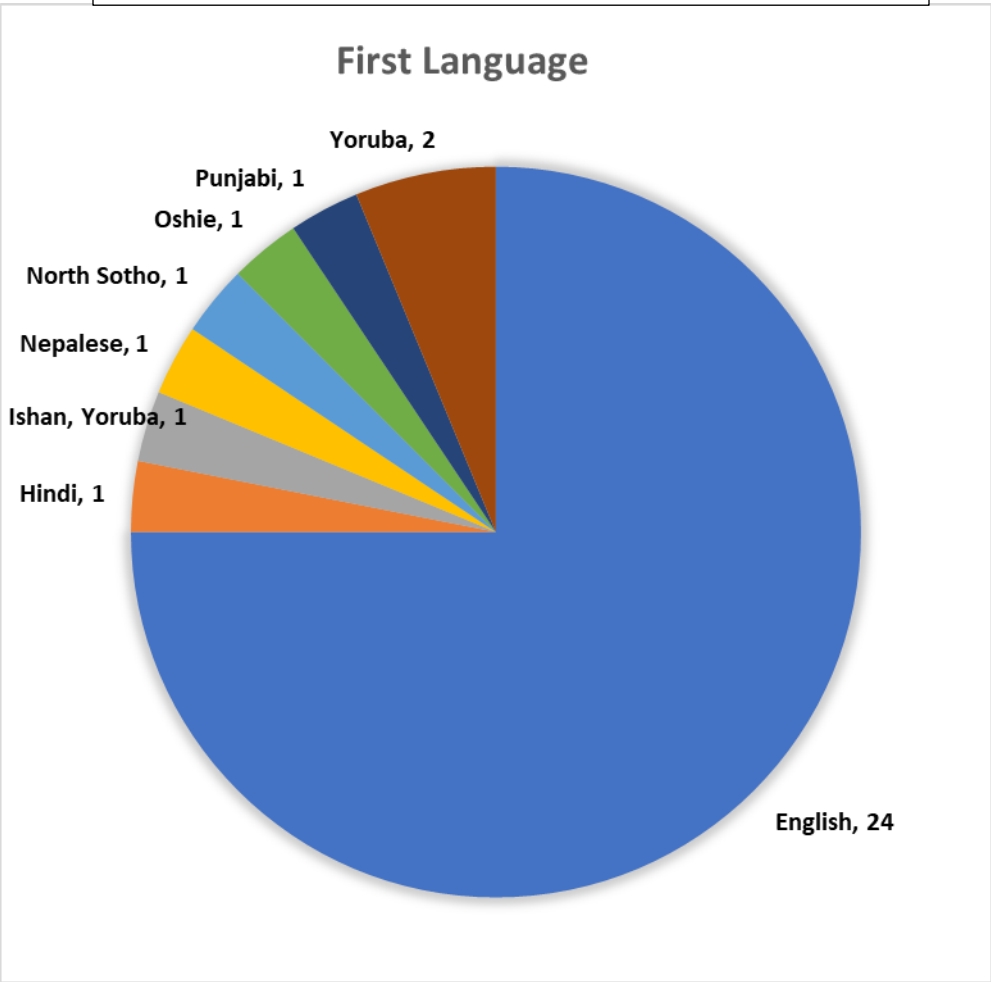
Focus Group Demographics



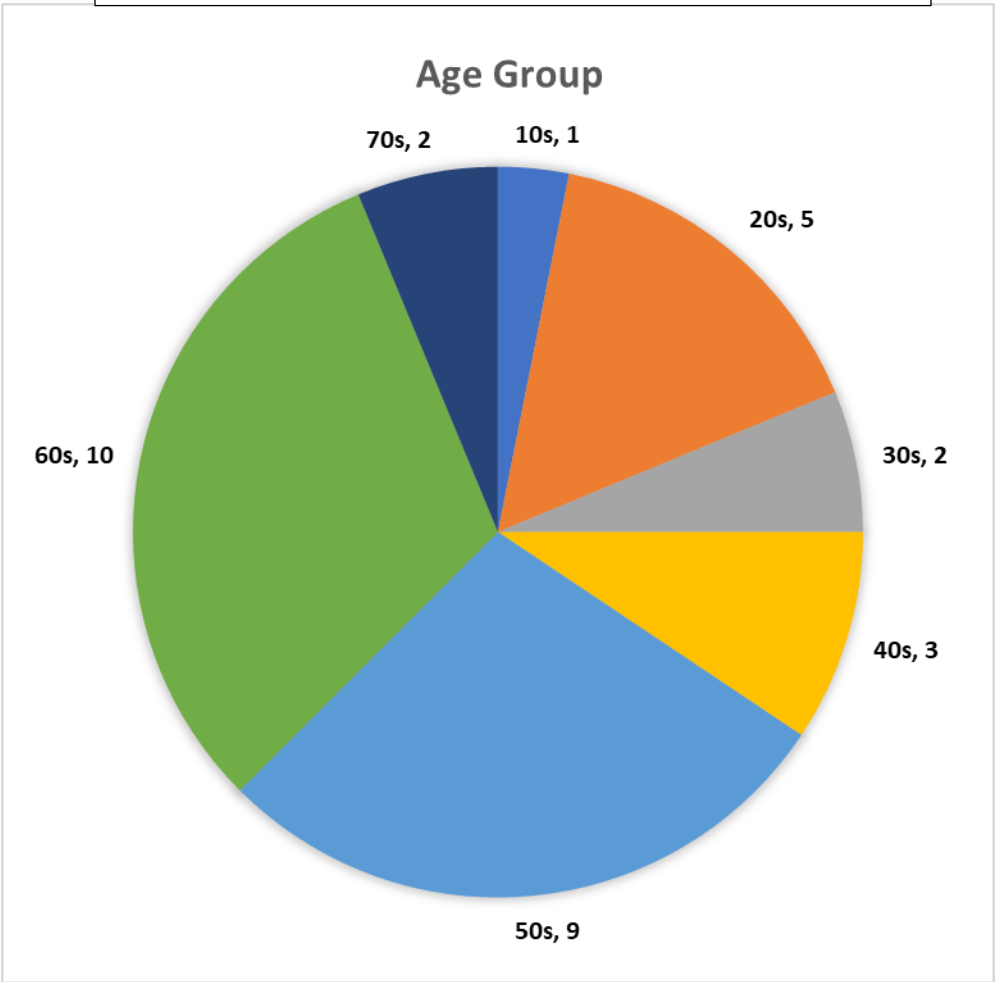
Focus Group Demographics



Focus Group Demographics

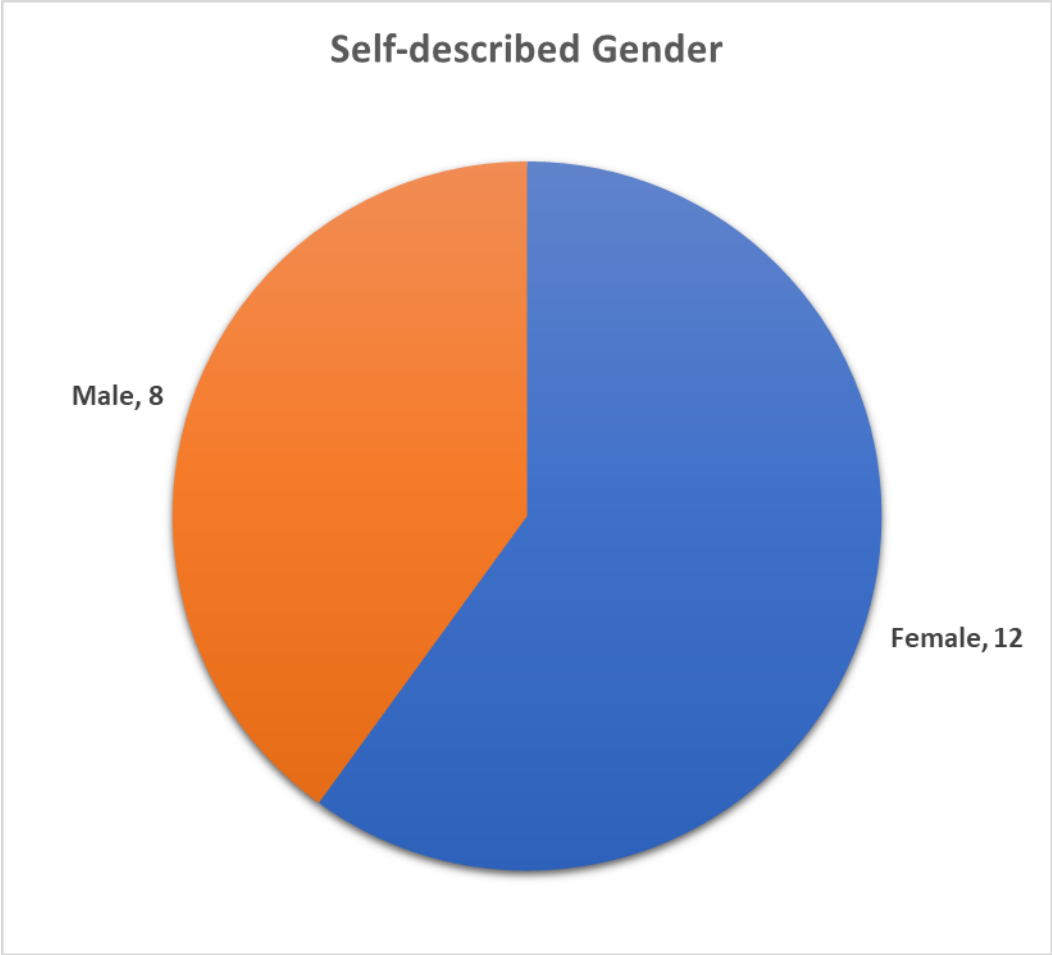


Focus Group Demographics

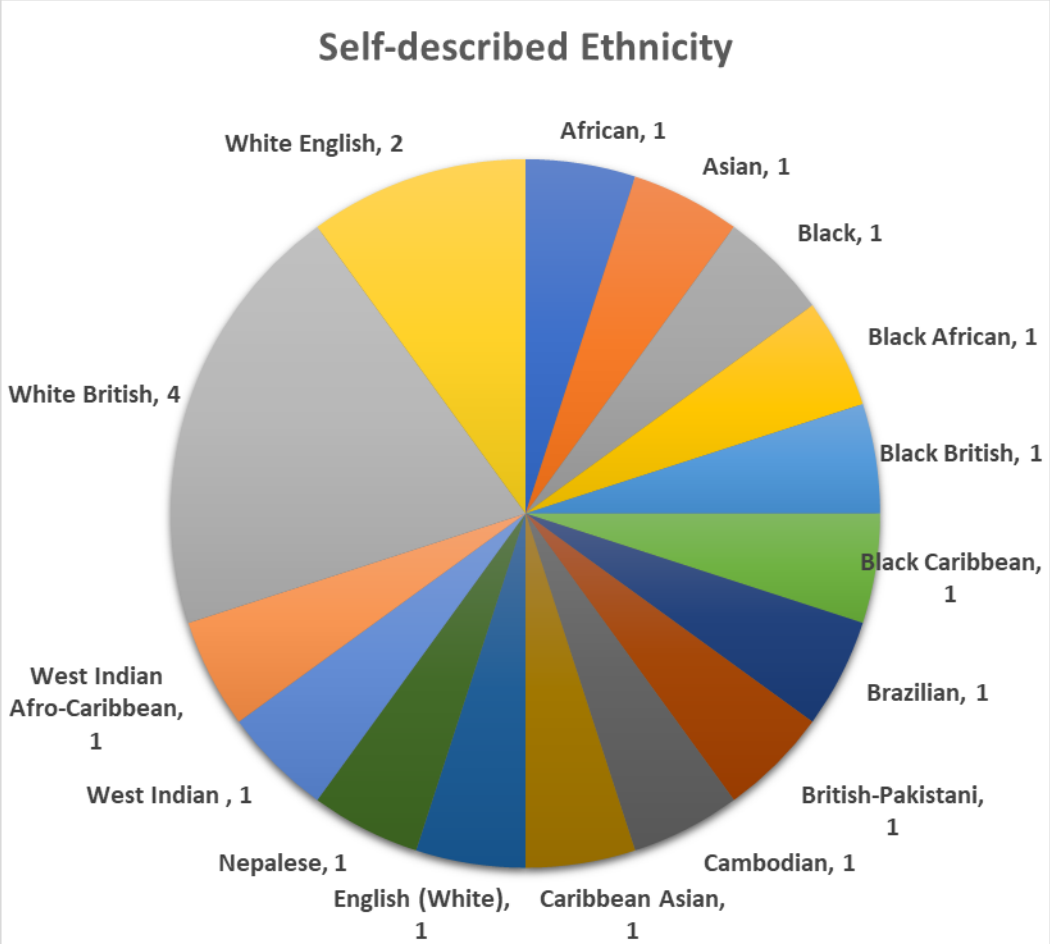


Profession/Occupation of FG attendees	Number
Assistant Charity Worker	1
College Lecturer	1
Company Director	1
Counsellor	1
Doctor - GP	1
Engineer	1
Librarian	1
Maintenance Manager	1
Managing Director	1
Media Entrepreneur	1
Paralegal/legal professional	1
Pastoral Care Worker; Pension administrator	1
Pre-Reg Pharmacy Technician	1
Project Manager	1
Receptionist/administrator	1
Registered hcpc paramedic	1
Registered Nurse	1
Retail	1
Retired	2
Retired Admin	1
Retired admin officer	1
Retired Librarian	1
Retired nurse	1
Retired receptionist	1
Retired Scientist	1
Social Worker	1
Strategy Manager - Civil Servant	1
Teacher	3
Unemployed	1
Grand Total	**32**

Interviewee Demographics



Interviewee Demographics



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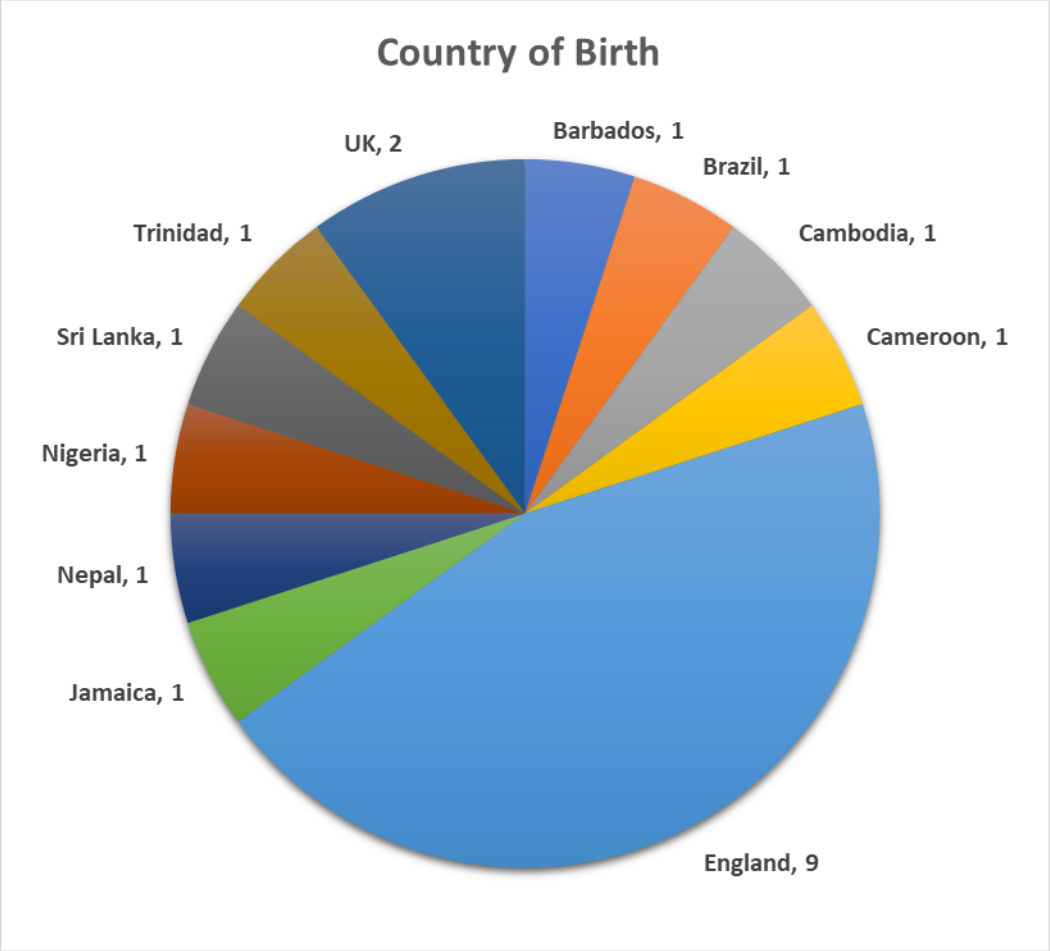

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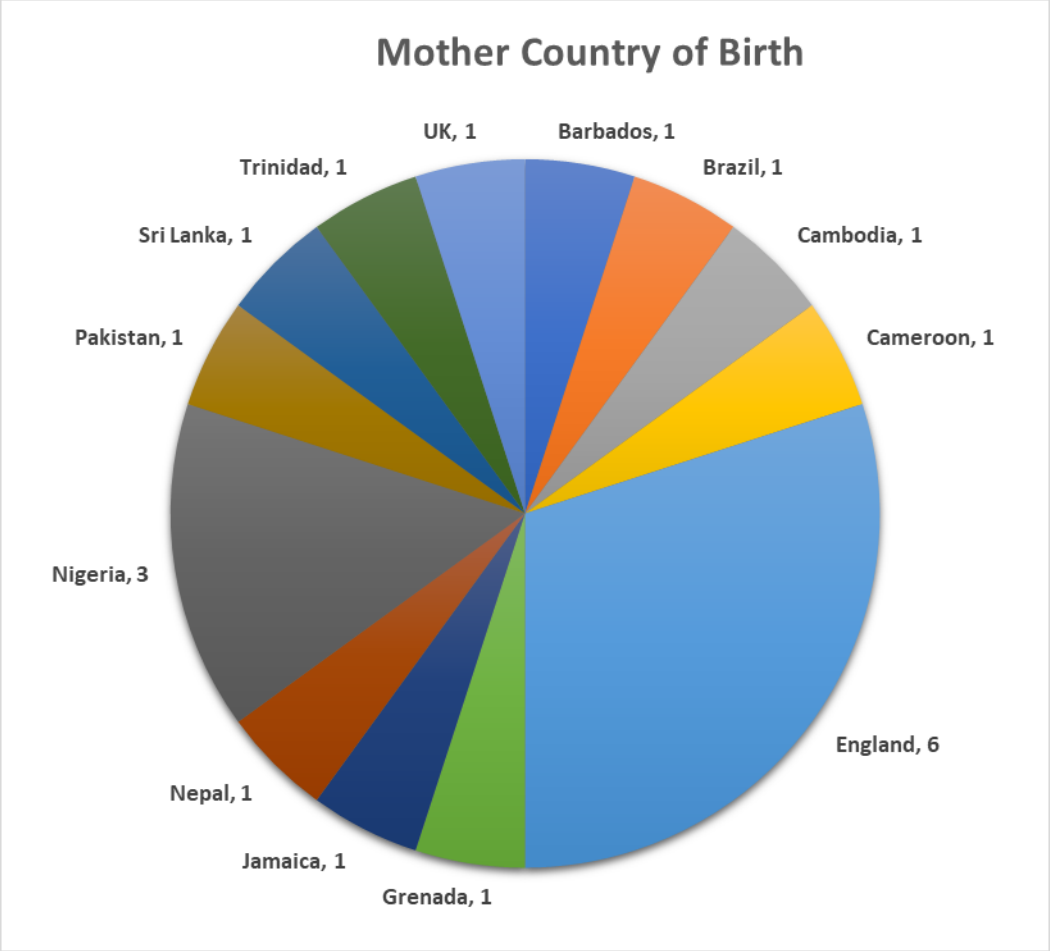

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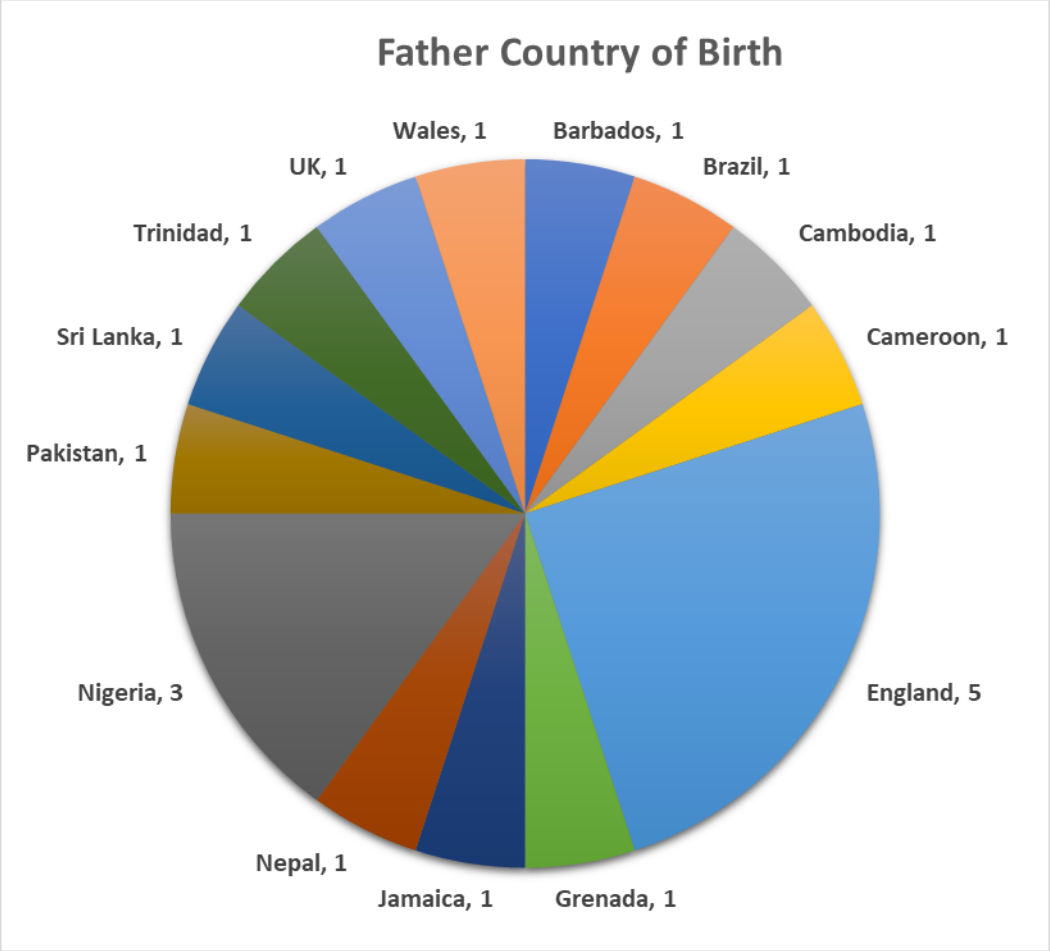
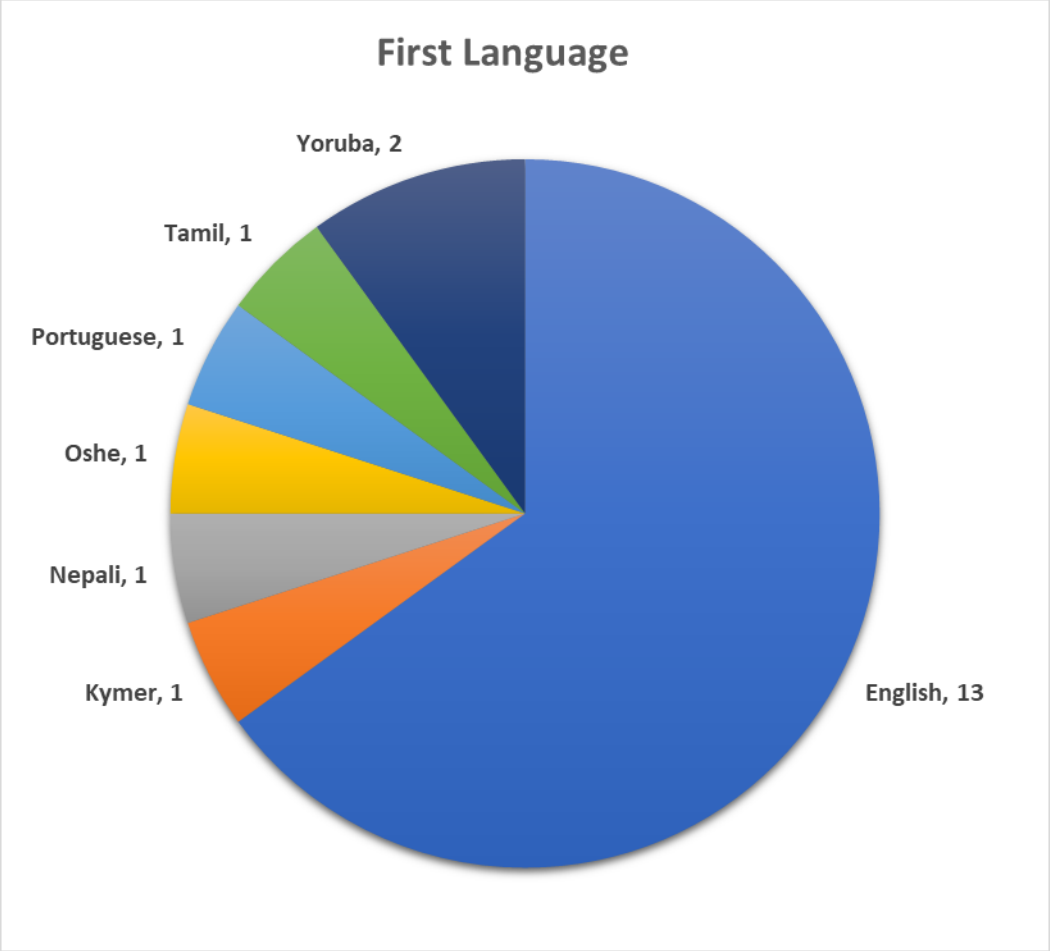
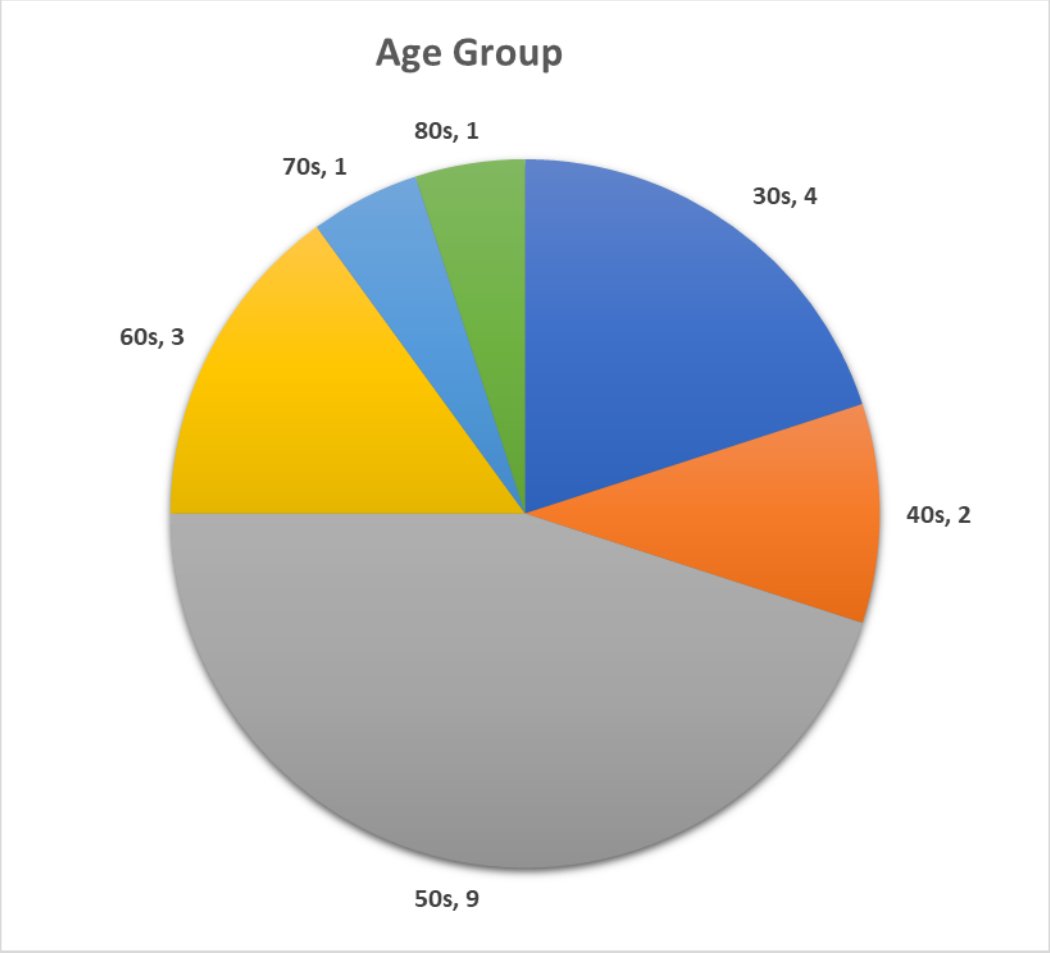


Interviewee Demographics



Interviewee Demographics



Profession/Occupation of interviewee	Number
Accountant	2
Admin Officer	1
Administrator/Quality Data	1
Baptist Minister	1
Information Communication Technology Specialist	1
Librarian	1
Manager	1
Mental Health Nurse	1
Police Officer	1
Pre-Reg Pharmacy Technician	1
Project Manager	2
Registered Childminder	1
Retired Administrator	1
Retired Infant Teacher	1
Retired nurse/ midwife /manager	1
Retired Project Manager/Trainer	1
Teacher	1
Treasury Analyst	1
Grand Total	**20**

Appendix 8 – Schedule of Interviews

Name	Date
Anthony	13 October 2018
Alvita	24 June 2019
Betsy	9 May 2019
Brian	4 September 2019
Chasida	23 May 2019
Debbie	19 June 2019
Felix	6 July 2019
Graham	30 July 2019
Harnoop	24 September 2019
Honoria	24 August 2019
Janice	12 September 2019
Kunle	4 August 2019
Livya	19 September 2019
Melanie	5 June 2019
Natasha	23 September 2019
Oluwasesan	4 September 2019
Panha	5 October 2019
Ronke	17 September 2019
Shanice	2 October 2019
Tabia	23 July 2019

Appendix 9 – Interview Questions

Interview Questions

Each interview had a different mix of questions as explained in Chapter Three. Below is each of the question sheets that shaped each interview. They appear in the order the interviews were conducted. Where questions contained wording that might identify the interviewee the wording has been redacted.

Interview Questions for Anthony

- Can you remember how long you have been a part of Greenford Baptist Church? How old were you when you first came and roughly what year that was?
- What were your first impressions of Greenford Baptist Church and the surrounding community prior to my arrival as Minister in 1987?
- What was your experience of being Black and being at Greenford Baptist Church? Was it similar to your experience of being Black in the wider community? Were there things that were different? Do you have any particular memories?
- You were one of the five members of the Leadership Training Group which I started sometime in late 1988 early 1989. Any recollections, reflections on your being invited to be part of that group or the make-up of that group?
- At the end of that group you were one of the three members of it that were appointed by the members' meeting onto the leadership team together. You started as members of the leadership team on the first of January 1990. What are your memories of that experience? You were part of that three who at that time became part of what was an all-White Leadership Team because there was a black member who was on sabbatical having got married. So, just anything really around your experience of that.
- One of the things I introduced into that leadership team not long after you joined the team was a process called 'Every Member Ministry,' and in each of the Leadership Team meetings we would, working alphabetically through the membership list, discussing six to nine different people and asking how integrated they were in the church relationally and whether and how they were using their gifts, using their ministry. Then after that, after each discussion we would task one of the leadership team with either visiting them or having a

phone call with them, depending on what seemed to be appropriate. Do you remember that process?

- Do you think looking back at that it had any relevance to the subsequent multi-ethnic development of the church?
- Are there any particular things that you think about, steps, moves, events or processes that you see as particularly significant in the journey of the church from being the White, British institution that it was to becoming a well-integrated, multi-ethnic mix of 45-plus nationalities? As you look back over that journey are there things that stand out to you as being significant markers, processes, moments in that journey?

Interview Questions for Betsy

- How would you describe GBC prior to my arrival in October 1987? [Style of services, make up of congregation]
- What do you remember about the time immediately after my arrival?
- Do you recall any thoughts or feelings from yourself or anybody else about the early changes in the ethnic make-up of the congregation? [Arrival of Hong Kong Chinese, Indians and Caribbeans]
- What things do you think helped with the integration of people from other ethnicities within the GBC family? [Ask about social events, Partnership Mission]. Do you remember any difficulties?
- Your own Christian background was traditional and conservative. During the period from 1987 to 2007 when you moved away, GBC changed considerably not just in its ethnic composition but in just about every way it did things. How do you remember feeling about those changes? What do you remember being helpful to you in the transition? What things do you remember finding difficult or unhelpful?
- In September 1997 the Paul family were victims of a racially motivated assault. What impact did that have on you? What impact do you think that it had on the church membership?
- In 2003 Graham was appointed as the church worship co-ordinator. Part of his role was to introduce more worship that originated outside of Western Europe and North America. During that time you were part of the Worship Team. What

do you remember about that period? How did you feel about these changes? What did you find helpful? What did you find difficult?

- In 2004 GBC radically changed the format of the Sunday morning meeting (remind of changes). What do you remember thinking/feeling about those changes?
- By January 2006 40% of the church members were White British. What reflections do you have on that change? [In Jan 1988 91% were White British]
- Thank you very much for this interview. Is there anything else you would like to tell me around the subject of our discussion today?

Interview Questions for Chasida

- When did you start attending GBC? What brought you here?
- As someone from ZZZ heritage what was your initial experience of attending GBC?
- Why did you continue attending?
- In what ways did you feel welcome as a person of ZZZ heritage? What did you find helpful?
- What did you find difficult/challenging from a cultural point of view?
- In what ways has being a part of a multi-ethnic congregation been helpful for you?
- In what ways has being a part of a multi-ethnic congregation been difficult/challenging for you?
- What things have helped you to feel a full part of the GBC community?
- What things have hindered you from feeling a full part of the GBC community?
- How have you found the experience of using different languages in sung worship?
- In what ways do you think that ZZZ Culture in particular or South Asian Culture in general has been incorporated into church life?

- Did you attend Jesus Through Asian Eyes? What were your impressions of this course?
- What significant relationships have you built at GBC? What facilitated the start of these relationships?
- In what ways have other parts of your life, i.e. those outside of GBC, been affected by your involvement with GBC?
- Any other reflections on being a part of a church congregation that uses a variety of languages and worship practices drawn from different cultures?

Interview Questions for Melanie

- You became a member at GBC in 1995. What do you remember about the church when you arrived here?
- How would you describe the sort of person that you were? In the context of my research, I am especially interested in how you viewed cultures other than White British. [In FG2 M described herself as 'a typical English person, who was also introverted']
- How would you describe your own relationship with God at that time? Ask about being a 'traditional' Christian.
- When you joined GBC around 80% of members were White British. By 2009 about one third of members were White British. What reflections do you have on that change?
- The phenomenon known as 'White Flight' is used to describe the way that White people leave churches (or other communities) in response to the growing presence of Black people. Given your description of yourself as 'a typical English person, who was also introverted' I would have expected you to leave. What caused you to stay?
- What friendships have you developed with people at GBC who are other than White British? How did these relationships come about?
- In FG2 you said that you were 'really interested in the way people from other cultures were so free in the way they could express themselves in the worship'. Can you unpack this for me? **NOTE** dig into this in as much depth as possible.

- During FG2 you said that you 'loved learning the new songs in the different languages, learning the different rules and the different rhythms and it was a really good experience'. Can you please say some more about this?
- In 1997 the Paul family were attacked in their own home. What do you remember about the impact of that on GBC?
- What was the impact on you personally? [How did this change the way that M viewed racism?]
- How has your experience within GBC affected your life outside?
- Anything else that you would like to tell me …

Interview Questions for Debbie

- You started attending GBC in 2001. How would you describe the church then?
- The proportion of White British in the membership of GBC declined from 65% in Jan 2000 to 45% in Jan 2006. What do you remember about this time, do you recall any feelings or thoughts about this change?
- What have you observed about the changes towards GBC becoming more inclusive of different ethnicities?
- In 2004 GBC began experimenting with changes to the structure of the Sunday morning meeting. What do you remember about this time? What feelings do you recall? How do you think this impacted people of other ethnicities who were around GBC?
- As a worship leader and a member of the worship group what observations do you have about the use of worship material originating outside of Europe and North America?
- What has been your own personal experience of worshipping at GBC using a language that you do not speak?
- What has been your experience, if any, of being prayed for at GBC in a language that you did not understand?
- What have been for you some of the good things about being part of a multi-ethnic worshipping congregation?

- What have been for you some of the difficult things about being part of a multi-ethnic worshipping congregation?
- You have had intentional long-term engagement with ZZZ. In what ways has that influenced your perception of GBC's multi-ethnic development?
- Any other reflections on being a part of a church congregation that uses a variety of languages and worship practices drawn from different cultures?

Interview Questions for Alvita

- You started attending GBC in 2003. How would you describe the church then?
- Arriving from ZZZ what are your memories about how you felt when you started attending GBC?
- You were invited to join a leadership-training programme. What was your experience of that programme as a ZZZ?
- The proportion of White British in the membership of GBC declined from 65% in Jan 2000 to 45% in Jan 2006. What do you remember about this time, do you recall any feelings or thoughts about this change?
- What have you observed about the changes towards GBC becoming more inclusive of different ethnicities? What has been your own experience/observation of racial prejudice or White Privilege within GBC?
- In 2004 GBC began experimenting with changes to the structure of the Sunday morning meeting. What do you remember about this time? What feelings do you recall? How do you think this impacted people of other ethnicities who were around GBC?
- As a worship leader and a member of the worship group what observations do you have about the use of worship material originating outside of Europe and North America?
- What has been your own personal experience of worshipping at GBC using a language that you do not speak?
- What has been your experience, if any, of being prayed for at GBC in a language that you did not understand?
- In what ways do you think your own ZZZ culture has been welcomed and incorporated into the life of GBC?

- What have been for you some of the good things about being part of a multi-ethnic worshipping congregation?
- What have been for you some of the difficult things about being part of a multi-ethnic worshipping congregation?
- Any other reflections on being a part of a church congregation that uses a variety of languages and worship practices drawn from different cultures?

Interview Questions for Felix

- In what ways, if any, has being a part of multi-ethnic GBC as you grew up prepared you for your life outside of GBC now?
- What have been for you some of the good things about being part of a multi-ethnic worshipping congregation?
- What have been for you some of the difficult things about being part of a multi-ethnic worshipping congregation?
- In 2004 GBC began experimenting with changes to the structure of the Sunday morning meeting. What do you remember about this time? What feelings do you recall? How do you think this impacted people of other ethnicities who were around GBC?
- The proportion of White British in the membership of GBC declined from 65% in Jan 2000 to 45% in Jan 2006. What do you remember about this time, do you recall any feelings or thoughts about this change?
- Thinking back prior to 2015 what are some of the events in the multi-ethnic journey of GBC that you remember?
- Which changes were particularly significant for you and why?
- What have you observed about the changes towards GBC becoming more inclusive of different ethnicities?
- What has been your own personal experience of worshipping at GBC using a language that you do not speak?
- What has been your experience, if any, of being prayed for at GBC in a language that you did not understand?

- In what ways has the multi-ethnic experience of GBC affected your ability to engage with God?
- Are there specific ways that your experience of being a part of multi-ethnic GBC helped/hindered you in your own spiritual journey?
- Any other reflections on being a part of a church congregation that uses a variety of languages and worship practices drawn from different cultures?

Interview Questions for Tabia

- You started attending GBC in 1999. How would you describe the church then?
- Arriving from ZZZ what are your memories about how you felt when you started attending GBC?
- The proportion of White British in the membership of GBC declined from 65% in Jan 2000 to 45% in Jan 2006. What do you remember about this time, do you recall any feelings or thoughts about this change?
- What have you observed about the changes towards GBC becoming more inclusive of different ethnicities? What has been your own experience/observation of racial prejudice or White Privilege within GBC?
- In 2004 GBC began experimenting with changes to the structure of the Sunday morning meeting. What do you remember about this time? What feelings do you recall? How do you think this impacted people of other ethnicities who were around GBC?
- As a member of the worship group what observations do you have about the use of worship material originating outside of Europe and North America?
- What has been your own personal experience of worshipping at GBC using a language that you do not speak?
- What has been your experience, if any, of being prayed for at GBC in a language that you did not understand?
- In what ways do you think your own ZZZ culture has been welcomed and incorporated into the life of GBC? Ask follow up on dance/body movement and also food if this is not mentioned.
- What have been for you some of the good things about being part of a multi-ethnic worshipping congregation?

- What have been for you some of the difficult things about being part of a multi-ethnic worshipping congregation?
- Any other reflections on being a part of a church congregation that uses a variety of languages and worship practices drawn from different cultures?

Interview Questions for Graham

- Thinking about GBC when I arrived in 1987 how would you describe the church then? Services and congregation.
- Still thinking about the late 80s early 90s, what do you remember about new people joining GBC? Other ethnicities. Integration.
- The proportion of White British in the membership of GBC declined from 65% in Jan 2000 to 45% in Jan 2006. What do you remember about this time, do you recall any feelings or thoughts about this change?
- In 2004 GBC began experimenting with changes to the structure of the Sunday morning meeting. What do you remember about this time? What feelings do you recall? How do you think this impacted people of other ethnicities who were around GBC?
- As a worship leader and a member of the worship group what observations do you have about the use of worship material originating outside of Europe and North America?
- Can you tell me something about your own journey into leading multi-ethnic worship? Own role & responsibilities.
- What have you observed about the changes towards GBC becoming more inclusive of different ethnicities?
- What has been your own personal experience of worshipping at GBC using a language that you do not speak?
- What has been your experience, if any, of being prayed for at GBC in a language that you did not understand?
- What have been for you some of the good things about being part of a multi-ethnic worshipping congregation?
- What have been for you some of the difficult things about being part of a multi-ethnic worshipping congregation?

- Any other reflections on being a part of a church congregation that uses a variety of languages and worship practices drawn from different cultures?

Interview Questions for Kunle

- You started attending GBC in 1991. How would you describe the church then?
- Arriving from Nigeria what are your memories about how you felt when you started attending GBC? What drew you to stay?
- What was your church context like in Nigeria?
- You were invited to join a leadership-training programme. What was your experience of that programme as a ZZZ?
- You were the first African to become a part of the church leadership. What was your experience of that as a ZZZ?
- You were the first African to become a church officer. What was your experience of that as a ZZZ?
- The proportion of White British in the membership of GBC declined from 65% in Jan 2000 to 45% in Jan 2006. What do you remember about this time, do you recall any feelings or thoughts about this change?
- What have you observed about the changes towards GBC becoming more inclusive of different ethnicities? What has been your own experience/observation of racial prejudice or White Privilege within GBC?
- In 2004 GBC began experimenting with changes to the structure of the Sunday morning meeting. What do you remember about this time? What feelings do you recall? How do you think this impacted people of other ethnicities who were around GBC?
- As a worship leader and a member of the worship group what observations do you have about the use of worship material originating outside of Europe and North America?
- When you have been at the front leading, what have you observed when such material has been used?
- What has been your own personal experience of worshipping at GBC using a language that you do not speak?

- What has been your experience, if any, of being prayed for at GBC in a language that you did not understand?
- You have preached many times at GBC. In what ways are you able to draw on/incorporate aspects of your ZZZ culture in your preaching?
- In what ways do you think your Nigerian culture has been welcomed and incorporated into the life of GBC?
- What have been for you some of the good things about being part of a multi-ethnic worshipping congregation?
- What have been for you some of the difficult things about being part of a multi-ethnic worshipping congregation?
- In what ways do you think that our friendship has enabled the multi-ethnic journey at GBC?
- Any other reflections on being a part of a church congregation that uses a variety of languages and worship practices drawn from different cultures?

Interview Questions for Honoria

- You started attending GBC in 2008. How would you describe the church then?
- You previously had been attending ZZZ what are your memories about how you felt when you started attending GBC? What seemed different/strange? What helped you feel welcome? What helped you to engage with GBC?
- How easily did you form friendships with non-ZZZ? What helped that process?
- In autumn 2008 a Portuguese speaking House Group started. What do you think was good about that? Any negatives?
- In 2010 a Brazilian Assistant Pastor was appointed. How do you think that this affected Brazilian church members?
- What have you observed in the years you have been here (up to 2015) about the changes towards GBC becoming more inclusive of different ethnicities? What has been your own experience/observation of racial prejudice or White Privilege within GBC?

- What has been your own personal experience of worshipping at GBC using a language that you do not speak?
- What has been your experience, if any, of being prayed for at GBC in a language that you did not understand?
- In what ways do you think your own ZZZ culture has been welcomed and incorporated into the life of GBC?
- What have been for you some of the good things about being part of a multi-ethnic worshipping congregation?
- What have been for you some of the difficult things about being part of a multi-ethnic worshipping congregation?
- Any other reflections on being a part of a church congregation that uses a variety of languages and worship practices drawn from different cultures?

Interview Questions for Brian

- You started attending GBC around 1992. How would you describe the church then?
- You had previously not been a church attender. What drew you to stay?
- The proportion of White British in the membership of GBC declined from 65% in Jan 2000 to 45% in Jan 2006. What do you remember about this time, do you recall any feelings or thoughts about this change?
- What have you observed about the changes towards GBC becoming more inclusive of different ethnicities? Ask re development in inter-cultural relationships.
- What has been your own experience/observation of racial prejudice or White Privilege within GBC?
- In 2004 GBC began experimenting with changes to the structure of the Sunday morning meeting. What do you remember about this time? What feelings do you recall?
- How do you think this impacted people of other ethnicities who were around GBC?

- As a White British person how do you think these changes impacted White British people?
- As a pastor and worship leader what observations do you have about the use of worship material originating outside of Europe, Australia and North America?
- When you have been at the front leading, what have you observed when such material has been used?
- What has been your own personal experience of worshipping at GBC using a language that you do not speak?
- What has been your experience, if any, of being prayed for at GBC in a language that you did not understand?
- What have been for you some of the good things about being part of a multi-ethnic worshipping congregation?
- What have been for you some of the difficult things about being part of a multi-ethnic worshipping congregation?
- Any other reflections on being a part of a church congregation that uses a variety of languages and worship practices drawn from different cultures?

Interview Questions for Oluwasesan

- You started attending GBC in 2008. How would you describe the church then? Ask about the then recently established pattern.
- What are your memories about how you felt when you started attending GBC?
- What was the church you previously attended like?
- Why did you visit GBC and why did you stay?
- What was your church context like in Nigeria?
- What have you observed in the period between the time you arrived and when I left for Quaystone about the changes towards GBC becoming more inclusive of different ethnicities?
- What has been your own experience/observation of racial prejudice or White Privilege within GBC?

- What observations do you have about friendships forming at GBC between people from different ethnicities?
- What observations do you have about the use of worship material originating outside of Europe and North America?
- What has been your own personal experience of worshipping at GBC using a language that you do not speak?
- What has been your experience, if any, of being prayed for at GBC in a language that you did not understand?
- In what ways do you think your own Nigerian culture have been welcomed and incorporated into the life of GBC?
- What have been for you some of the good things about being part of a multi-ethnic worshipping congregation?
- What have been for you some of the difficult things about being part of a multi-ethnic worshipping congregation?
- Any other reflections on being a part of a church congregation that uses a variety of languages and worship practices drawn from different cultures?

Interview Questions for Janice

- You became a member of GBC in 1988. How would you describe the church then? Services and congregation.
- What was the church that you came from like in comparison?
- Still thinking about the late 80s early 90s, what do you remember about new people joining GBC? Other ethnicities. Integration.
- In late 1997 the Paul family was attacked. What do you remember about the impact of this within GBC?
- The proportion of White British in the membership of GBC declined from 65% in Jan 2000 to 45% in Jan 2006. What do you remember about this time, do you recall any feelings or thoughts about this change?
- In 2004 GBC began experimenting with changes to the structure of the Sunday morning meeting. What do you remember about this time? What feelings do you recall?

- How do you think this impacted people of other ethnicities who were around GBC?
- What have you observed about the changes towards GBC becoming more inclusive of different ethnicities?
- Do you have any reflections on the way that friendships have or have not developed between people in GBC from different ethnicities?
- What examples of racism/racist behaviour have you observed within GBC?
- What has been your own personal experience of worshipping at GBC using a language that you do not speak?
- What has been your experience, if any, of being prayed for at GBC in a language that you did not understand?
- What have been for you some of the good things about being part of a multi-ethnic worshipping congregation?
- What have been for you some of the difficult things about being part of a multi-ethnic worshipping congregation?
- Any other reflections on being a part of a church congregation that uses a variety of languages and worship practices drawn from different cultures?

Interview Questions for Ronke

- You started attending GBC in 1991. How would you describe the church then?
- Arriving from Nigeria what are your memories about how you felt when you started attending GBC? What drew you to stay?
- What was your church context like in Nigeria?
- In late 1997 the Paul family was attacked. What do you remember about the impact of this within GBC?
- The proportion of White British in the membership of GBC declined from 65% in Jan 2000 to 45% in Jan 2006. What do you remember about this time, do you recall any feelings or thoughts about this change?
- What have you observed about the changes towards GBC becoming more inclusive of different ethnicities?

- What have you observed about friendships developing between people from different ethnicities?
- What has been your own experience/observation of racial prejudice or White Privilege within GBC?
- In 2004 GBC began experimenting with changes to the structure of the Sunday morning meeting. What do you remember about this time? What feelings do you recall? How do you think this impacted people of other ethnicities who were around GBC? I already have your comments on Connection Time from the Focus Group so you do not need to repeat those.
- As a member of the worship group what observations do you have about the use of worship material originating outside of Europe and North America?
- When you have been at the front as part of the singing team, what have you observed when such material has been used?
- What has been your own personal experience of worshipping at GBC using a language that you do not speak?
- What has been your experience, if any, of being prayed for at GBC in a language that you did not understand?
- In what ways do you think your Nigerian culture has been welcomed and incorporated into the life of GBC?
- What have been for you some of the good things about being part of a multi-ethnic worshipping congregation?
- What have been for you some of the difficult things about being part of a multi-ethnic worshipping congregation?
- Any other reflections on being a part of a church congregation that uses a variety of languages and worship practices drawn from different cultures?

Interview Questions for Livya

- You started attending GBC in 1999. How would you describe the church then?
- What are your memories about how you felt when you started attending GBC? What drew you to stay?
- What was your previous church context like?
- Did you attend church in ZZZ? What was your church there like?
- The proportion of White British in the membership of GBC declined from 65% in Jan 2000 to 45% in Jan 2006. What do you remember about this time, do you recall any feelings or thoughts about this change?
- What have you observed about the changes towards GBC becoming more inclusive of different ethnicities?
- What have you observed about friendships developing between people from different ethnicities?
- What has been your own experience/observation of racial prejudice or White Privilege within GBC?
- In 2004 GBC began experimenting with changes to the structure of the Sunday morning meeting. What do you remember about this time? What feelings do you recall?
- How do you think the changes impacted people of other ethnicities who were around GBC?
- What has been your own personal experience of worshipping at GBC using a language that you do not speak?
- What has been your experience, if any, of being prayed for at GBC in a language that you did not understand?
- In what ways do you think your ZZZ culture was welcomed and incorporated into the life of GBC?
- What have been for you some of the good things about being part of a multi-ethnic worshipping congregation?
- What have been for you some of the difficult things about being part of a multi-ethnic worshipping congregation?
- Any other reflections on being a part of a church congregation that uses a variety of languages and worship practices drawn from different cultures?

Interview Questions for Natasha

- You started attending GBC in 1989. How would you describe the church then?
- What are your memories about how you felt when you started attending GBC? What drew you to stay?
- What was your previous church context like?
- In ZZZ you were appointed as part of the church leadership team. What was your experience of that as a ZZZ?
- The proportion of White British in the membership of GBC declined from 65% in Jan 2000 to 45% in Jan 2006. What do you remember about this time, do you recall any feelings or thoughts about this change?
- What have you observed about the changes towards GBC becoming more inclusive of different ethnicities?
- What has been your own experience/observation of racial prejudice or White Privilege within GBC?
- In 2004 GBC began experimenting with changes to the structure of the Sunday morning meeting. What do you remember about this time? What feelings do you recall?
- How do you think this impacted people of other ethnicities who were around GBC?
- As a member of the worship group what observations do you have about the use of worship material originating outside of Europe and North America?
- What are you observations of friendships forming between people from different ethnicities?
- What has been your own personal experience of worshipping at GBC using a language that you do not speak?
- What has been your experience, if any, of being prayed for at GBC in a language that you did not understand?
- In what ways do you think your ZZZ culture has been welcomed and incorporated into the life of GBC?
- What have been for you some of the good things about being part of a multi-ethnic worshipping congregation?

- What have been for you some of the difficult things about being part of a multi-ethnic worshipping congregation?
- Any other reflections on being a part of a church congregation that uses a variety of languages and worship practices drawn from different cultures?

Interview Questions for Harnoop

- You started attending GBC in 2013. How would you describe the church then?
- Why did you start attending GBC?
- What are your memories about how you felt when you started attending GBC? What seemed different/strange?
- What helped you feel welcome? What helped you to engage with GBC? Why did you stay?
- What was your previous church like?
- How easily did you form friendships with non-ZZZs? What helped that process?
- What have you observed in the years you have been here (up to 2015) about any changes towards GBC becoming more inclusive of different ethnicities?
- What has been your own experience/observation of racial prejudice or White Privilege within GBC?
- What has been your own personal experience of worshipping at GBC using a language that you do not speak?
- What has been your experience, if any, of being prayed for at GBC in a language that you did not understand?
- In what ways do you think your own ZZZ culture has been welcomed and incorporated into the life of GBC?
- What have been for you some of the good things about being part of a multi-ethnic worshipping congregation?
- What have been for you some of the difficult things about being part of a multi-ethnic worshipping congregation?
- Any other reflections on being a part of a church congregation that uses a variety of languages and worship practices drawn from different cultures?

Interview Questions for Shanice

- You started attending GBC in 2005. How would you describe the church then? Ask about the newly established pattern.
- What are your memories about how you felt when you started attending GBC?
- What was the church you previously attended like?
- What was your church context like in ZZZ?
- You arrived at GBC during a time of significant change in the ethnic make-up of the church. The proportion of White British in the membership of GBC declined from 65% in Jan 2000 to 45% in Jan 2006. Where you aware of this? Do you recall any feelings, comments or thoughts about this change?
- What have you observed about the changes towards GBC becoming more inclusive of different ethnicities?
- What has been your own experience/observation of racial prejudice or White Privilege within GBC?
- What observations do you have about friendships forming at GBC between people from different ethnicities?
- What observations do you have about the use of worship material originating outside of Europe and North America?
- What has been your own personal experience of worshipping at GBC using a language that you do not speak?
- What has been your experience, if any, of being prayed for at GBC in a language that you did not understand?
- In what ways do you think your own ZZZ or wider ZZZ culture have been welcomed and incorporated into the life of GBC?
- What have been for you some of the good things about being part of a multi-ethnic worshipping congregation?
- What have been for you some of the difficult things about being part of a multi-ethnic worshipping congregation?

Interview Questions for Panha

- You started attending GBC around 2003. How would you describe the church then?
- From memory this was the first church you attended in the UK? What was your previous background/experience? What are your memories about how you felt when you started attending GBC?
- Why did you continue to attend?
- You grew up in ZZZ. In what way did coming from that context colour how you experienced GBC?
- The proportion of White British in the membership of GBC declined from 65% in Jan 2000 to 45% in Jan 2006. What do you remember about this time, do you recall any feelings or thoughts about this change?
- What have you observed about the changes towards GBC becoming more inclusive of different ethnicities?
- What observations do you have about friendships forming at GBC between people from different ethnicities?
- What has been your own experience/observation of racial prejudice or White Privilege within GBC?
- In 2004 GBC began experimenting with changes to the structure of the Sunday morning meeting. What do you remember about this time? What feelings do you recall? How do you think this impacted people of other ethnicities who were around GBC?
- What has been your own personal experience of worshipping at GBC using a language that you do not speak?
- What has been your experience, if any, of being prayed for at GBC in a human language that you did not understand?
- In what ways do you think your own ZZZ culture has been welcomed and incorporated into the life of GBC?
- What have been for you some of the good things about being part of a multi-ethnic worshipping congregation?
- What have been for you some of the difficult things about being part of a multi-ethnic worshipping congregation?

- Any other reflections on being a part of a church congregation that uses a variety of languages and worship practices drawn from different cultures?

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