**Interview 018 PSEUDONYM: Jennifer** (older participant)

INTERVIEWER: So, if you could to start off just tell me your faith history.

JENNIFER: OK. So I grew up very firmly in the church in a parish in the Church of England in England in a, erm, in a parish where my dad was the priest. And so, been very involved with ministry from the very beginning. It was a wonderful church. We had a growing, spiritually alive congregation and all the families… it was like a big family. So my experience of church as a child – it wasn’t that there was never any problems, because there always are – but my experience was a very healthy church full of love where all the other kids’ parents were like your second parents and you know, if anyone was misbehaving, anyone would tell them what to do. But there was a lot of love. And we were growing in our faith and, em, so whenever I think of what church should look like I often come back to that scenario. These are some of the key foundational things that the church has to have. So, em, when I was about eight years old I read the biography of Gladys Aylward and was so blown away and I felt like the Lord was calling me to be a missionary. (I’ve got a fly on my nose!). And, em, it was not something that I had remembered then – that kind of went to the back of my mind for probably until my, about twenty years old, twenty-one years old. I kind of forgot about that. So then when I was fourteen my family moved to Latin America, to [country A], where my dad was called to go and serve. At that point it was a chaplaincy ministry and the only Anglican – of course the Church of England is part of the Anglican communion – the only chaplaincy, the only congregations were both at the cathedral. One was in Spanish, one was in English. But the Bishop at that time was the Bishop of [City, Country B] and he had a vision for a national church. So a [Country A-an] church with [country A-an] clergy with you know, just that’s what his vision was for that country. And he’d had that vision for a while but hadn’t had anyone to kind of run with the vision. So I think his intention always was that that’s where we would go in terms of ministry. And so, a year after we got there, my dad was elected as assistant bishop with special responsibility for [Country A] and a year later he was made Bishop of [Country A]. And [Country A] was made a separate diocese and em, basically he had a whole country with two congregations in one church and one deacon and himself the bishop and then of course the family was still there, and you know, a growing number of faithful people who started to come around. [Country A] is known as the missionary graveyard because it is a place of great spiritual darkness. There, they were the first country in Latin America to reject Christianity as a state religion. So they basically followed French liberalism and what happened then was a bit of a spiritual vacuum, we very much of a spiritual vacuum. Which of course, vacuums get filled. And so what you started to have was a lot, a lot, of Spiritism. A lot of the worship of the sea goddess from [Country C] started to come down. People, I mean in my class at school, there were like ten people in my class – it wasn’t a Christian school, it was just an international school, and every single person in that class except myself had at some point had some kind of occult experience, whether that was going to a fortune teller, or taking part in a séance, or playing Ouija board and so on. And so if you can imagine what that was like to, to, you know, we were… and also it’s a very key place for Masonry in Latin America. So big… I think it may even be the kind of focal point of Masonry in Latin America, with a lot of the power issues that go along with that. And, em, God had given us a vision, given my Dad a vision, to create a national church and so he basically started to, he formed a seminary, got down somebody to teach, started to raise up leaders, and started to plant churches. I was there for three and a half, four years before I came back to university. My parents stayed there for eleven years. And in that time the church grew to eleven congregations around the country and about the same number of clergy. And there was tremendous spiritual opposition and spiritual attack, including things like our house being, you know, we woke up one morning and the, em, the spiritists had clearly been outside our house during the night putting curses around it, putting down petals, you know. Everybody on the street was like, what the heck’s going on? Who are you and why are they attacking you? Kind of thing. So you know, to having them breaking into our cathedral during Holy Week one year and totally desecrate the church and everything. To having them take people that we were working with – one time they took a deaf, dumb, mute who would come to our soup kitchen, and sacrificed him to the sea goddess on the beach right outside the cathedral. So, you know, there was so much evil and the church has always struggled to grow but it did grow. And I think for me, you know, being part of that. I worked in the soup kitchen – not all the time because I was a typical teenager, you know, I went through my own, you know. I was rebellious at times, I was disobedient at times, and you know, I wasn’t faithful all the time. But I still was regularly part of the church and I would help at different things and we helped a lot. We had in the first six months of living there we had sixty different people stay with us in our home. And so whenever they’d stay, I’d have to move out of my bedroom to my sister’s bedroom or my brother would move out of his bedroom to the living room and you know. So for the first six months. The person who stayed the longest stayed for a month. And some people stayed for one night. Some people stayed for three nights. I mean it was just nuts from the word go. And so then I went back to university, when I was eighteen. And during … and I did Latin American studies, that was my degree. Because I’d fallen in love with Latin America. And I couldn’t stand the thought of going back to college and being away. And so I thought if I did Latin American studies, my third year I’d be in Latin America. So it’s only two years I had to put up with being away, and then I’d be back, you know. So that was my focus. And I really engaged – my whole family did – we really engaged with the culture. We had many, many, many friends and I suffered very strong reverse culture shock when I got back to university. I was very unhappy. I’d gone from a very social interactive culture to one which was one which was full of college students who were all highly sarcastic and not very friendly, you know. And so I remember standing at the bus stop in England, waiting for the bus, and having – I didn’t have a panic attack – but there was a moment of panic when I was thinking to myself, oh what am I supposed to do? Do I stick my hand out? Do I just stand here? I can’t remember what I’m supposed to do, you know. And at that time I’d not heard of the term ‘Third Culture Kid’. I’d not heard of the term ‘reverse culture shock.’ I mean, we basically, none of us, not even my parents, knew that. They put me on a plane at one end, and my aunt met me at the other end, and then my brother came with me on the train to [UK city] and took me up to my room in halls. We dropped my bag off, looked round, and he took the train from station – that was it. And, you know, you’re on your own. There was no internet, there was no, you know, phonecalls. It cost me ten pounds for like one minute on the pay phone. And so I would save up all my money and pretty much ten pounds was about a week’s worth of living expenses, and I would save up all my money and get on for like a minute and burst into tears when I heard their voice. And you know. [starting to cry] Sorry, not meaning to cry. You know, it was rock hard. And em, the mission agency we went with had basically they would pay one return trip for your kids every two years, once you left the field. And so my parents just said to me, [name] you know, if you hate college you come back. The only thing is, we’re not going to be able to pay for you to have another ticket to go back and, you know. It was just basically, you’re going to have to be brave and that’s what it is. Thankfully I had my family in England, so you know. So about half a term I could get on a train and go and visit my gran and, you know, she’d give me the money back for the train ticket, you know. But it was hard. It was very hard. And pretty much during college I was very homesick. I really missed my parents. I loved the course, that was the only saving grace because I was so miserable. And the course is what kept me going, kept me focussed. But I looked at that point in my life, I looked at other people to fill the gap that my parents had filled, my family. And that was the time in my life where I basically, I stopped going to church. I had tried to go to church and the church I went to, basically singled out the students – they had a lot of students there, and so they were like, so this is what the congregation’s doing I thought ‘oh that’s great!’ Then “and for the students we have this…” I’d be like, no, I just want to be part of a congregation, I don’t want to be lumped with the students. I’m sick of students, I see them all day, you know. Can we be a real living community that I can be part of? So, like you know, I just stopped going to church for two years, and my life was just not on track. And then I went home for my third year. And that was really when my faith came back in full force. And not just my faith, because I think my faith had always been there, but my complete commitment, my 100% commitment to follow the Lord and to live his way. And so, and what helped me with that was during that year I was asked by my dad to work with one his seminarians who was a [country D] woman who was working with young girls at risk from prostitution in the old city. And so I spent a lot of time that year in the slums of the old city, working with these young girls who were aged between seven and fourteen years old. A lot of them, their mothers were prostitutes and basically you can make a lot of money with a young girl. And so they’d had the same thing happen to them, and as far as they were concerned that was good, you know. And so we were working with these girls and trying to to give them a sense of self-worth and show them that they were loved, you know. And some of them would say to us things like, I just want to be a nun. And it wasn’t that they wanted to be a nun, it’s just that they knew that they would be safe inside a convent. They were not safe where they were. And I remember one particular day, we’d gone to look for this girl who hadn’t shown up for a couple of weeks. And we’d heard that she was working at this strip joint, but she was working in the kitchen. And apparently that’s the way it goes: you start in the kitchen, you move into waitressing and then you move into the prostitution. And she came running out of the kitchen when we were there and we were talking to her and I remember going home that night and I remember the day, it was right before my 21st birthday,

[birth-date discussion omitted to preserve anonymity]

JENNIFER: And so, I was washing and drying the dishes with my dad – I can’t remember which I was doing – but I was telling him all about it and I was saying, ‘I just don’t know what to do. I’ve put all my effort, I’ve put all my energy, I’ve put all my love, I’ve put all my love… and I’m just seeing these girls, it’s not making the slightest difference. They’re still, you know.’ And we were talking about it, and I was putting the dishes away and we had these Bible verses, you know, like it was like a calendar and it was glued to one of the cupboards in the kitchen and I never used to read it, but I looked at it, I just glanced at it, and it was John 16:33 where he says to his disciples “I’m telling you this that you’ll have peace. In this world you will have trouble but take heart, I have overcome the world.” And it just spoke to my heart like no Scripture had ever spoken to my heart. And I was like, ‘dad, look at this! Look at this!’ And he just said, you know what, that’s Scripture, that’s the word of the Lord. It’s alive and it will speak to us if we let it. You know. And so, that was a place where I just said right, you know, my life, you know, I’ve either got to be 100% for God or forget God. And I was like, I can’t forget God. I’ve got to be 100%. And so from that point on I was really – I started to walk with him. I went back and did my final year, got involved with a church in [UK city], went on to become part of a community care team for two years in that place with another church but I was still going to my own church. And working with the homeless, working with the drug addicts, working with the elderly, working with people with special needs. Loved it. But I knew I was called to be a missionary. And at that point in England there really wasn’t, there was only like one or two places that had any kind of mission focussed courses. And so I then was invited to go, I went over for a brief summer, I helped with like a vacation Bible school but it was a bit more than that, I helped with a church in [North American Country]. And after I’d finished helping, they said to me, we know that you want to be in ministry and so why don’t you think about coming back and doing an internship. So that, at that point I then moved to [N. American Country] for a year and a half with that church, working with a lot of internationals which I absolutely love, international ministry, I guess because it makes me feel very much at home. And em, and working with a lot of evangelism and em pastoral ministry. So I was doing all of that. And from there I found a seminary in the States that actually had a Masters degree in what they call Mission and Evangelism. It was missiology but it was also a lot of practical mission stuff, and it was exactly what I wanted for going back to the mission field. So I did that. And then at the seminary I also met my husband. Everybody else said I would, but I kept saying I’m not interested. I’m going to be a single missionary, on the mission field. I’m not looking for a man. And then I met him and it took me a while to accept that maybe possibly I might be interested. And then we got married. He actually was in [Asia] for a year after I met him, which was great because that gave me time to warm up to the idea. And then – and finish my masters, because you know, that gets a little hard to do both. So, and then in 2000 we went down to [Country D] and I had felt called when I was in [UK city] to be ordained but had not pushed that forward. I kind of waited on that. And then after we’d been in [Country D] for a couple of years I was ordained a deacon. And in Latin America in our church, most of the diocese didn’t ordain women in any way, shape or form. And our diocese did ordain women to the diaconate; we weren’t allowed to ordain women to the priesthood, so. But as I became a deacon and kind of that role basically is one foot in the world, one foot in the church. And that is very much my heart. To be one foot in the world, one foot in the church. Bringing the church into the world and bringing the needs of the world into the church. And so it’s not that I – if the Lord called me to be a priest I would – but it’s never been something that I’ve felt like he was calling me. I feel like I’ve found the right place for the ministry he wants me to do. So, em, I don’t know what else I can tell you about my faith journey. I mean, I could tell you so much but you probably don’t want to know it all.

INTERVIEWER: that’s interesting. Has your faith been challenged? What do you think have been the challenges?

JENNIFER: Oh my word! I wish it would sometimes stop! So, I mean, I think when you’re really living out the gospel and pushing forward and you know, the church when we got down to [country D] we were working with my mum and dad. And my dad has got a very apostolic gifting. So he went from Country A to country D – there was about six congregations when he got there. They hadn’t had a bishop to lead them for five years because of the terrorism that was going on and the difficult situation. And over the course of the next eighteen years that he was there, the church went from six pastors, which were like 50% missionaries – 50% locals, to having three [Country D-an] bishops, to having over 40 national clergy. And then churches in many regions of the country, you know, we set up a seminary. That was our role there. So, but to say that. The challenges were constant. So, it, we really have faced over the years just horrendous spiritual opposition in many shapes and forms. For example, when I was in [Country A] that summer, there was a group of people who basically tried to overthrow my dad. They tried to have a coup and overthrow him and kick him out. And they were headed up by people who were really – I won’t go into it all, but people who were not right with the Lord, people who were, er, from an abusive priest who… somebody who was severely struggling with alcoholism to people who had been very involved with the Masons and just wanted my dad out of there. Didn’t like the way he’d taken the power out of their hands. So, that was awful, to see my parents go through that. And it’s not that, I mean, ever since I was a little girl, I think I’m quite perceptive. And that it’s not that they ever spoke about stuff in front of us, but since I was a little girl, I remember having a recurring nightmare in which my dad was being stabbed in the back. And that was my experience of… But not stabbed in the back once, as in lots of times, you know. And needing to take care of him. And you know, at six years old, I was actually at Brownies and this had nothing to do with [name]’s mum, one of the other Brownie leaders came to me and basically pulled me to one side and started saying to me, your dad is a very naughty man, he’s a very very naughty man. You know, six years old. And I just remember saying to her: I don’t believe you. You know. I don’t believe you. But I mean the kind of … that’s the kind of, you know, the personal attacks, they were huge. So challenges in that way. Challenges in the way that you, for example, later on when we had the seminary. You know, challenges where you would train people, you would invest four years in people, and then the moment they stepped out into ministry, they’d screw up at the first obstacle, you know. Whether it was stealing all the money in the church, or you know, having an inappropriate relationship with someone, or whatever. To the point that we then started to actually incorporate it into our seminary training: a massive component that was enabling people to find inner healing and wholeness in their lives. And then also training them to think ethically and think you know, critically about their own culture and their own decisions. And be able to say, is this right in God’s eyes? And if it’s not, and if you’re struggling with something, what do you do? That you actually should go and tell your brother and confess your sin and pray for one another to be healed. You know, I mean, that you don’t have to try and fight it by yourself. You know, there’s ways that we as the church have to come alongside one another and support one another and all of that. So there were challenges like that. We faced challenges from the churches that supported us. Very much from the States. There’s often been this attitude of “we hold the purse strings and we’re going to tell you what to do.” You know. And so actually that was highly impressive at one point during our time in [Country D] because, you know, you’re like, number one, you have money but God has called you to come alongside us and help support us. Number two, you’re not down here, you don’t have the first clue, you know. You want to build a children’s home that’s like some five start deluxe children’s home. And it’s like, these kids don’t need that. There are certain things they absolutely need, but having a luxurious children’s home with, you know, top-end tutors coming to see every kid every day for this… It’s like, this is not what these children need. They would never live like this, and they don’t… and it’s not that you don’t want something good for the children, but it was just creating a real problem with these kids. And the failure of those supporting churches to humble themselves and not think that they knew best, you know, because they were, they were the ones who were so qualified, or whatever. So that was always an issue. And having to hold boundaries in those relationships was exhausting. So that was an issue. Financial issues. You know, there was so much we could do, but without money you were limited in what you could do. So you know, that was an issue. Trying to avoid dependency situation whereby everybody expected the rich Americans to provide, you know. And trying to build up stewardship, trying to teach people to find ways to do it themselves and to put in place structures that would be fund-generating in-country. You know, those were challenges we had to deal with. Then, em, you know for us as missionaries, you know, 2008 was the big crash and our funding pretty much went down by 50%. And we basically at that point had to move into the same house as my parents. They were living in a house that belonged to the diocese because my dad was the bishop so that house was already there and it had two extra bedrooms. So my husband and I had one bedroom and our boys had the other bedroom, and for two years we lived with them. You know. Now we get on very well, but, you know, that wasn’t ideal. But that was the reality financially. It was either that or leave the mission field. Another challenge I guess would be finding when you’re really, you know, when you have a big responsibility in the diocese like running a seminary and training people and it’s not like, when I say you’ve got a seminary, it’s not like you’ve got fifteen professors. It’s you and your husband and possibly one or two people and some visiting professors. So if you weren’t there it wasn’t happening, pretty much. So how do you do furlough? And also how do you do furlough when you’ve got kids who’ve now started school? You know, that’s another issue. How do you get healing when you’re going through things? Now, I mean, we have people around us in [country D] who would pray for us and who would bless us and, you know, who…. I had a lady who would come and cook in my house three days a week. She was a member of one of our congregations. She was a woman… I mean we really helped her to deepen her faith, but then she became like a city on a hill in the slum that she lived. Like the women from that shanty town would come and the perception of her was that she was holding, cos somebody had this vision one time that they shared with us about her, that they saw her just at the foot of the cross just clinging to the cross. And then they saw all these other people from that slum, clinging to her as she clung to the cross. So it was like, that’s who she became. So she would come to my house and if I was, if I was down in the dumps, she’d be like, what’s going on? I’d be like, this is what’s going on… She was my sister in Christ and I depended on her like she depended on me. So that was great. But you know, we’ve gone through some stuff on the mission field that was so deeply hurtful and then you come back and you find that oh well there’s this centre and this centre and this place that you can go and find healing, but it’s all booked up until next year and you’re only here for three months and you know. So that was a challenge. I’m just trying to think if there were any other challenges. I mean there’s so many. It’s you know, there’s always challenges in ministry. We had to raise funds, we had to find funds to put our kids in school. You know, the mission agency gave us so much, but what it gave us was completely unrealistic based on what the real costs were. So things like that, practical things like that were difficult.

INTERVIEWER: so where is your support base?

JENNIFER: The US primarily. And when we first went out we had maybe about ten churches that supported us. But the rest was all individuals. And we had very good support. You know, we were a young couple, we were in our late twenties when we were fundraising. Country D was happening – as in things, the Lord was at work and people knew that. And our role there to go and raise up leaders, people could see it was very strategic. And so when we left the mission, we had excellent support. But over sixteen years, and not being able to come back, and not having that immediate relationship with people that we had before we went to the field, you know, that gradually dipped. But we have people who still support us who have been supporting us for twenty years, so faithful in giving and in prayer and in just writing letters to us and stuff like that. So, em, I would say right now, with the exception of a couple of churches, the rest is all individual families, couples, people who support us. And it’s, we’ve just moved to [US state] and my husband is starting to work for a seminary here. But I, they couldn’t bring me on at the seminary because they didn’t have the money or the role for me. The have the role, they have the need for somebody who can really boost the missionary heart of the seminary, but they didn’t have a place, and they’d really fought to get the position with the Board that my husband’s taking, so [organisation] said well first of all they wanted both of us to serve as associate missionaries. But they said to me, why don’t you stay on as a full fledged [organisation] missionary and do the support raising so that you can actually do your ministry there at the seminary. And be supported, get your pension paid, and get a small, you know, salary that will help augment what your husband gets, which is not very much. So, so that’s kind of where we are right now. So, em, and to be quite honest we arrived here a month ago and we’re already facing incredibly intense spiritual opposition. Just awful. So it’s been a, it’s been a difficult week. You know. That’s why when you said that I was like, ooh. Where can I start? I could go back from today, you know.

INTERVIEWER: yeah. Where shall I go next? I’ve got a list of questions and I think we’ve covered quite a few just like that. How do you maintain your faith, develop your faith?

JENNIFER: well, we – I mean we just live it, live it every day. Apart from specific things, like for example, my husband and I pray together every day in the morning. We start by reading the Bible together and praying together and we’ve noticed that when we don’t do that, then things get pretty choppy in our marriage pretty quickly. So that’s a discipline, spiritual discipline that we’ve always had, from the beginning of our marriage when we didn’t have it. Initially we were doing our own thing, then we were like, hey, let’s try this, then we were like, oh this really helps. So that’s one thing. Then of course, individual prayer. We belong to the church wherever we are, the local church. We’re faithful in that. We have fellowship with many people, not just locally but around, so are praying for one another, sharing our lives you know via whatsapp or messages, you know. We have a huge Christian community around the world of people that we’re actively, you know, in contact with. I’m not much for, IT is not my thing, but through whatsapp, through text messages, you know, we’re praying and interceding for different people and they’re praying and interceding for us. And I think that’s really key. And I can call, I have certain intercessors, so I have a lady who’s been praying for me now for – faithfully – since I met her in 95. And when I was on the mission field, she would call me every two weeks faithfully on a Sunday night and just say what’s going on? And how can I pray? And then she’d pray for me. And there were times when … (I just need to find my battery charger…) … So there were times when, when I would, em, be so broken and just having her call and pray. You know, cos things happen. And she was just a powerful prayer warrior. And after those many years she knew me so well that, you know, she was like a spiritual – not just a spiritual mentor, but – it’s what I needed, I needed somebody who could do that for me. (Just a minute, going to plug myself in). So, em, so that was, that’s been very very key. And then different books, you know. My dad keeps me supplied with a lot of really helpful books that will build my faith and my spirituality. Things that he thinks will be helpful. I’m staying with some friends right now. And you know, they have some wonderful books that I haven’t read, you know. There’s a lot going on at the moment in the States regarding race relations and you know, just a Christian perspective on that. And so, you know, that’s the kind of thing. They’re Christian books written by theologians, written by people who really you know…. A good friend of ours is, he’s just published a book on faith and being a person of colour, so things like that that are just helpful and timely to help us, you know, apply our faith to whatever’s going on in the world at the time. You know, so things like that. So prayer, Scripture, writing, spiritual writing that’s helpful, community, fellowship. More prayer. And just trusting and holding on to the Lord. I mean, you know, things get hard and your roots go deep but it’s not easy sometimes when you’re going through it to … you need help, we need each other to stay strong, you know. So… We pray for each other here at home, you know. The kids – every night as a family we sit down and read Scripture and pray together. It’s not always the most super-duper inspired thing. Sometimes the kids are eager to get off to do something else. But we try and keep that as a plan as a family. Because we need it. And so the kids, you know, there’s times that I’ll go up to them, you know, this is what, I won’t be over-burdening them, but I’ll say I’m really stressed out at the moment, will you pray for me? And they’ll pray for me if their dad’s not there. So building that kind of praying, loving community around you. And then serving. We need to be obeying the Lord and just giving our whole heart into whatever he’s called us to. So, you know, I mean, it’s just about feeding. My faith is built when I am able to see him at work and go and love others and give to others. Because most of the time I get more out of it I’m sure than I give, so you know. So all of that I think is important as well. And how else is your faith built? Relying on the Lord. So ever since we went to the mission field, you know, you never knew how much money was going to come in any one month. And so that’s a walk of faith. And if you needed something. You know like … so we came off the mission field and the Lord called my husband to do a PhD and we knew that that was what we needed to do. And we didn’t have any resources. In fact when we came off the mission field we were owed like, it was like $28 000 for ministry expenses that we had footed. And we never actually got it back. Because we have to raise our own support and it just wasn’t coming in. And it wasn’t that they wouldn’t have given it to us, if we’d have raised it we’d have got it back but we just didn’t. And we knew that the Lord had called my husband to do this PhD and so, and we ended up the mission agency, they were able to cover our rent through what people supported us, but the rest of our expenses was by the grace of God. And I personally, it’s hard to live like that, but it builds your faith. And you can say without a shadow of a doubt, no matter what, I trust the Lord. And it’s not that we’re going to have everything we might desire. You know, but there’s a lot of trust there. And that would not have happened necessarily if I hadn’t gone through those times where I was completely dependent on him and you know, so.

INTERVIEWER: That just reminded me, I had a poster when I was a child of a load of kittens hanging from a tree…

JENNIFER: I remember that one!

INTERVIEWER: and it said ‘faith isn’t faith until it’s all your holding on to.’

JENNIFER: I remember that one with the kittens. We had it upstairs on the wall.

INTERVIEWER: I’ve never forgotten that. The times when I’ve been like, yep, that’s all I’m holding onto right now.

JENNIFER: Yeah. And just being able to learn… And it’s not like we ever master it. We just have to keep coming back to it. But to learn that He is trustworthy. Whatever the situation. And our hearts sometimes need to be reminded of that. So, you know.

INTERVIEWER: So how did you feel about bringing up children on the mission field?

JENNIFER: Well, I think I… it gave me things in mind that I knew, I need to make sure we do this and this and this. You know, like things that had been hard for us. It was a very different scenario from when we went to the mission field. So when we went to the mission field we didn’t even get a phonecall from England for the first six months. Because it was so expensive. And I remember when they invented the fax, or at least when Britain discovered the fax. And we were like, oh my goodness, look at this. We can actually put a letter through and it gets there immediately. Which made you feel a lot less far away, you know, at the time. So now I mean, our family, we have a family thread with my brother and sister and their families and my mum and dad and us on whatsapp. And like every day there’s chatter going backwards and forwards and stuff. So our children are much more able to be in touch with and be in relationship with their cousins and things than we ever were. I never once…. I mean, first of all I wasn’t necessarily going to have kids. I wasn’t necessarily going to get married. You know, it was a couple of years into marriage that I was like, you know, actually I kind of would like to have kids. And it’s not that, I’m just not one of those people who thinks through everything and makes a plan. I kind of tend to dive into what’s the Lord telling me to do now? Let’s do it. Right? So it’s not that I ever thought about it in advance and thought do I want to have my kids on the mission field or don’t I? it was like, I’m a missionary, I’m on the mission field, and I’m not going back to the States to have these kids, I feel more at home in [Country D], right here. And so, and I love the fact that they were like me. I love the fact that they were Third Culture Kids and I love the fact that they speak two languages. I love the fact that, you know, and of course, different from some, their grandparents were right there on the mission field with us, you know. That was a big blessing. A big, big, big blessing. And very hard when my mum and dad went back to England and we came here and we were not able to see them regularly. That was a huge loss. I think, things that I chose to do differently. I chose not to send them to the best international school. I mean, we had gone to the British schools in the place we were at, because they had in their constitution or whatever it was, that they had to provide a free education for any British person in the country. Otherwise we wouldn’t have gone there. But that was such, it was filled with the elite and they were so undisciplined and unruly and … not that I minded at the time, but I was like, I’m not going to put my kids in that environment. So there’s things like that that I was savvy about because I’d gone through it myself, that I did differently. But just like my parents and like any parent, I have not been able to protect them from all harm and from all the hurt that can accrue on the mission field, you know. But I think there’s a lot of things that they, when they fully grow up, they’re going to, that will have enriched their lives. So, I don’t regret it. But it’s not been easy, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: I usually ask people “do you call yourself a missionary?” and I’ve heard you use it. So what’s your relationship with the term “missionary”?

JENNIFER: Well, you know the verse in Psalm 84 which says “blessed are those whose strength is in him, who set their hearts on pilgrimage”? That was a verse that I once saw in the houses, in the house of fellow missionaries and it just really, you know, that seemed to explain best what my life it. So, in 1986, you know, so the Lord called me when I was eight years old to be a missionary. And in 1986 my family left for the mission field. I have been home in England for four years since then. And people often laugh. They’re like, you’re in [North American country] now, you’re home. But I’m like, this is not my home. You know. And I’m a missionary in the sense that every place I’ve gone since then, I’ve been serving the Lord as he calls me to, doing whatever ministry or service that he tells me to do. And so even though I’m in (N. American Country], there’s so much need for missionaries here, you know, and so my, how I perceive myself is, my life is a pilgrimage, serving the Lord. More often than not that’s cross-cultural. So whether it was with the international students in the last place we were at in [other area of country] or the international people that I was meeting and reaching out to and sharing my life and my faith with, you know. But also with [North Americans] who, you know, are international to me. You know, I married a [North American], but this is not, you know, there is a … I mean, as I say, I felt more at home in Latin America than I did in North America. It is a, I continue to be on that pilgrimage of serving the Lord in obedience to his call, even though my heart would rather be… not rather be because I’d rather be serving the Lord… but I’m like, Lord, I’d love to be back in England, I’d love to be close to my family, at some point, you know. And that’s a sacrifice. So…

INTERVIEWER: How do you go about taking those big decisions in life?

JENNIFER: Like you mean where to go next?

INTERVIEWER: Those kind of things, yeah.

JENNIFER: So, it’s the kind of thing for example, leaving [country D], it’s the kind of thing, it took about four years for us to, from starting to sense that that was right to actually getting to the end of that. And, em, so, we started to get the sense that [name] needed to be going on and doing a PhD, partly because we could never get accreditation for what we were doing in [Country D] because there was no one with a PhD.

INTERVIEWER: yeah

JENNIFER: And had he had it we could have actually accredited it with the government and it would have been… so we were being held back in that way. And then our mission agency actually came to us and said have you thought about doing this? And we would want to use you guys as kind of guinea pigs by helping you, supporting you for four years – not that they… they don’t provide all the support, but they were willing to work with us to make that a reality. And then [name] applied somewhere and we, everybody, we always have a group of people around us who are praying. So we have a group of trusted people, most of them are in ministry: my parents, my brother who is also in ministry, em, just praying with us for discernment. And so, em, the mission agency are very good, they’re very, they don’t tell you where to go they serve you and they serve the local church to make the mission happen, kind of thing. And so [name] got turned down. Everybody was praying, it was like we think this is right, we believe you should go for it, and then he got turned down. And we were actually quite honestly so surprised, because we’d felt very confident that that’s what it would be. But then, em, so we were still… so we got to a point, this was three years before we left Country D where the Lord told us that we had to hold lightly. He didn’t tell us for how long. He didn’t tell us… but we knew…. All we had was that word: you have to hold lightly. And so we ended up being three more years. We were asked to go and fill in at the cathedral for a period of time because their priest had left and nobody else spoke English apart from my dad who was the bishop and had another role. So we were there. So we served what was an interim thing. Well in that time it just really came alive and new families were coming in and it went from about 29 people every week to about 125, 150 people. You know, it really, the ministry took off. And it was so hard because on the one hand we knew we had to hold lightly, and on the other hand, we knew that we needed to give our all in that place at that time, you know. But it became clear, you know, that the right time was about the time that my dad was leaving and the leadership was being handed over to a national. And we just knew that we needed to honour the national church by stepping back because otherwise there’d always be this tension of can they actually make their own decisions and go their own way, or are they always going to feel like somehow they have to do everything maybe the way my dad did it, or whatever. So we knew that was time. Before we went to [Country D} again we had a group of people that we would meet with and we would pray with. So basically one component that’s always been present has just been having a group around us of people that we trust who’ve been helping us pray and discern. So, sorry that was a long answer for something very simple.

INTERVIEWER: It got you there!! How do you think your work-life balance has been?

JENNIFER: It has always been, I mean, it’s always been a juggling act. So I don’t think we ever got to a point where we were like, oh yeah, now we’ve mastered this. Because we never did, you know. You always have to kind of be like, hold on a minute, this is really too much, or whatever. I would say we have always erred on the side of being over-stretched. And I think that’s classic missionary. You know, you go to the mission field and you’ve got a very small group of people and there’s fifty million jobs to do, you know. And so for example, when I was in Country D one of my jobs was receiving – not receiving but – taking the information from the donors in the US and England, putting that on a spreadsheet, so that it was in Spanish and giving that to the administration. Now I didn’t do anything else. You know, I wasn’t involved in the money – they wanted me to be and I was like, you’ve got to be kidding. This is like the most draining possible thing for me, you know, I’m not doing it. But I was one of the few people who spoke English and Spanish who, em, knew how to use Excel, and who was trusted to do that job. Which sounds terrible, but it’s just a reality of what we were working with. And so, em, but because I had that position, that meant I was fielding all of the stuff from overseas donors, and when I told you about setting the boundaries and saying hold on a minute, that was so gruelling to me. And there are a couple of times where, you know, I mean, and again that’s what a deacon does – a deacon serves and the role can be different but it’s what the church needs to free up those in leadership. And so for example, if I hadn’t done it, that would have been on my dad. Well my dad had so many more other things that he had to think of. So it was really a case of, right now, although I hate this, this is my role. It’s one of my roles because I had about five, you know. So I was chaplain to the youth ministry leadership team. So what does that mean? They had three key people from the whole diocese who headed up the youth ministry leadership team and so I was working with them to develop sort of the yearly vision and what we should be doing, how to develop retreats, how to do this…. Content… this, that and the other. And they would work with all the leaders at the youth groups to equip them, to you know, to co-ordinate with them, then the leaders of the youth groups work in their parishes. So I wasn’t doing a lot of youth ministry – I’d always be involved with the retreats and stuff – but I wasn’t doing the day-to-day stuff. But that was another key role. I was deacon in, I was always a deacon in a parish so there was always pastoral ministry, there were Bible studies, you know. So, there was always a lot. And I taught in the seminary. So you know, I mean, I think I’ve always managed to limit what I did around the needs of the family, em, but that meant I was exhausted a lot of the time. And I remember coming back from after our first stint on the mission field and I remember coming back to [N. American country]. I had a three month old and a two-and-a-half year old and we’d just packed up our entire house when the baby was five weeks old and moved to [city in Country D]. So all of that. And we got to [N. American country], and I remember my husband saying [name] let’s think, what is it that brings you joy? And I burst into tears. I don’t know! I don’t remember what brings me joy! You know, I was exhausted! And thinking in those terms, about what brings me joy, you know, em….. So, I think I got it more balanced more recently, before we left [Country D]. You know. I’d joined a keep fit class twice a week with a bunch of women who were not – a couple of them were missionaries – but the rest were expatriates of one kind and another. And we’d always exercise on the cliffs overlooking the [ocean] and it was such a blessing. But it was like, that time was always… it made me healthy, it made me feel fit and healthy and it gave me a lot of joy because there was just a real camaraderie and so you know, that’s the kind of thing that I haven’t done a great job of building into my life. For those sort of five or six years it was there and it was really good. So… Plus gives you an opportunity to meet all these new people that you wouldn’t necessarily know otherwise, you know, share your life and your faith with them.

INTERVIEWER: How have you found teams?

JENNIFER: Are you talking about teams on the field? Teams coming down – short-term teams, what are you thinking?

INTERVIEWER: whatever comes to mind!

JENNIFER: So, just starting with the local team. I’m going to talk about [city, country D]. We had weekly meetings where all the clergy were coming together and certain lay people were coming together who were in charge of stuff. We’d always celebrate Eucharist together. And then we’d have a time of Bible study and prayer, fellowship together. And then we would deal with things that we needed to deal with. And that really made for a good solid backbone of team. You know. I mean I frequently am getting messages from members of the clergy in [country D] – you know, we’ve been gone now for over four years – they’re like pray for so-and-so, this is what’s going on. Or you know, they’ll be commenting, encouraging me. There’s still very much a strong relationship with them. It doesn’t mean that those relationships were without conflict, without gossip, you know, betrayal. Those things happened as well. But I think what we had was a very intentional regular time to come together that did a lot of good, strengthened the leadership in the whole diocese. We would have, we would have regular things like the synod and things like that that would happen every year where everybody got together. So, and there was a lot of joy in those times as well as, you know, business and prayer and you know. Like having a mariachi band come in and having half the clergy up there playing the guitar and singing. Just silly things like that. So that was good. I would say in terms of the short-term teams that would come down, we had some fabulous ones. We had people who really knew how to come, what attitude to come with. And they were very fruitful. And then we would have some where you were dealing with somebody coming in with the attitude I spoke about earlier whereby they thought that they knew everything and whatever they thought should be what… you know, there was no humility to sort of even recognise that they were way out of their depths, they didn’t know what they were talking about. And they just needed to come and hear and understand what the local church was saying. This is what’s going on. Now they might have expertise that they could offer, you know, but that didn’t mean presuming that you could come down and just think you knew, you know, what it would be like. Because quite often you didn’t.

So we had a mixed bag in short term mission teams and quite frankly you could basically say whenever a team came through if you’re responsible for them you had lost that time in terms of you doing what you needed to do or you, you know, it was a full-on burden to receive the team. Now a lot of the, there were times when that burden was wonderful and it was good, but there were times when people just wanted to come because it was what they wanted to do or because, you know, we really want to get our youth equipped and do a short-term mission and then we all want to go to [popular tourist site]. And we’re like, well, why don’t you just go visit [popular tourist site], cos, you know, it would take us over a month of preparation and then we’d lose a whole week while you’re here, and really your only intention to come here is so that you can go to [popular tourist site], so why don’t you just go to [popular tourist site]? You know. But people didn’t understand quite how labour intensive it was, and towards the end we kind of figured out that what we really needed to do, we had people who knew how to receive those teams and we would incorporate into the team budget a salary for that period for that person so that they, you know, so that was covered. Otherwise, you know, the church itself, the local church, was covering that. And you know, so… I don’t know if that’s answered everything, that’s off the top of my head.

INTERVIEWER: that’s ok! I think we’ve pretty much covered everything. How and how much do you use social media?

JENNIFER: So, my main social media that I use for keeping in touch with people around the world is Facebook, and of course Messenger because that goes with Facebook. I’m not on it everything day, you know. I use email, that’s not social media though, is it? I use Constant Contact, which is a form of newsletter generating – you pay monthly and you have all the contacts on there and they have all these formats that you can use when you put out your newsletter. So that’s been very helpful, I’ve used that for maybe six or seven years now. Because when we first went in 2000 we would do a news email and we’d have an email group, but you know there’s only so many people you can fit in an email group. And so we’d have to have like twenty different email groups.

INTERVIEWER: I can remember having to send the same email to like twenty people at a time

JENNIFER: Exactly. So that’s why Constant Contact is much easier because, em, if people want to unsubscribe they can unsubscribe and you don’t need to do anything about it, they just click.. It’s all set up for you, so that’s been really beneficial. Whatever we post there, we post on our Facebook accounts. And so for example recently we posted something on our Facebook that was an article written by the seminary where we are, and [husband] got nearly 200 people commenting and more people just liking and what-not, and I had close to 200 people liking or commenting or whatever, you know. So we have quite a broad group of people that we reach. You know, we send out probably 300 hard emails through the Constant Contact every time, of which some are going to groups, some are going to churches, so that goes even further. And some are then going to couples, families, so you know, it’s probably going out to six/seven hundred people and we send it out, that’s our prayer letter. Social media… Facebook is very common. I have friends all over the world who I’m linked to on Facebook. And very often the youth for example in (country) that I worked with if they see me online they’ll pop up and be like “hey, sister [name] how are you doing?” I’ll end up having like a 45 minute chat and it’ll be bedtime and I’ll be there in bed having this chat, this pastoral care chat with this young person who needed someone to talk to. And I’m so thankful because for whatever reason, whether it was the anonymity of it or the, the fact that you don’t have to look somebody in the face, you know, you’re chatting, it seems like they’re very open. So I’ve had a lot of times, you know, ‘what you doing?’ like, chatting with so and so, and they just…. And so for me that’s been, it’s just been a way of keeping in touch, sharing prayer requests, sharing news, just sharing our life with these people, you know. We left [country] but we continue to share our lives in a different way with those people. And it’s not just [country], it’s [other country]. I mean I have people, kids that I knew when I was in college and working in that community care team that I am regularly in contact with through Facebook. You know, one girl who was ten years old when I was there has been going through cancer for the last couple of years, you know, and praying for her and encouraging her in her faith. And people from our church who have been, you know, people who don’t go to church any more. I knew them when I was a kid, we grew up together, I know what’s in the depths of their heart – it might be buried, it might be hidden but I know their families. You know, for example, one young, well one guy my age, so young and able. He’s just split up from his wife and I’m talking to him about what’s going on and you know, what about your mum and dad – he’s kind of estranged from his mum and dad. And I was like look, they love you, I spoke to them. And so you’re able to minister. So many people from [UK town] I’m in touch with; lots of them have kind of slid off, you know. But you know, even, you know [name], I’ll be texting her and it’s not like, we don’t often have a, like a big long chat, but you know you’re praying for these people, you’re trying to say things that will encourage them to find the faith again where they’ve lost it, you know. So, that for me is very - I really value that very much. Whatsapp of course. And I don’t do Twitter, I don’t do any of those other ones. I think I’m a dinosaur, but do you know what? Facebook really works for me, so, you know.

INTERVIEWER: I’m noticing that that seems to be… I couldn’t put my.. say exactly what the date is, where the cut-off is or the age, but there definitely seems to be a kind of Facebook / Instagram / Snapchat….

JENNIFER: But my kids will use Facebook as well as Instagram. The nice thing is, we’ve always said, my son now is 18 and I’m much less involved with what he does or doesn’t do. But my younger son who’s 15, you know, the rule that we said for both boys growing up was: these have to be people that you know and who are your friends. You know, that was always the rule. And lots of times there are people who have loved them since they were a baby, you know, people our age or slightly younger, you know, the parents of their friends who they were at school with. And so they receive a lot of love and affirmation from people who used to do that in person but now do it you know in that way. Snapchat, you know, they keep in touch. My sons are able to easily keep in touch with friends from [country] and what not, but it’s like any other thing: our teens at the moment seem to be very, em, what keeping in touch means to them is a much less deep and meaningful keeping in touch and a… how do I say that? That’s not what I’m trying to say. What I mean is, even if they have a conversation with their peers now, like so when we got back from [country] my oldest son, obviously in high school and the kids basically said to him, you talk in paragraphs; we don’t talk in paragraphs. You know, and in the car one time, listening to them, it was exhausting because these kids were doing half-sentences back and forward – d-d-d-d-d-d – and it was like, oh, my word! Why don’t you call… I didn’t say that, but… It was exhausting. My son was exhausted because he just hadn’t grown up with that kind of communication that’s just so superficial, you know. He was used to talking to people about an idea, or talking to people about, you know…. And so I think for me when I think of Snapchat and what-not, mostly I’m thinking of much more of a quick communication that doesn’t go very deep as opposed to a, you know, one that takes longer and maybe contains, I don’t know… I hope you understand what I’m trying to get at. I’m not against the other kind but it just, I think there’s levels of communication and it’s not just in their social media, I think it’s how they speak to each other in general, or don’t. You know, looking at their phones but in the same room, that kind of thing. I will be honest, my easiest way of communicating with my 18-year-old is I’ll text him – I’ll hear him in his bedroom and instead of calling up the stairs I might forget that because then I get a grumpy response: I’ll just text him. I’ll be like “can you be down in 5 minutes for dinner”. “OK mum” and he’ll be down. And I figure this works. [laughter]. I’ve learnt to use things to my advantage. So…. But I think that’s pretty much my, I don’t blog… you know what? The reason is, when we went to the mission field, the big difference for us being there from about 2000, we had email, was everybody here in [N. American Country] and I suppose in England, everybody was getting the up-to-date technology, and so it was part of, you know, you start a new job and you would learn a new bit of technology. We were on the field and that wasn’t happening and so you’d come back on furlough and people’d be like “oh, well do you have a cell phone?” and I was like, “well, actually no I don’t” you know. Which sounds crazy, but I didn’t. And so I think I would always be very keenly aware when we came back from the mission field that there was a lot of stuff I didn’t know. And honestly I did not have the time to figure it out. People’d be like, ‘oh this is how you set up your new blog page’ and I was like, ‘did I ever get the time to even open that email and look at it?’ I can’t even think about having a blog-page. You were just working flat out all the time. So I think that was a real lack of somebody sharing – they were saying ‘oh did you know you could do a blog?’ not ‘let me sit down with you for an hour and show you how to do a blog.’ There just wasn’t that… that didn’t happen.

INTERVIEWER: yeah, with Facebook I actually had someone sit down and show me how to do it to get an account.

JENNIFER: yeah, that’s right. Another missionary who had just come to the field who was slightly younger than me but she’d been in [N. American Country] for the last 15 years and had been – I said to her, ‘what do you do?’ and she said ‘I do this’. I said ‘show me’ so we sat down and within two hours set it all up. I got cracking and then from there I was good. But I do think partly, you know… and that may be something that, you know, comes so naturally into the younger generation because they’ve grown up with it, em, and maybe there’s more tools I could use, but… yeah… I just, I don’t know what they are right now. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: OK, I think we’ll leave it there. It’s been absolutely fascinating.