**Interview 003 Pseudonym: Lucy**

INTERVIEWER: Could you confirm for me that you’ve read the information about the study and that you’re in agreement to take part in this interview?

LUCY: I have. I have read all the documents that you sent me and I do agree to take part in the interview and be recorded.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you. Just to start off with, can you tell me a bit about your faith history?

LUCY: So, my parents are believers and I was raised in a Christian household. They’re not particu… they’re quite sort of British middle class about their faith, so they’re not completely really like open and er vocal about it. But through various ways and means I did, er, come to true faith and got baptised at the age of ten. And, em, have been muddling along ever since, trying to get to know God better and failing sometimes and doing well at other times. So it’s been a steady journey but I can’t really say that there’s ever been a time that I haven’t known God or about God at least.

INTERVIEWER: Have there been any challenges – times when you’ve struggled with issues of your faith?

LUCY: I had quite a rough time when I first came back to the field in 2013. Cos I’d been involved in a very sort of intense community church and then I was here by myself and was very much responsible for my own spiritual walk. And I floundered quite a bit. So I think then was probably quite a dark time. And, maybe for two years or so that was quite a struggle.

INTERVIEWER: So how did you come to be doing what you’re doing?

LUCY: Em, so … I didn’t particularly aim to be a missionary or anything. It was never something on my radar. Although I did enjoy doing short term missions when I was on summer holidays from school. And did a couple of Crusader or Scripture Union type things.

INTERVIEWER: Was that in the UK or overseas?

LUCY: Yeah, in the UK. I grew up in the UK, so …. I mean, I’ve always liked travelling. My parents have been well off enough that we travelled quite a bit when I was growing up. So I kind of wanted to do something to combine that in my summer holidays and that started me on doing little short term missions. But, em, the main reason I ended up with [Mission Organisation] is that I was doing a maths degree and got to the end of my maths degree and thought ‘I don’t know what to do with my life’. And figured that the best way to think about this was to spend some time in mission – a year or two years – just serving God, trying to do something useful while I figured out, you know, what I wanted to do. So, em, so that’s what I did. And I kind of looked around at options, thinking along the lines of doing something financial, or I don’t know, helping out in finances. But, [Mission Organisation] had an advert on their website for this graduate international programme (title) and the – I think it was on the website, I don’t think it was something somebody said to me, but I think it was actually on the website that it said that mathematicians make good linguists. So, you know, don’t rule this out. So I thought, ‘oh well, I’ll investigate.’ So I went to an open day, em, was quite excited by what I heard. You know, they said that they would give us the training and such and that I could potentially be useful for two years, you know, that they could send me somewhere I could do something and then, you know it’s not such a long commitment that if I didn’t like it it would be the end of the world. So that’s what I did. I signed on. Did the training. And, er, really loved being… I was in [country] for the first two years as well, so… that’s how I ended up coming back here. Got to the end of those two years and thought, I don’t want to decide while I’m still on the field. So I wanted to go home and spend some time at home with my parents and praying about it and … After about a month or so I decided that I did want to commit to long term. But the problem was then that I didn’t have a supporting sending church. So that’s what I kind of had a bit of a gap in between those two years and coming back in 2013. I was back in the UK for two years and then studying further linguistics for a year. So… yeah. And then haven’t really looked back. Really love what I’m doing. So I kind of fell into it.

INTERVIEWER: What’s the main sort of focus of what you’re doing?

LUCY: I’m doing linguistics for – depending on how you count it – for five different languages here. So as they need it, helping them with their writing system, making decisions about how to write complicated things like word boundary stuff is usually the issue. So from the initial stages, actually doing the analysis on the language and figuring out what kind of consonants and vowels need to be used to represent the language and if we need tone represented and things like that. I’ve worked with a couple of languages from the very beginning like that. But there are a couple of languages that have been started for a long time and have been going since before I was here, and they’re kind of, they’re more established in their writing system but they still have problems. So I’ve been trying to untangle those problems and find a solution that they’re happy with. So that’s usually what occupies me. Spelling.

INTERVIEWER: Sounds fascinating. So, can you tell me a bit about where you live, what it’s like?

LUCY: Yeah. So I live in south west [country], in a town called [town], which is in what they call the southern highlands. So we’re at about 1700 metres here, so a little bit thin on the air if you’re walking around and up and down hills which there are plenty of. But it’s a beautiful place and because it’s higher up it’s not usually too hot, which is nice. It’s em, [country] is really quite an easy-going country in many ways. There’s not… People are very friendly, well, I should say people are very friendly to most Westerners. They’re not particularly fond of Chinese. So if you’re Chinese you probably have a different point of view. But, yeah, I’ve always felt very welcome here. Obviously there are cultural differences. But, er, I think this is, it’s a very friendly society in general. And, yeah, there’s not too much tension. I mean there are obviously there are things going off every once in a while between Muslims and Christians, but for the most part it’s very safe in that sense, because of the policies of the first president of [country] and his kind of, er, you know, everyone get along kind of attitude. Yeah, so it’s a really nice place, I do like [country].

INTERVIEWER: So how have you found adapting to living in a different country?

LUCY: Em, for the most part ok. Em, there are obviously always those moments where you have a misunderstanding with people and you don’t understand why things aren’t, why you’re not communicating. And those happen, you know, even now after being here for nine years. So, that can be frustrating. I haven’t… I don’t think I’ve ever experienced a time where I’ve just got completely frustrated with the culture and, em, you know, just wanted to go home. I don’t think I’ve ever got to that point. Em, I think possibly because most [country]ns are very gracious and you know, if there has been offense caused usually they just don’t show it. So I might not realise that I’m causing offence. There have been times when cultural difference have… There have been a couple of people that I … em… I mean, so visiting people is very big in this culture. And have often felt that I can never live up to people’s expectations of me because I will never visit them as much as they want. And, they very rarely come and visit me. And usually because I’m younger than the people that I’m visiting and in this culture it is the younger person who goes to visit the older person. So I do often feel like I’m disappointing people because it almost seems like it’s never enough. You know, even if I’m visiting them like once a month or something and that’s about all I can manage with, you know, just Saturdays to do it on, em…. But yeah, yeah, for the most part I think I can cope with that. I don’t know if they can. But I do wish that I had more [country-an] friends and maybe, maybe the fact that I’m not as flexible as I could be in those things is a result of, I mean, means that I have not been able to find as many [country-an] friends.

INTERVIEWER: So are you attending a local church there?

LUCY: Yeah. So there’s a Baptist church not far away that I go to the morning service. It’s in [local language], so it’s just me that’s the odd one out. And I’ve been going there for… I guess for most the time I’ve been here, so seven years now. Or six years I guess cause I found it at the end of my first year. And it does frustrate me. It’s not an experience I enjoy most of the time. But I do, I do feel the need to go to a local church and not just, em, avoid it because it’s difficult. Which is what some of my colleagues do. Everyone chooses their own way of doing it, but…. I don’t really see my local church here as my – the place where I get my spiritual input. We have a Bible study every Thursday that I see more as my church fellowship. And my going to church on a Sunday is more to be seen going to church and to … em… yeah, I guess, yeah, that’s it, to be seen going to church. Which is awful but true.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. So who’s this Bible study with that you do?

LUCY: It’s with a variety of people. I would say half of the people in the study are from [Mission Organisation], so from the same mission, although we’re [Mission Organisation B] here, so we’re seconded from [Mission Organisation] to [Mission Organisation B]. And it was originally set up by [Mission Organisation B] so it was one Bible study and since then we’ve kind of grown and split it into two. So I’m in the one that is majority singles, we meet a bit later. The other one is more families. And there’s, as I say about half of us are [Mission Organisation B] and the rest are a variety of different missions. We’ve got, yeah, we’ve got a couple, well a family who are originally from [African country] and they’re kind of here doing business but for a witness, we’ve got people who are working in orphanages, a couple working in hospitals. So a variety of people.

INTERVIEWER: Can you tell me a bit about your team as well? Are there lots of people there?

LUCY: So, the, in the office we’ve got about I guess it’s probably about thirty people now. And the majority of those are [country-an], so there’s about ten Westerners. Maybe eight. And the rest are [country-an] employees. So all the [country-ans] are employed and all the Westerners are seconded staff. And we’ve got a bit of a mix. We’ve got Americans, Dutch, British, German. So not a huge mix, but you know, with eight of us that’s still good representation from different nationalities. And that number has dwindled quite significantly recently because we’re having a lot of problems with work permits. So we’ve had quite a few people leave. And then from the [country-an] side we’ve had to stop some of the translation projects. I mean not completely for bad reasons. They reached the end of the New Testament and our project, or our, the funders want to see the community more involved. So they’ve kind of said, well we will act now as advisors, so if you want our help you are very welcome to come and seek our help, but we won’t administer the projects any more. So if you want to do the Old Testament you need to get your act together and do it yourself basically. So we’re kind of waiting to see if they’ll do that. But that means that we’re not employing those, I guess it was like six or seven [country-ans] that used to be working on those languages.

INTERVIEWER: Do you consider yourself a “missionary”? What does that term mean to you?

LUCY: [laugh] Em… I don’t really know what to make of that term because I, I don’t like the distinction between, I mean often when people are referring in our office to the Westerners and the [country-ans] they’ll refer to the Westerners as the “missionaries”. I don’t really like that because they’re as much missionaries as we are, because a lot of them are, you know, accepting lower pay than they might otherwise be able to get. You know, they’ve moved from their language communities to be in this central location in order to do what they’re doing. So, you know, just because they haven’t moved country, I feel it’s a little unfair to say that they’re not missionaries. And also, like, back at home I know people who are much more missional than I am here. I mean, yes I do a job that is considered a missionary role, but, and I do that for, you know, that’s my job. But you know, there are people back in my church who are doing regular jobs and then being completely missional in their free time. And I think of them probably more as missionaries than me. It’s just a label.

INTERVIEWER: Who have been your main models in faith in your life?

LUCY: ooh, mmm. Em, there’s been a lot of people who have kind of come and gone at various times. I don’t know that there’ve been people who’ve been there throughout my life, necessarily. I feel like God’s always provided usually women of faith that have kind of inputted into me at that time. So, for example, I was in the States for one year of my degree, one year of my maths degree. And, you know, while I was there God provided some wonderful people who were models there but I don’t really keep in touch with them now. You know, there’s people who come and go. I mean, I guess one lady who’s from my church who’s kind of my church contact – my sending church I mean – my church contact who’s I guess the current and long-lasting one. Em, yeah, and then from sort of books and things as well there have been people I really do – I had a book on Jonathan Edwards that I like to re-read that really inspires me, really encourages me. And then, Elizabeth Elliot I think, her writings as well have been a real encouragement. And to be honest anything that’s from the pastors of my church, so Tim Chester and Steve Timmis, they’re kind of, their writings have been very, er, formative I guess. And Tim, Tim Keller, oh yes, Tim Keller. Can’t forget Tim Keller. So there’s the book side and then real people. You know what I mean, they’re all real people. People who are actually in my life.

INTERVIEWER: Tell me a bit about what it’s like being single in mission and how you see that.

LUCY: I never particularly thought of myself as somebody who wanted to be single long-term. Like, I always imagined that I would be married by thirty. Yeah, that one’s passed.

INTERVIEWER: I married at 38, just so you know

LUCY: OK. I guess it’s been a process of every so often it raises its ugly head and I deal with it again. It did bother me more to start with I think, when I was first starting out in those first two years in particular. And when I, when I was thinking about coming back, that was a big factor in, you know, do I want to come back single? I mean, I know that being in England doesn’t ensure that you’re going to find a husband. So my final decision was like, God can bring me a husband wherever I am, if that’s what he wants for me. And I don’t want to not serve Him just because I’m waiting around to… waiting for somebody to drop into my lap. So, em, I did make that conscious decision and occasionally have to sort of remind myself of that. And of course, you know, hormones, joys… sometimes it just all gets too much, but I have a housemate here who’s also British, a couple of years older than me. And, you know, whenever we have those moments, we talk to each other about it and usually the other one’s… well even if the other one is in the same place and is kind of feeling down about it too, you can still encourage each other and commiserate and hopefully remind each other that, you know, that’s not all that it is. I don’t … I have read books about like singles in mission and things like that, and I don’t feel like some people have felt that, er, my colleagues look down on me or have given me a greater work load. I mean, generally the singles in our office do work harder than the couples, but then we don’t have the commitments back at home of children and you know… we generally do it voluntarily, it’s not because we’re made to. So, yeah, I’ve never felt disadvantaged because of it.

INTERVIEWER: Some of that might be something I wrote. The book “Single Mission” – I wrote a chapter in that that was kind of things people had said to me or friends of mine.

LUCY: Oh right.

INTERVIEWER: So it wasn’t me specifically but a friend of mine had had that experience of being given extra things to do and then you go home and you’ve got to cook your own dinner.

Do you think, if you ever did marry, have children, do you think you would do that where you are?

LUCY: Well, I mean, despite what I said, you know, I really do believe that God can bring me a husband wherever I am in the world. I obviously, I don’t really see it happening here in [country] just because of the lack of people that I meet. So, and I also realise that, em, it’s not realistic for me to expect a husband to join me in the mission I’ve chosen. If he has a heart for mission then perhaps he’s got his own path, and particularly somebody who’s my age and therefore is likely to already be on that path. So, I mean, great if this person wants to join me here that would be awesome and if we’re both still allowed to live in [country] and work in [country]. And I would, I think that would be great. I don’t know about, the whole children thing has been up and down for me in the sense that I see how much of a … a… I don’t want to say this wrong. I mean, children are obviously a burden. They are a joy, but they’re a burden. And having children in ministry does mean that basically the wife cannot work. Or can do very little. And I don’t know that I want children that much, to just stop doing what I’m doing. And I know that’s a huge decision and can’t be made by yourself anyway, so it’s not like I would rule that out before marriage. But, I have seriously considered just not bothering with that, for the sake of being able to continue doing what I’m doing.

INTERVIEWER: Do you have plans for the future? Do you intend to stay? Do you know how long?

LUCY: Yeah, well, as I say the problem at the moment is work permits and mine is due at the end of November. So, all being well if I get a renewed permit then great I would love to stay. And I would love to stay as long as there is work for me to do meaningfully, to do here. But we are, because of these problems with getting work permits, we are trying to hand over more and more to the [country-ans]. And, em, so I don’t want to, you know, me being here to stand in the way of that. But, and also, I know that even with the few people who’ve had to leave already, it’s changed sort of team dynamics and stuff and I realise that if, for example, I was the only expat here, I don’t know, I might have different views on how long I want to continue. I like to think I wouldn’t, but I probably would. Em, so, yeah, all being well I’d like to continue but, em, I realise that might not be practical.

INTERVIEWER: How do you take major decisions, like deciding to go and live there or whatever?

LUCY: well, I would say that I’m not the kind of person who would ever say that I hear God speaking to me or guiding in sort of really tangible ways sort of that I can look back on and say that was God’s leading me and therefore I have to trust in that. It’s more a kind of, I pray about it and, em, ask God to close doors if I’m doing the wrong thing, or just to, you know, give me some feeling that this is not the right thing. I’ve always struggled with the whole idea of, you know, guidance and hearing God’s voice. But generally that has been my policy: kind of walk through doors until those doors shut. And certainly with coming to [country] the first time that was really what it felt like. All the doors were open, you know. Especially with the whole sort of, mathematicians make good linguists, you know, it was kind of really obvious, like come, serve here! And, em, to a certain extent I also feel that, em, I, I mean I can serve God wherever I am and it’s not that he doesn’t care what I do but… it’s… how to put it?.... I mean it’s not about sort of my emotions and how good I’m feeling about things, because I don’t want, you know, if I’m having a really bad day, to say ok that’s the door closed on [country], but, em, you know I also feel like there are seasons and if God is, you know, being married is a good thing, not being married is a good thing, but if marriage calls me away from the field then I’m sure God can still use me in that context as much as he can here.

INTERVIEWER: Are there people that you would talk to about things?

LUCY: Em, yeah. I mean, my, so my sending church is very involved in things and they do… they’ve normally got an elder assigned to keep in contact with me. And then there’s this lady who’s, who I mentioned before, who skypes me quite often. And I would usually talk about stuff with them, I mean bigger things particularly. Specifically if I was to lose my work permit and have to decide what to do, I really would involve them in that decision. And of course my colleagues here, try and get their opinion on things like that. And that’s definitely part of decision processes. You know, what trusted Christians around me are thinking and my parents as well I think would be another major influence.

INTERVIEWER: how are you, obviously this is part of it, but how are you supported? Prayer, finance, all those sort of things?

LUCY: Prayer, finance. I have newsletters I send out every month and, em, to my prayer supporters. And yeah, a significant proportion comes from my church, financial and prayer certainly. They very much want to keep the prayer in the minds of people in the church, particularly people who haven’t met me or haven’t met me very often, because of course I’ve been here for seven years and there are people there that generally don’t know who I am. But then there are also friends and family. Quite a lot of my supporters are friends and family. And people who sort of signed on for the first two years and sort of carried on afterwards. They didn’t know what they were signing up for. Yeah. I’ve, I feel like I’ve got a really good solid prayer base actually. I’ve never, thankfully, never had financial problems in terms of like lack of support. I’ve always felt like I’ve had enough and … often a little bit more to be able to help others, which is great.

INTERVIEWER: How and how much do you use social media?

LUCY: Em. I don’t ever or very rarely post anything on Facebook. I am signed up to Facebook. I generally use it as a tool for finding out what’s going on in my friends’ lives who don’t really stay in contact with me. I mean people who I’d be very happy to meet up with when I’m back home but they’re not the kind of people who would email me or anything like that. So, it’s like oh, you’ve got engaged, you know. Good to find that out. Just to sort of avoid the really big shocks when I do come home. Em.. yeah, so that’s probably how I use it most. I’ve never been involved in Twitter or any of the other ones. And… I did use to have a blog. Well I do still kind of have a blog. I had a blog online and people could read that. But anyone could read that and then I – I got one message from somebody I’d never met before about my blog. And it wasn’t a bad message or anything but it made me realise just how sort of out there it was, so I then made it more private. And then, em, some people asked to be emailed the blog instead of them going onto the blog and I ended up just sort of shifting it to email. And it just being a kind of thing for extra information about [country], nothing to do really with my ministry as such, just kind of ‘what life is like here’. And I think the requirement of it not being checked, like every blog being checked, was that I didn’t really mention my work. And so it wasn’t really anything to do with work it was more life, life and stuff. So… and then I think actually I tried to go on my blog on the website recently and it’s been taken down or something cos I haven’t done anything on it for so long. That kind of fizzled out. But… yeah… that’s not really social media anyway.

INTERVIEWER: So that’s…. and do you communicate with friends and family this way, skype, that kind of thing?

LUCY: My parents aren’t really into Skype. I mean, they do do Skype. My mum is much more of an email person. She’ll just send off a one-line email if she thinks of something. She gets a bit more frozen if she has to talk on the phone or Skype. So, not so often with the Skype with my parents. My sister, who has two kids, she’s been very good and she sort of Skypes with me ideally once a week but it’s usually when she remembers. And she’s actually moved to [Asian country] now, so we’ve been more intentional about doing that, even more so because I won’t be able to see her when I’m back at home unless she’s able to be there too. And then my, I’ve got two other older sisters and they’re much more random in when they Skype and when they email. Yeah. I’m not quite so close with them, so that’s just normal.

INTERVIEWER: OK. I think that’s all I wanted to ask about, unless there’s anything you think I’ve missed.

LUCY: I don’t really know what the focus of your thesis is. I mean obviously Millennials in mission.

INTERVIEWER: I think what I’m wondering is… so it’s a very unusual thing for this generation in Britain, having grown up in a very secular society, to still make that decision. So what I’m wondering is are Millennial missionaries like old fashioned missionaries and not like the rest of Millennials, or are they taking traits of being Millennial and kind of adapting what it means to be a missionary. It’s that kind of question. I got into it through being, I was involved with Member Care in Europe. We were doing a conference and a few of us were asked to do a presentation about Millennials. We really didn’t know anything and we threw something together and all the mission leaders were saying ‘please, we want more, we want to know more. We don’t know what to do with these people.’ That was a while ago now, so hopefully they’ve started to get more of an idea but there was a sense that there’s something different.

LUCY: Oh there is. I mean I’ve definitely noticed. I wouldn’t necessarily term myself a ‘career missionary’ cos I’m not, I haven’t had a career yet, but it’s…. I don’t really feel like ‘career missionaries’ exist much any more. We have some in our branch and they’re more at retirement age. Those who’ve been in the branch you know for twenty-five years, twenty years plus. But I feel like people are much more sort of fast turnover these days and it does make for problems in mission because you know you build up the experience and then you lose it and you have to do it again and you lose it. We’ve had so much turnover with people. And I think that is part of the problem, the Millennial thing. And also people don’t really chose careers any more, so like life-long careers, they’re sort of in something for the short term. Which I guess is how I started so … you know

INTERVIEWER: I picked that up… That’s something I’ve noticed. Just what I’ve noticed in my own contacts, is people often don’t make a long-term commitment: they commit for a couple of years at a time. So often they’ll end up doing the same length of time, but not having seen it from the beginning.

LUCY: yeah, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Hopefully it will be of use…..