**Interview 017 Pseudonym: Claire**

INTERVIEWER: The first thing I want to ask is just, tell me a bit about your faith history.

CLAIRE: My parents are Christian, I grew up going to church. To an Anglican church. And probably feel like I – like personally – understood and decided to be a Christian when I was thirteen or something, and was like confirmed after that. And yeah, have been in mainly Church of England Anglican churches since then.

INTERVIEWER: How did that happen – like deciding that it was your own faith?

CLAIRE: I think I always kind of had a sense of like God existing in a general way, like I never really questioned God as a big thing existing. But I think it was more like, more felt like just something someone really far away that wasn’t that connected to my life early on. And then, I think like, I had a period of time right before I, I guess, became a Christian where I just felt suddenly aware that I couldn’t like be the person that I wanted to be or like even when I tried to do the right things or be a good person, I was just kind of somehow aware that I wasn’t, like reaching that – what I would even want for myself let alone what anyone else would want or whatever. And that – I think at that time I read like a children’s novel about Christianity and it just felt real for the first time that Jesus actually cared about me as an individual and died for me as an individual because he knows that I needed it I guess. So like that He wanted me to have forgiveness and like a new, like real life in Him that I couldn’t have on my own. And yeah, that just felt like, oh he’s actually a personal God who wants to know me as a person and have a relationship and I have a choice like whether to enter into that relationship or not. But it felt like an obvious, felt like an obvious choice, like an obvious decision because I kind of already had that – I already felt a need for it. I just hadn’t like somehow put the dots together of really grasping whatever I’d heard in church, that it actually, like connecting it with like a personal like human God.

INTERVIEWER: So would you say your faith has been challenged in any way over the years?

CLAIRE: I think, like, l…. like, yes. I think like naturally I have had an underlying faith in God that has never completely left or like felt like it wasn’t there in like a broader sense. But I think, I think the biggest challenges were like when I was living overseas and just experiencing things that felt really hard and the fact that I had kind of gone there feeling God’s leading to go to that location, I think that was the biggest challenge to me of just having the question “how can this be so hard?” Like, how can I be experiencing, like feeling like I’m suffering, when God was the one who like led me to be in this situation, kind of thing. I think that’s been the biggest challenge of just like, is God really good? Is God really good to me? I think that’s been it.

INTERVIEWER: So how did you get from that thirteen year old decision through to the decision to go overseas?

CLAIRE: I mean, I was going to church always. And I think, like, looking back, like, we had some, like, kind of youth group thing about sharing our faith when I was a teenager that like I think must have been some kind of foundation but I have almost no memory of it. And then when I was at university I was involved in the Christian Union and doing like Bible studies with them. And involved with [organisation] as well and they had a weekly like evangelism time that I went to sometimes. But I think there was like some key like moments of in the Bible study that I was part of, of reading passages and realising like the Bible talks so much about God’s heart for the lost and the nations that I think initially what was new to me was just the lost in general, that that is like a big part of God’s nature and character and heart and that then, like, I remember clearly like being in a Bible study of like Matthew 28 and it feeling like I for the first time realised that God, that God like wanted every Christian to be involved in like making disciples and not just like being a Christian and going to church but like being involved in God’s plans and desires for other people to know Him and follow Him. And I – like I was really shy and like mainly silent most of my growing up and even at university in the first year I was reading these things I remember like praying probably for several months to God, just saying I see that this is part of what my life with you is about and what you have for me and everyone else being Christian, but I can’t imagine ever talking about my faith with anyone else and I want to do that because I think you care about that, but I can’t. Like, I don’t know if I can. So if you really do want me to, help me to do that. And like I think I just eventually did start talking to people about my faith. And then, er, I went, I was invited and went on a couple of short term mission trips with [organisation] when I was in my last year at university and then did an internship in [UK city] for two years and while I was in [UK city] did the Perspectives course on world missions and that was my church and that was the thing that went from like “oh I want to be involved, I want my work and my life to be involved in mission and sharing the gospel” to like “oh I want like this actually includes other countries not like just the UK.” So like, it kind of like almost felt like just God had given me a heritage of growing up with so many experiences of Christians and church and different things developing and helping me grow in my faith and following God and, em, just felt like, oh well, the next step of that is to be that for other people and like when I heard stories – it was kind of hearing stories of other missionaries sharing, that would come and share about their experiences in other countries that just kind of, like, resonated with me. I was like, oh, this is like, I know that God loves these people as well as people in the UK. He just clearly does care about all people knowing Him and if there are places where there are less opportunities for people to hear about him then I would want to go to those places and be like called to be able to be a part of that. And then that’s … and then I applied to go overseas with [organisation].

INTERVIEWER: So, you mentioned there hearing stories from other people, who have been kind of your models in your faith or in your mission work?

CLAIRE: Hmm. Do you mean like specific people or what are those people like?

INTERVIEWER: Specific people in your whole journey with God – who would be the key people who had played a role, or not even necessarily people that you know. Sometimes when I ask that question sometimes people say biographies they’ve read as well. So whatever – either way.

CLAIRE: I think the main like initial key person was there’s this couple who came – I don’t even remember their names – someone… I don’t remember their names, but they lived in like [Asian country] for like fifteen, twenty years and like still live in a Muslim country now but, yeah. I think when they came to talk they were just temporarily back but still living in [county] and like they talked about just even like really embracing where they were living and I remember them talking about like you start to be effective in another culture after you’ve been there for like five years. And like I had that in my mind when I went overseas, like, yeah ok, this isn’t like “oh I’m going to change the world” and I’m only going to go for one year and I’ll have done my thing, but like just engaging in a language and people and culture is like a deep thing and not like a, yeah. And like I don’t…. like they like told stories of their young children having rocks thrown at them as they went to school. I think because of being Christian or white, I’m not sure. I think like the value of like we see this as so worth it that we’re willing to like give a lot to it because it is worth it kind of thing. And I think similarly like there’s a couple when I was in Asia who’d been there for like twenty years and, em, I don’t know why they felt like a model, just their faithfulness and just like really loving the people that they knew there. I feel like, like I’ve read quite a lot of biographies but I’m not sure that I immediately ever felt like I was modelling myself on them because they always seem so extreme – like Hudson Taylor and like all of the people like that little lady who went across Siberia… you know, like all the kind of older stories just felt like – like I like hearing about their relationship with God and their faith but like I’m not sure I even want to model my practical lifestyle on the things that they did because it just seemed so extreme. So I feel like the models have been more like people that I know and have met who like are like amazing great people but the main… but they’re like real people and just kind of being faithful.

INTERVIEWER: so when you were in Asia, what would you do to keep your own faith alive?

CLAIRE: yeah it’s quite hard – well it was easier and harder at the same time, compared to the UK. Like, I think in some ways like my whole life revolved around my faith so there were so many reminders of God every day just in the nature of like we had prayer meetings a few times a week and em like when I was meeting with students I was talking about God every time with them and reading the Bible with them so kind of because my work as well as my personal life like had just a lot of references to God in it, it would have been hard to forget that he existed, that he was around. And I think that was, I think that like especially… I mean sometimes, like, the ministry side of like talking about God was helpful to my faith because I remembered as I was talking about him that I liked him and that I think often like the team, like prayer times together, that was really nice and I think also just having, working with other people who, like all of us had like made a really big decision based solely on our faith to go to another country and do these things so just there was just doing it together just kind of kept you going I think in some ways. Because it’s like well, yeah this is what, yeah we’ve all seen this as like God’s work. But also, like, there wasn’t… I lived there for eight years and there were four – three or four years in the middle – where I lived in a city that had a church that was English speaking and that I was legally allowed to go to by showing my passport to get in. But the other four years I, there wasn’t an, the city didn’t have an international church and the like underground church… like sometimes there were ones that they would have been ok with me going, but they might, it might have led to them being arrested if I had gone so I didn’t go. And we just met as a team, like me and my colleagues just did like a church service together where we listened to a sermon online and had worship together. But I think that, like, the aspect of being part of a faith community is bigger than like six people - that couldn’t ever really be replicated in another way. But I think listening to sermons online was probably one of the main things, like, just listening to loads of [famous preacher] basically. Even like, I think like my first year when I was there, it was just a hard year adapting to being there and like I would go for like a run almost every day and listen to a [preacher] sermon as I was running and just talk to God and tell him how difficult it was. I think those were like key moments of like hearing from God and being with him. And like watching, watching live worship times – not live, but

INTERVIEWER: yeah – recorded live

CLAIRE: Yeah online. Almost had a feeling of like being… like singing along and being able to almost be a part of the like gathering of people worshiping God together. That was like really helpful.

INTERVIEWER: was it ok to do that – I mean like security wise?

CLAIRE: Yeah, people couldn’t really speak English much where I was so, sometimes if we wanted to be secretive about what we were doing we would just speak in English. So yeah when I was listening to those things they were in English so it was …

INTERVIEWER: How did your friends and family react when you made this decision to go?

CLAIRE: I actually almost can’t remember because it’s a while ago. But my – everyone was very shocked actually. Just like I was almost shocked! Like it wasn’t like a completely expected decision, or like a thing that I would do. So, partly it was just like ‘oh this is quite surprising that you’re doing this.’ I think my parents were like a mix. Well like, a mixture of like proud and like wanting me to follow God and also anxious about what it would be like for me.

INTERVIEWER: I spent fourteen years in Romania and I used to tell people that I thought my parents would be – it was like they would be really pleased if it was their best friends’ child.

CLAIRE: [laughing] yeah

INTERVIEWER: that kind of mix of proud but ‘actually I’d rather you were closer.’

CLAIRE: Yeah. I think like given the range of options of responses, they responded like very well. And yeah, I think mainly my mum was just – I think the first like couple of years like from when I decided to leave and then when I was there the first couple of years, just she was just very anxious about if I was ok, like. And then, yeah I remember because actually I was in Asia but then a couple of years ago was thinking about moving to [another region]. And I had a conversation with my parents. Like I remember we went on a walk and when I told them that I was feeling like God might be leading me to move to [other region], and they said literally nothing. Just silence for a couple of minutes. And then they started talking about something else. And I think we might have talked about it again like six months later. There was literally – we did not talk about it for quite a while. I think it shocked – I think “shocked” has probably been like the theme. But yeah. Yeah I think my, my mum especially, because I was like raising financial support to go like when I first decided to go and I remember she was like more, like, effected by that process than I was. Like she was very unsure about me asking people for money and like worried that I wouldn’t get it, but then any time someone did donate money, like she would often like cry. She was just like overwhelmed that God was providing for me, so I think that whole journey was like a journey for her as well as for me. Yeah. They’ve been like, they’ve always been encouraging of me to follow God’s leading, even if they don’t necessarily love it.

INTERVIEWER: so you said, you were there eight years – is that right? So when you went initially, how long did you think you were going for?

CLAIRE: Well, I had the couple who’d told me that you had to be there more than five years to be effective, so I had that in my mind. But I signed up for one year initially, and then at the end of that year I signed up for another year. And then at the end of the second year I signed up for like long-term, indefinite. Yeah, I kind of – like I kind of wanted to go long-term, but I didn’t know if I could handle it or how it would be. And then even at the end of the first year I was like, this is actually quite hard. I’m still not sure – maybe I could do one more year. And then at the end of the second year it was kind of better by then so it was an easier decision.

INTERVIEWER: Is that the way they work as an organisation then, to say like you just commit for a year to start with and then…?

CLAIRE: It’s common. There’s like – you can do – it’s almost like an internship. So you can do – but I’d actually already done an internship, but you can do up to two years of internship before you’re full time. But I’d already done two years of internship in England, so then I like kind of, I already joined the organisation as full-time before I went overseas, but then I still was like well I’ll be full-time with the organisation but I’ll do kind of the internship route of being overseas again. So it’s normal to have 1-2 years of that. And then it’s often like a three year commitment or whatever, but that’s not really like a set thing. I think some people – because actually when I was, when I applied to go overseas the organisation was like I could go to [other country] that was an option, but in [other country] they were like oh we only want people who are already committed long-term to at least three years. And I was like, oh, I don’t know if I’m ready to do that. So I didn’t go to [other country].

INTERVIEWER: so what are you doing now and what are you thinking for the future? Because you said about [other region]….

CLAIRE: yeah, well I got… I felt like really depressed at the end of my eight years and that’s why I moved back to the UK. So I was kind of thinking of moving to [other region] like around the time when I got really depressed and then I was just too ill and then I had to come back to the UK and that’s just put on hold any future plans. That was a couple of years ago and I am healthy – I think healthy – now, but that’s just made me want to have a bit of time in a stable location and build up some more like resilience or just like be a bit stronger and like, er, I think I wouldn’t go to or go overseas unless there were like certain things in place. Like I had a certain number of teammates I work with – I think ideally like there would be like a church that I could go to. Just maybe a few different things. So I’d like to go overseas – I would still quite like to go to a [different country] in the future, but probably not for a … I probably won’t even think about it for another year and see.

INTERVIEWER: do you call yourself a missionary and what do you understand by the term?

CLAIRE: Yeah, I do. I mean even now I’m in the UK I still work for a mission organisation. So, er, I mean… it’s a really interesting question. And … like in some ways, like if you just use the word ‘mission’ but not ‘missionary’ then it’s like oh well, all Christians that’s part of what it is to be a Christian is to be an ambassador of Christ and to be a witness and mission is just like sharing Jesus with people who don’t know him, so that’s, you don’t have to … you can be that anywhere. Or maybe, but maybe being a missionary is being sent to a different group of people but I’m currently with my own people in the UK, but I probably would still consider myself a missionary. And … yeah like I think. I feel like a bit confused, or like uncertain myself of what I think, how I feel about this term or what I think about it and … I think the tag-line of my organisation in the UK is [detail omitted] which is like very intentionally not ‘us-and-them’ and but if you go to another country then it feels quite intentional to like… you might be [detail omitted] together but if you’ve gone there for the purpose of them discovering then it feels a bit more like a different dynamic. But, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: where shall we go? I’ve got a list of questions but I’m jumping around! So you mentioned raising support – how were you supported? In different ways not just the money. Who supported you? How did that all work?

CLAIRE: so, yeah, the way that my organisation does it is like everyone’s salary is through financial donations but also the way that it’s talked about is like ministry partners, finding people or churches who want to really partner with you in what you’re doing and have the same like vision or like they want to support you with prayer and / or finances – always with prayer and sometimes the finances! And for me that looked like I asked lots of people and churches if they wanted to partner with me with what I was doing and like have probably like 60 people that financially support me in like a long-term way and probably like 200 people that get a prayer letter that I send out and maybe – hopefully - some of them pray for me. And it’s just like I think a couple of churches who consider me like a mission partner of their church, have been like, especially one of them has genuinely been like a really strong support for me in like every way and they are really committed to support me financially but they just like really stay in touch with me and like connect with me and want to see me in person and genuinely want to know every aspect of like how I’m doing, how the work is going, and they’re just, it just feels like they’re very invested in like yeah like supporting, giving me support, giving me advice, praying for me, like when I was depressed and moving back to the UK they like took the initiative to contact the HR person from my organisation to talk to them about what support I was receiving and to make sure that I was getting enough support and to see what gaps there were, if they could help. Someone offered to pick me up at the airport if I needed it, like… So, yeah it feels like… there’s probably a spectrum of like support or like people who kind of like to hear what I’m doing and maybe give some money or maybe prayer like some individuals and church people who are like, feel like real partners, like I couldn’t do without them. We’re doing it together, they’ve contributed like so much of their prayers and themselves to what I’m doing that, yeah, that’s ….

INTERVIEWER: how did you find working in a team? That kind of thing… how did that all work?

CLAIRE: I wouldn’t want to not work in a team! But it is sometimes quite challenging when you’re in a team.

INTERVIEWER: That’s a very good perspective!

CLAIRE: [laughing] Yeah, like I know… just even my personality… like I wouldn’t do well just being alone or just trying to do things by myself. And even like, sometimes I have to just tell myself like “community is like a Biblical principle” like even outside of whether it’s a work team or not, just being with Christians and having, like, being in some level of community relationship with Christians is like a good thing according to God – well it can be a good thing to like move towards and not away from. Yeah I think… I’ve been on such a range of teams and when I was overseas I’ve never been with any other Briitsh people. I was with a [N. American] team for two years, and then an [Asian] team for four years, and then a [N. American] team for two years, and I was always like the token British person. And I think, I mean the [Asian] team was my favourite and I think by that point, like I was fluent in the language and I had lived long enough in the culture that they did kind of accept me as one of their own and I felt like very part, like I belonged and like we were generally together and pulling in the same direction and like I got on really well with them. I think both of the other teams, I just didn’t feel very understood most of the time. And, just like we were so different. And also because I think always lived with – or almost always lived with – teammates so it wasn’t just like working team but also like living. So like, I think both my first and second year for different reasons I was like praying almost every day for God to help me with my relationship with especially my housemate that I was living with because the first, it was just like strangers and people I’d never met and then we lived together and they are your closest people almost like that. The first girl, the first year, was just really slow and indecisive, I just found it really hard to live with her. And the second year I lived with a girl who’s really blunt and didn’t ever understand what I was saying because I was too indirect. So just like, it was just so… just being aware that we’re so different and even though we have the same like goals for work and relationship with God, just as people just the way that we naturally would do things would not be the same. So I think like, and I mean that’s true now – even my team in the UK, but in the UK I have more relational networks that my team is not like, they’re not my main people, like I have family and church and small group and friends outside of… just like more network of friends. So I think overseas the team was partly, was more difficult because it was more of a sentiment of it was almost my only support. So if it wasn’t a good support then, then I didn’t have anything else to fall back on. But yeah.

INTERVIEWER: so tell me about your work/life balance.

CLAIRE: Erm, yeah that was… I think it was really a struggle for a number of reasons. Like the Asian culture – like Christian culture – was like you work really hard, you don’t take any holiday, you work every day of the week. You don’t take, like even when it’s like public holidays, you don’t take holidays. And I think our required, like our expected hours was like minimum of forty, like between forty and sixty hours a week – that was the expectation. So people were working like close to sixty hours a week and that was kind of felt like normal. And I, like, that’s not normal coming from the UK and just like, I didn’t really, I couldn’t really handle working that much but I always felt like guilty if I was the only one who wasn’t. So I think like – well the last like two years I just asked to work – maybe just one year – to work just four days a week. Because then I was then different – like it felt like it was either work like seven days a week or be part time. So I was like well if I’m part time then people can’t ask me to work seven days a week because it’s like a clear thing that I’m not working more than the number of days which is like four. Maybe working five would have been ok but that felt like not really an option. And I don’t know, it was kind of like different seasons, but in general I think it was not good. The average general was not a good work life balance. I think my team like had a conversation one time where the general consensus was it has to be ok to be talking about work all the time because work is ministry and you don’t stop being a Christian, you never stop being a Christian, so it’s always, it always has to be acceptable to talk about ministry at any time and like if we’re having dinner together in the evening it should be a normal acceptable thing to talk about ministry. And I remember being like, I really don’t want that to be the norm. I really don’t want that; I really do want some space. To have some like time that’s a different thing. But that was the consensus so I just had to either not eat dinner with them or be willing to talk about work. Yeah, I mean, and I think … I don’t know. I like to blame it on like the culture, actually I do genuinely think that was the culture… but I think even just personally, like, like the … I felt like my drive to go overseas was like quite strong and my motivation was like quite strong. Like, I really want to help people know God and I really want my life to be about this, so it’s almost hard to like pull that back sometimes to be like, oh, my life can be about that *and* I can have time off. Like those two things can exist at the same time. Yeah. Yeah I feel like I had a lot of conversations with people about work/life balance but it was, like, hard to actually enact, change.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have, I guess like leaders back home that you could talk to about those kind of things? That had any like official role, or was it the local team deciding what they do?

CLAIRE: It was like, a mixture of – like I was technically employed by the UK and they were responsible for my care or whatever, but it was kind of like handed over to the national the like leadership – not like my local team leadership but the overall leadership of the organisation in the country that I was. So they like

[interruption from my cat]

CLAIRE: So they kind of set all the decisions of expectations. But there was like a lady that I talked to once every six months in the UK and they kind of just said like “we’ve got your back.” If you need us to talk to local leadership about anything, we will. But they didn’t like really take any initiative of like asking about those things or like, yeah, like, yeah. I think, like I asked, there was like one time when I was about to move cities into a team that was like really intense and I knew that they had like mandatory exercise like three mornings a week at like 6:45 and like, like worked 9pm Monday and Tuesday every week. And I was like, I really don’t like this. And I remember having conversations with the UK HR lady about that specifically, I was like I am worried about this. And she, she was just like, well you don’t have to do it – it’s your choice if you want to do it or not. But I didn’t want, I wanted to like… like I wanted to be there, I just didn’t want to do all of those things. So in the end I just did it, but then I was quite ill by the end. It was only… in the end I wasn’t very well. But like, yeah. I think… Like right at the end when I was like, I’m really ill I need to move back to the UK, then they were like very supportive. So I think in like crisis times or if I very strongly was like I need you to do this and step in, they always did, but they were very directed by me and I wasn’t really sure of what was the right thing to do, so.

INTERVIEWER: It kind of puts you in a strange position – you said you were the only British person, so if the British leadership are commenting on something then it’s clearly come from you.

CLAIRE: Oh yeah. That’s all. They could only comment about me. So it kind of had to be worth it in that sense. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: How did you find moving to a different culture?

CLAIRE: It’s such a like mixed… em… I think I was quite like shocked and overwhelmed for like a full year, looking back. At the time I’m not sure I really recognised it but like… er… like I didn’t really want to leave my house and I said no to like anything that was like an optional thing that was like a new thing, I said no to for like a full year because I just was like, I can barely handle all of the things that I have to do and all of the new experiences that I have to like feed myself and do life things that yeah, and like now, I’m like my normal functioning self, I quite like doing new things and I say yes to them quite a lot, but that year I said no to basically everything. I think I was, like, and actually… so I was there for a year and I came back to the UK for like two weeks after the year and I had like crazy dreams for one or two weeks and every day I woke up and I had no idea where I was. I think I was, I was like quite, like quite extremely was like, I’ve entered into this alien world and it’s everything, like there’s no familiar, nothing is familiar to anything that I know and like I think, it was a lot for my brain to process. So I think it took a while, but then eventually I like really liked it and, I don’t know, even at the time like I kind of liked it as well as it being difficult. I kind of really enjoyed like learning a language, that was really fun. And I really like meeting different people, just the learning of like, learning a whole culture and a different way of thinking and people that were different to people that I’d met before was really fun and enjoyable but also like really overwhelming and … I don’t think I handled it very well. Like I think, I think I like wasn’t very healthy for like a year or two because it was just so much, it was so intense, and I’d never been there before and I was there for like, I just went for like a full year and I didn’t know anyone else. So I think it was like really immersive. Yeah, it was just a mix of I liked it and it was like awful at the same time. And like now, that was like, and that was the first year or so, and then the second half of the time there I like loved. I don’t know. It was just like this is my home, I love this. I love these people and this culture and I, like, found it hard to be in the UK, felt more at home there than I did in the UK. So…

INTERVIEWER: You said you enjoyed being in an Asian team as well.

CLAIRE: Yeah and I was living with… those four years I like lived with local teammates and was on a local team and yeah I loved that.

INTERVIEWER: How do you go about taking major decisions? Things like changing location…

CLAIRE: Hmmm. Changing location within the country they just kind of told me almost that I had to and then I did. I think it was, yeah, very much like ministry needs is this – there’s this gap that needs a person, you’re a person, you must fill this gap. And yeah I think just like, it just felt like I have to obey the authority of the people who are in leadership over me and they know the bigger picture of all the different teams and … yeah, I mean I think the decision to go overseas was just kind of an idea planted in my head by God I think and that was all like directed by me and, it kind of just felt like things came together, like I really wanted to be on a team and there wasn’t a team for a while it seemed like I could join. Then just praying for a team and then there was like this team that was like oh we just have one girl and we don’t send teams with just one of either gender by themselves so we’ve been praying for a girl and we’re going to Asia. And I was like I’ve been praying for a team, this just feels like God has put us together. So that was that – that’s with that decision. And then within the country, just felt like I was pulled along by other people’s decisions. And, but I think with that just kind of a sense of Oh God… I don’t know, like, God directs the leaders and so I trust God and so I trust that he’s directing the leaders and so I trust their decisions, that was part of the process. Yeah. I think… I think like now moving back to the UK and like decisions more recently, I think I have made those decisions with a wide variety of advice from… I’ve just like asked, like talked about the, what I’m thinking, and the decision through with probably like ten to fifteen different people that I really trust and like they know me and I think they love God and have my best interests at heart and like, yeah, just kind of try to have like a more balanced holistic like array of perspectives that could help me make a decision, that I haven’t like missed something that I should be considering. And pray. Like always prayed about all of those things and just asked, generally just like prayed and asked God to guide me and then had like, then I guess this feels like this is how God is guiding me in various ways. But yes.

INTERVIEWER: Last question, completely different. How and how much do you use social media?

CLAIRE: Now or when I was overseas?

INTERVIEWER: Both I guess.

CLAIRE: I don’t know what you mean by how much!

INTERVIEWER: Too much?

CLAIRE: Yeah, probably more than I would want to definitely. Yeah, like I probably spend like an hour or two a day on social media, like Facebook or Instagram. And like, the first… like when I wake up in a morning the first thing I do is check, turn on my phone, check messages and social media and, yeah, like I think, like it’s the main… messaging is the main way that I stay in touch with friends. But social media like posts is, I’m not directly communicating with friends on that. I would definitely like to use that less than I do. Like when I was overseas, I didn’t… like most of the social media things were blocked so I didn’t use it very much.

INTERVIEWER: was that a good thing?

CLAIRE: I’ve never really thought about it.

INTERVIEWER: if you can compare…

CLAIRE: it’s hard to because everything in my life was so different. It’s almost impossible to compare the two lives because this is not the same. Yeah. I still think that I, I think even when I was in Asia I started trying to do a thing where I would like charge my phone at the other end of my room or in another room overnight so that it wouldn’t be the first or the last thing that I saw before I went to sleep. So I guess even when I was in Asia I was still, felt like I was drawn to like look at my phone, but I guess less social media more just messaging.

INTERVIEWER: so what… were you able to communicate much with people back home at that time?

CLAIRE: Yeah, I mean I could, yeah I had like whatsapp and messages and email and I would skype friends… I probably skyped my family and two other friends every week. But I just… if I had a VPN I could check facebook or whatever, it’s just such a long process to get there, it wasn’t like a, like it’s just an easy thing. Yeah, probably like once a week I would be on social media, yep. But yeah, mostly I was mainly directly messaging or calling people.

INTERVIEWER: OK. I think we’ll leave it there. Thank you. Thank you for your time.

CLAIRE: I’m really interested in like what your research is about and like can I see it after you do it?

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, absolutely. You will definitely get to see it. I think I’m virtually required to send you what I’m doing so that you can check that I’m not misrepresenting…

CLAIRE: sure

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, I’m kind of… so you get this group of people who’ve grown up in largely secular Britain, and still have felt the call of God to go overseas, which is pretty extreme.

CLAIRE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: It’s not a normal thing! And so, I think my research question, I’m kind of phrasing it as well, is it that it’s people who are more like sort of old-fashioned missionaries and less like other British Millennials, or is it people who are pretty like the rest of the generation, but are sort of changing what mission is like? So…. Yeah… that’s kind of how I’m looking at it.

CLAIRE: I’m really interested in that. I’ve like watched a couple of like webinars and stuff about that, yeah, it’s really interesting.

INTERVIEWER: it’s fascinating to look at, I guess, how people change and how thinking changes. Yeah… what’s important.

CLAIRE: and even like as an organisation, my, for me, I guess most of the people who are recruiting people to go overseas are like older, like, if they’re just completely missing the type of … like what they’re offering or communicating.

INTERVIEWER: It’s quite interesting that a large number of the traditional mission organisations have completely changed – a lot of them have changed their names. But they’ve changed the way they market themselves, really substantially in the last few years. Yeah… And they are struggling to recruit. But yeah, I was involved in member care, so when I was in Romania I got involved with mission organisations sending Romanians to other countries, but I was involved in like member care conferences internationally, and you’d meet these people saying, ‘we just don’t understand this generation.’

CLAIRE: Yeah. I was talking to an older couple a couple of weeks ago who were saying, like, when I started working here like twenty years ago or whenever, like, everyone worked six days a week and me and my husband still do that and I don’t understand, like, I feel like I’m in a different organisation than I was when I joined. Yeah, and I was trying to like explain what’s going through people’s minds when they’re like not working six days a week. Yeah, it’s really interesting.

INTERVIEWER: It’s fascinating. Hopefully what comes out of it will be of use to organisations and… yeah. But obviously the Millennial generation is now moving into leadership and… so… we’re not talking about just, I guess, recruiting people straight out of university. We’re talking people that have actually got a lot of years of experience and… Yeah. So leadership styles as well – how different is that?

CLAIRE: Yeah. Like how do those styles work together when you have like multi-generational organisations, which a lot of organisations are. Cool. I’d love to talk with you for a lot longer about these topics, but…. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Well Zoom hasn’t cut us off, which is quite interesting.

CLAIRE: Oh that’s true actually. I don’t know. Yeah, great, magic.

INTERVIEWER: Maybe it allows you if it’s only one-to-one, who knows….

CLAIRE: I think they sometimes just upgrade your call, just randomly.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: no. Right, well I’ll let you go. Thank you for your time.

CLAIRE: No problem.