

Interviewee: Malcolm Johnson  
Interviewer: Mark Bowman  
Date: May 5, 2008  
Transcribed by: Teresa Bergen

**[Begin Track One.]**

Mark B: This is Mark Bowman. The date is May 5, 2008. I'm in the UK in Weymouth, having an interview with Malcolm Johnson. Malcolm, if you would just say your name and spell it please?

Malcolm J: Yes. Malcolm. M-a-l-c-o-l-m Johnson, J-o-h-n-s-o-n. And we're in Weybridge. And—

Mark B: I knew I would do that.

Malcolm J: I guess you'd like to know early days, and that sort of thing.

Mark B: Yes. Let's just start with where you were born and early years and family life.

Malcolm J: Okay. I was born in Great Yarmouth, in East Anglia in Norfolk. My father and mother lived there. During the war we were moved to the local village. I was born in 1936, so I was three when the war started. We moved to a little village and our house was destroyed about two or three months afterwards. So it was very lucky that we did move. And I was brought up in this tiny rural village. And went to the village school when I was five. And I had a gang of boys. We all had very broad Norfolk accents.

Mark B: Okay.

Malcolm J: I suppose it was when I was about seven or eight that I began to realize that I was very attracted to other little boys. Not girls. Therefore, my gang was rather important, I suppose, really. So it was fairly early on that I realized I was sexually attracted to men. Then we moved back to Yarmouth when I was ten, and I went away to boarding school. My father had a business, oilskins as they were in those days. It was the biggest in England with five factories, employing about seven hundred people.

Mark B: Oilskins means what?

Malcolm J: They were waterproofs.

Mark B: Okay. Okay.

Malcolm J: Now it's plastics, of course. And my dear father was very clever, and changed from oilskins to plastics. Then wanted me, of course, to follow in his footsteps. I'm the only son, only child. And he expected me, really, to go into the family business. But I didn't. I went away to school, which was not a good experience. It was in England what is called a public school, which means it's a private school. And it was in Suffolk. It was a community of bullies and sadists, really. Academic life was very low priority, very low priority indeed. And I really hated it for the first three years. But, of course, there was a great deal of sex. The boys all experimented together. I didn't really very much enjoy that, because I think they were not really gay (not that we used the word then). But I obviously took part in it all. And I often wonder, all those people now who are married with lots of children, if they remember all the things that went on. I had lunch with one of them recently and I didn't dare say to him, "Do you know we used to wank each other off in the dormitory, do you remember?" I didn't, of course. [laughs]

Mark B:       What ages were you there?

Malcolm J:    I went at thirteen and I left at eighteen. I'd been in a boarding school before that, as well. They sent me away to boarding school when I was eight, which is what was done in England in those days. You sent your children away. So, of course, it made me very independent. I had no wish to go into my father's business. And it took me a great deal of time and courage to tell him that. We all had to do two years in the army, called national service. And so after school, aged eighteen, I went away to the Royal Norfolk Regiment. I was an officer. For two years I went first to Cyprus, which was on active service. And then to Germany. In Cyprus we had to keep order because there was a Greek movement called EOKA, E-O-K-A, which wanted union with Greece, really. As Cyprus was a British possession, we had to try to stop this. So several people died in the regiment. But I luckily survived. But I did two years. I was terribly celibate for the whole time and I think what a waste of time, really, it was. But I was terrified of anybody finding out that I was gay. And I remember one officer said to me once: "what did I think about homosexuality?" because I was known to be a Christian, and probably going to be a priest. And I said, "Well, I disapprove of it, and the church disapproves of it. It's as simple as that." And this officer said to me, "Fancy you saying that!" And of course I thought he meant he realized I was gay. And I went back to my room and sat there thoroughly depressed. And he didn't mean that at all, of course. I think he meant fancy you as a Christian saying that. Anyway, I hadn't been rumbled, nobody had found out that I was gay. And for two years, as I say, nothing happened at all.

Mark B:       Would you go back and talk about religion, what that was like? Were your parents religious?

Malcolm J: No.

Mark B: How did your faith life develop?

Malcolm J: My parents were not churchgoers. They were very good people. I've never met anyone as good as my father, a very gentle, loving person. He died thirty years ago. My mother had no interest at all. It was while I was at school, I think, that horrible boarding school, that I caught Christianity, really. And it was some consolation to me. I think in a way it was a sort of support going through a rather nasty time. And so I became very religious, really very devout. That was the most devout time of my life, really. I went to church a lot.

Mark B: You were mentored in the faith by a chaplain or a particular person?

Malcolm J: Yes. I didn't like him at all. I was a very independent sort of person.

Mark B: Okay.

Malcolm J: It was all very subtle. And even though I went home, I used to go to the church to what I called "mothball matins," which was morning prayer. And all the old ladies smelt of mothballs, because they'd had their fur coats in mothballs during the week, and brought them out for Sunday. Nobody spoke to me at the church at all. I was what, twelve, thirteen, fourteen. My grandfather had been church warden. But even the vicar didn't speak to me. And I didn't mind terribly. I used to go home and not worry terribly.

Mark B: Did you do reading? Were there other people who, in terms of your own faith development?

Malcolm J: Yes.

Mark B: Or was it mostly just the practice?

Malcolm J: I think it was the practice more than anything else, and the drama of it. I went eventually to a more Catholic, Anglo-Catholic Church of England parish, which had smells and bells. And the drama rather attracted me, really. And I began to serve. And I served at school at the altar. So I was really quite religious. Although of course I hid it, really, from my father, because I think Father would have been terrified that I was going to be a priest. And my mother once said to me, “I certainly don’t want you to be one of those priests.”

Mark B: You want to talk more about that vocation? How did that unfold?

Malcolm J: I think I just always wanted to be a priest. And there were one or two priests who I respected and went to talk to at home. And to be honest with you, I think I just was attracted by the work. I don’t think I ever had a call from God to be a priest. I just thought, that’s really rather good. What they’re doing, I’d like to do. I’d like to be with people in trouble. I’d like to take funerals, weddings and Sunday services and things. It was a bit of a drama, I suppose. And I’ve always been a bit of an actor, although I never have done any acting. And I remember watching a film called *The Holly and the Ivy*, which was about a Norfolk vicarage at Christmas. And the vicar has his family coming home for Christmas. And they’re all oddballs. But I watched it intently and thought, I would love to do what he’s doing. And he was played by Ralph Richardson, who was a very famous English actor. And I’m very pleased to say that I was in the club that I belong to, the Athenaeum, just before he died. And he was warming his backside on the fire in the hall. And I said to him, “Sir, I would like

you to know that *The Holly and the Ivy* had a profound effect on me.” He was quite aghast. I mean, he’d forgotten. It was years ago. It must have been about 1950, I suppose. So I was pleased I told him that. So really, it was just the work that attracted me, I think. Eventually I did tell my father. He was very good about it, although I tried to compromise. I went to see the bishop of Norwich when I was in the army. He was a very patrician figure. His father had been one of Victoria’s generals. And he was very upperclass and grand, lived in the palace at Norwich. And here was me aged nineteen saying, “I’d like to be a priest, please. But I don’t want to let my father down. Would it be all right if I went and did all my training and then came back and took over a little tiny village in Norfolk as the priest?” He was terribly interested. And he said, “Wonderful idea, but quite impossible. Because we don’t have worker priests in the Church of England. So you have to go do your training.” But now, of course, without worker priests and non stipendiary ministers and so forth, the Church of England would collapse. So in a way, I was ahead of my time. Because I wanted to please my father, and also please the lord. But I didn’t. So I had to go for a full time training, get a degree first. After the army, I went to Durham.

Mark B:        You studied religion there?

Malcolm J:    Yes. Yes. And theology in ... I wanted to go to Cambridge, but they wouldn’t have me until a year later. I wasn’t going to hang around for a year, so I went to Durham. And I was very happy there. Again, I was celibate the whole three years. I mean, I must have been crazy, really, but I was terrified of my sexuality and that somebody might find out. So I buried it all in working hard and in doing sports. I was a cox and I was president of the Student Christian Movement, which was very big. And so I had lots to do in Durham, and made lots and lots of friends, and was really very happy there. But I didn’t have any love life at all. I then went to theological college near Oxford, where the principal was a man called Runcie who became Archbishop of Canterbury, of course, later on. Well,

he was a terrible snob. He didn't really like people from Durham or any college except Oxford and Cambridge. So I think he looked down on me, really. I was very much second class. But I enjoyed it. It was very monastic, again. Two years total monasticism for me. I fell in love, deeply in love, with an Australian ordinand, dark and hairy and really so warm and loving. He used to come and stay with me on the holidays. And years later, when he was a principal of a college, and dying of HIV and AIDS, I wrote to him and said, "Did you know how much I loved you?" And he wrote back, I've got the letter saying, "I loved you, too. Perhaps not as strong as you loved me. Weren't we silly? Wasn't I a silly goose—" that's how he described himself – "not to have done something, not to have formed a good relationship." But anyway, we didn't. And the two years went by--theological college near Oxford. And I then went to my first curacy--assistant priest, a vicar and eight of us were--just unthinkable these days. We'd never have such a large number of people. And four of us lived together in a clergy house in Portsmouth. southern England. It was a naval town. And rather depressed, what we could call working class, I suppose. And I loved it. I loved the work. But there was a very large hole in my life. And I knew that I had to start facing up to my orientation. I went to see the head of the Samaritans, a man called Chad Varah. C-h-a-d, V-a-r-a-h. He'd founded the Telephone Samaritans. He had a tiny church in the City of London.

Mark B:        Could you say a little bit more about the Telephone Samaritans? What they were?

Malcolm J:    They are, still, people who, if you are suicidal, you phone up and they will listen to you. They're not directive, but they will listen. I went to see him. But I had already met him in Durham, and I'd asked him to preach and speak to the Student Christian Movement. He was very sweet to me, very gentle and very nice, and he said he knew exactly what to do. He said I was obviously frightened of women. This was about 1963. I was frightened of women. And the best thing he could do was to find me a woman who would take me out to parties, and get to know me. I was

absolutely terrified. I ran from his church all the way to St. Paul's Cathedral, and got down on my knees and said really, this can't be what's needed. If I have to do it, I have to do it. A day or a year later I went back to see him and I said, "Look I'm sorry, but I didn't really like that advice. Have you anything else I might try?" And he said, well, he thought some therapy would be a very good idea, some psychotherapy. And he sent me to a woman who I always call the Jung lady. And the Jung lady and I did three years, twice a week I would go and see her. And her job was to make me straight, of course. And she went along with it. Of course, you did in about 1963, '64, '65. And I used to just lay on her couch and hope she would wave her magic wand and I would be straight. Crazy, really. I would go and see her in the country at her home on a Thursday. And I would come up to London to see her at her consulting room, usually on Monday. And she would give me fifty minutes. And after I had seen her, things must have started working, because I went straight off and got a prostitute. I never told her that, of course. I used to go and have supper. And then I'd go down to Piccadilly Circus or somewhere where I knew I could pick someone up for three pounds, take him back to the little guesthouse where I was staying, and really just have a wank, to put it crudely, nothing more. And that was a sort of release although, as I say, she didn't know. I never told anybody, of course, except my confessor, who was quite sort of gentle with me. When I did tell her a little bit, she said, "Well at least it's some sort of contact. At least you are beginning to do something."

Mark B:        So do you think she was trying to change you? As you look back on that.

Malcolm J:    Oh, yes, yes.

Mark B:        She was definitely trying to get you to be heterosexual.



Malcolm J: Absolutely. And of course it wasn't working, was it? So after about eighteen months, she said, "I think perhaps you'd better go and have some LSD. And I will book you in to see Dr. Henry." I've forgotten the name of the hospital. So I went along to see Dr. Henry, who said, "Well, what we do is we inject you with LSD."

Mark B: This is the hallucinogenic drug?

Malcolm J: Yes, the drug. "And you then have dreams and your unconscious is ripped open as if it was with a tin opener, and then we talk about it afterwards." Well that horrified me so much, of course, that thank God I said, "No, thank you very much, I don't want it." But I was within a whisker of having LSD, and I'm so glad I didn't. Now I really am. So we went on.

Mark B: Were you in Portsmouth, in the parish of Portsmouth?

Malcolm J: I was in Portsmouth, yes.

Mark B: How long were you there?

Malcolm J: Five years.

Mark B: Five years.

Malcolm J: The only person who knew was my vicar, who I swore to secrecy under what we call the seal of the confessional. But when I saw the bishop, he said, "Hello, Malcolm. How's your therapy going?" So the vicar had told the bishop, against my wishes. And I was really very angry, but

didn't take it up with the vicar. This is such an odd story, but on the day before I left the parish to be a university chaplain in London, the doorbell rang in the clergy house, and there was Pauline, who I had liked and taken to dances, but of course was not attracted to very much. Nice person. And she was on the doorstep. And she said she'd been a nun, she'd come out of her convent, and she remembered we got on so well together. So she was training as a nurse in London. She came down to Portsmouth to see me. She'd found out where I was. This, of course, to silly, devout Malcolm Johnson, was a sign from God. God was saying, "Here's this girl. Get on and marry her." And that's precisely what I did. And it was the biggest mistake of my life. I moved to London. We saw one another for about a year. Then we got married. I told her of my sexuality. She thought we could make a go of it together. She thought we would be able to change me. Didn't say that, but that's, I think, what she thought. And we got married in a very grand wedding with the bishop there and everybody. And I knew straightaway, of course, I'd made the most terrible mistake. I couldn't have sex with her. I just couldn't. It lasted only nine months, something like that. Tears. Tremendous passion. I mean, I won't go into it all, but you can imagine the pain of those nine months. And we had bought a little flat with some money my grandfather had left me. And we talked about it a lot and eventually decided we had to part. And she moved out. And we had an annulment. Because of course I had never had sex with her. But I was now a university chaplain. I went to see my bishop, the first bishop of London who I served under. He was called Robert Stopford. And he lived in Fullham Palace in grand style. One of the old-style bishops of the Church of England. And in 1960--I married in '68,-- so it was '69, summer, when I went to see him. He was puffing on his pipe, he said, "You've done nothing wrong. You've made the most terrible mistake. But there's nothing wrong." I offered my resignation as a chaplain. And he said, "I'm not accepting your resignation. You've done nothing wrong. And I want you to go back to the college and get on with it. If you were in a parish, I would move you." He said, "But students couldn't care less what you do. And the staff of the college would probably be interested, but not really very much. And anyway, they won't know why you had the

marriage annulled.” But of course, they did know. You didn’t need Sherlock Holmes to know my— I’ve always been grateful to him. But just following that on a bit, he saw me twice and said, “Stay put.” So I did. And the following week he wrote and asked me to preach at St. Paul’s Cathedral. Which was an enormous affirmation for a young university chaplain to go and preach in St. Paul’s at his command. He then sent for me and said, “Tell me more about the homosexual world. I don’t know anything about it.” This was about early 1970s now. So I told him. He said, “Well what you should really do is to work on the homosexual scene, shouldn’t you. Because that’s your experience. You’ll be absolutely marvelous. I will try to find you a place to be in London in a parish where you can work visiting the homosexual places and clubs as a priest.” Now that, to me, was wonderful. He didn’t manage to do it. I’ll tell you more about that in a minute. I’d like to go back again, because just before I was getting married, I offered help as a counselor to the Albany Trust, which was the homosexual law reform society.

Mark B:       Okay.

Malcolm J:    In England. In 1967, the law changed.

Mark B:       With the Wolfenden Report?

Malcolm J:    It was the—

Mark B:       I’d like you to say a little bit about that, because people may not—

Malcolm J:    The Wolfenden Report recommended that physical sex between consenting adults, homosexual adults, should be allowed over the age of twenty-one. And that was passed in Parliament

in 1967, which was just as I was leaving Portsmouth, of course. Now, the Albany Trust had been part, the counseling part, of the homosexual law reform society, which wasn't just gay people. It was everybody who wanted reform. And I went and offered my services as a counselor. Can you imagine it? I had no experience except nonsense experience. I said, "I'll be a counselor for homosexual people." I suspect what I was doing was saying I'd like to meet a few homosexual people and I'll be their counselor. The Albany Trust were delighted because they needed counselors. So many people were going for counseling, and I was a priest. So it was arranged that I would have referred to me anybody who had religious problems. And that is what happened. Meanwhile, I'm married, of course. But just before I married, I and two others, one was a priest and one was a social worker, formed a social group in London for gay men to meet one another. We're back in 1968, so we're forty years ago. There was no, the clubs then were very, very furtive. There were only about three or four, and you had to be a member. And if you knocked on the door, the door would open just a little bit, and they said you wouldn't be allowed in unless you were a member. There was no place, really, for people to meet. No gay lib, no nothing. So the three of us started a group called the St. Katharine's Group. SK Group. Which took referrals from the Albany Trust. We saw the person concerned. We then took the person along to the meeting. And the meetings began in the common room at the Royal Foundation of St. Katharine in the East End, where the master was a monk, and he had said we could meet there. So every Saturday night, we had this social group, SK group. Thirty, forty people, fifty people, eventually. All of whom had been brought by one of the three of us and introduced to all the others. There were a lot of clergy who came. It was very middle-class, as you can imagine. People came all in their best blazers and flannels. And they all looked so middle-class it wasn't true. And we used to have a half an hour of improving discussion, until we ran out of subjects to talk about.

[laughs] This went on while I was married, of course. And I didn't go so often then, of course, but I did go occasionally. And it was a lifesaver to me because I met lots of people my own age. And I had sex with one or two of them, of course. My wife knew about it. And as I said, I didn't go every

Saturday. So that was the sort of social side of my life. And that group went on, if I may just finish up about the St. Katharine's Group, that went on for thirty years and is now finished. But I was one of the organizers for about twenty of those years. And I went every Saturday, if I possibly could. And after a while, we had women as well, which of course caused a lot of fluttering. We lost some members. We then had dancing, so we had to move out of the Royal Foundation into a hall which they owned. It was an old school hall. And the only rule of the club was you couldn't refuse if someone asked you to dance. Because we said that was such a rejection. And there were people of all ages, of course, who would come. And I could go on for three or four hours about the people who came. But there were quite a lot of clergy. And it was all very secretive. You weren't allowed to say who was there. It was a lifesaver for a lot of people, and of course they met their partners. And even now I'm asked occasionally to take a funeral of somebody whose partner they had met at the Royal Foundation of St. Katharine.

Mark B:       And through that whole time, people came only by referral of someone else.

Malcolm J:    Yes. Only—

Mark B:       It was never advertised publicly.

Malcolm J:    Never. It was a most odd arrangement, but it had the advantage that you met everybody and knew everybody. When we had women, of course, that made it much easier. We'd have a party every six months to which 150, 200 people would come. You could bring guests. And there would be a group and there would be a cabaret. And we had some very famous artists in England come and do the cabaret. It was a very big hall with a stage. And as I say, it was really quite an incredible thing. But it closed up. There was no need for it, of course, after thirty years.

Mark B: I'd like to know a bit more about those early years. What was said in the church about homosexuality? Was there an official policy? What were you sensing going on in the Anglican Church?

Malcolm J: Absolutely nothing was said. In the '60s, in the '70s, as far as I was concerned, nothing was said. At theological college, there was no teaching of it, and no mention of it. I'm just trying to remember if anything was said. No, I don't think it was. It was all so secretive. And there was no teaching, not at all. It was just forbidden. And if you were asked, then you were told. And I think some spiritual directors in the '60s said, "Well, you know, don't worry." Michael Ramsey, who was later Archbishop of Canterbury, told an old gentleman who I counseled that he was very lucky to be homosexual, because he would be able to work with men. He said, "Most of us can't really work terribly well with men. You'll be able to." So there were occasional flashes of insight. And interestingly enough, in 1967, the bishops supported the homosexual law reform.

Mark B: I thought that was the case.

Malcolm J: Because they said it's a sin, but not a crime. And there was a distinction. So no, I didn't receive much hope.

Mark B: Anything more about those years and how your attitude about yourself became more positive in terms of understanding yourself and the way you recall of coming into identity as being gay.

Malcolm J: It was all very nasty until I met Robert, which was when everything changed. He came to the St. Katharine's Group, he came referred to me, just as my marriage was ending. And we're grateful for that, because he wasn't the cause of my marriage finishing. But as it ended, he arrived. And he'd gone to a talk in his university about homosexuality by a Roman Catholic priest who he thought was rather lovely. But he was very handsome, and he'd like to go and speak to him. But, of course, the counselor at the Albany Trust said, "Oh, no. you go and see Malcolm Johnson. You're Church of England." And so the poor man had to come and see me, and endure three months. And I didn't tell him anything, because he was dating girls and having fun with them. But he thought that he was mainly homosexual. And so for three months I talked and tried to find out about him what his true feelings were. And on his twenty-first birthday, I pounced. And we've been together ever since. That's forty years next year. So he really changed my life. Because suddenly I'd realized everything was all right. I'd made a big mistake in marrying. I now had found somebody who loved me and I loved him. And it sounds a bit like Mills and Boone, but that was the case. I now realized that it was perfectly possible to be a Christian and gay. And from that date on, I made no secret of the fact. In fact, all the bishops, the five of them, have known that I'm homosexual and that I have a partner. I have never hidden from that date, really, it was '69, about my sexuality. And that has had its advantages and its disadvantages. Had I had "Vanessa and two children", everybody says I would have been a bishop. And I would have made a much bigger mark in the church. But I didn't have Vanessa and the children. So I had Robert. And Robert has been my support.

Mark B: You've still made some very significant marks within the church.

Malcolm J: Well, thank you. But I, from then on, everything changed.

Mark B: I still want to go back to, so you're the university chaplain?

Malcolm J: Yes, that's right. And we lived together, Robert and I, in a small flat nearby.

Mark B: What was the chaplaincy like? What were you doing at the university? What was that ministry like?

Malcolm J: I enjoyed it tremendously. This is very naughty of me to say, but when I went for an interview, the chief chaplain said, "Now you've been with the ordinary men. Now you're going to be with the officers." Which of course was a dreadful thing to say, but it was true. Because I was with a community of people who were not, well—I'm not clever. But they'd only gone one year after school. They may have been studying incredible subjects, but they weren't that clever. I could hold my own. What I did was I got in consultants if there was to be a discussion on something, I didn't know anything about, the physics department, for instance, asked me to arrange a lecture. And I brought in somebody who knew all about physics. And I spent seven years in Queen Mary College in the East End of London. There were three thousand students, that's all there were. And it was quite possible to know most of them; and the staff; and the porters; and the nurse. I made very sure that I was chaplain to the whole college. I wasn't chaplain of the college, because London University was founded with the intention of keeping the church out. Jeremy Benjamin, who founded University College and was a nonbeliever, and said, "On no account are we to have chaplains." So Queen Mary College didn't have a chaplain. They had a chaplain supplied by the church, paid by the church, and a chapel, which was on the site of an old church. It was a model, model building. Kings College London, was founded by Blomfield, who I've written a book about, Bishop Blomfield, as an answer to Jeremy Bentham. That would be the Christian college in London—Kings College. And it still is today. So I had seven very happy years. It was obvious to everybody that I was gay. I carried on my counseling work for the Albany Trust and the work with St. Katharine's. Meanwhile, bishop was trying to find me



somewhere, because I, seven years was enough, really. But he was retired in 1973. He sent me a letter saying, "I'm so sorry, I haven't been able to find you a suitable place in West London," he wanted, or Soho. I think he'd asked one place and they said not likely. They didn't want someone working on the homosexual scene. But he burned my file, which was an incredible thing to do, wasn't it, really, so that the next bishop wouldn't know anything about me. And apparently he did that with several of his clergy. He had a bonfire right before he retired. So the next bishop who came along didn't know anything about me at all, except a note on a piece of paper which said that Malcolm needs a city church. What he meant was, of course, somewhere where there isn't a congregation and where he can do his counseling work. But he didn't know what the work was. And the next bishop was called Gerald Ellison who again was a prince of the church. Very grand. Heavily heterosexual, with hundreds of children. He wrote to me and said would I like to go to St. Botolph's, Aldgate. It's an interesting church. He said a retired judge had been the vicar. Not a lot was going on, except a homeless center in the crypt beneath the church. And a club for Asian boys. Would I like? It took me one second to decide that I would love to go to St. Botolph's. And so the induction was arranged for 1974, in June, after term had finished. And Gerald Ellison came and inducted me. And he said, "What a wonderful lot of men there are here in the church. All these young men see what you've done for university work." Hardly any of the students were still in London. They were all gay men and gay friends of mine who turned up at the church. Gerald had found out what I was up to because the vicar of Soho had been to see him—John Hester. And John said, "Marvelous that you've put Malcolm at St. Botolph's because he can get along with his work." And the bishop said, "What work?" He had a very deep voice. "What work?" He said, "Oh, don't you know, he works with gays, homosexuals." And apparently the bishop looked absolutely flabbergasted. So nothing was said. I was made the vicar. And don't forget, in those days you were given freehold. That meant you could be there till you died. If you were given freehold of a parish in the Church of England, nobody could get you out unless you had contravened canon law. So I was inducted. And then he came to lunch

with me. We had a very grand house. A beautiful house that we bought near the college, a Regency house with a first-floor drawing room. And he came to lunch and he said to me right before lunch, "I want to talk to you." So we went down to the dining room and we sat at the dining room table before dinner, lunch. And he said, "Now what is this about you wanting to work with homosexual people? Is it true you've been married?" So I told him everything. Everything. He didn't make any comments at all. Which was very good. He just said, "Well, I'm surprised and a little angry with my predecessor that he didn't tell me. But you're in now, and that's going to be your work." So this was then about early 1975.

Mark B:        Maybe just go back and say a little more about the work, the counseling. What was that like? Who were some kinds of people who came to you, what you were able to do?

Malcolm J:    They were all sorts of people. This is the most amazing thing of all. They were every class and every profession who were very disturbed and upset about their gayness, and had gone to the Albany Trust knowing that it was a counseling agency. I only got the ones, of course, who had religious problems. And with Father Fabian Cowper, who was the Roman Catholic that Robert had gone to hear, the two of us were going to write a book on sexuality and religion. We never did. We wrote a lot of stuff down.

Mark B:        Did you talk between the two of you?

Malcolm J:    Yes, we did. Yes, we did.

Mark B:        Gay issues in the church and you—

Malcolm J: Yes. With the Unitarians as well. We had a Unitarian join us. And we did, in fact, report on somewhere or other— [phone rings] That's Robert now. Could we turn the— [pause] Almost everybody who came to me wanted friends. And possibly a lover. And I was a sort of agency for people to meet, escort agency, really. [laughs]

Mark B: Did you have any groups, were there support groups in addition to the individual counseling? Or only the St. Katharine's?

Malcolm J: Only the St. Katharine's Group. About half. But then you've hit the nail on the head, because I started a group for clergy in 1976. That's when everything started. In 1976, I and two other gay clergy invited our friends to a meeting at the Royal Foundation of St. Katharine, thanks to Father Hoey. And I would think about fifty people came, all of whom were gay. And we talked about a support group.

Mark B: And these were all Anglican clergy?

Malcolm J: And we said we needed a consultation. And that's what it's still called. It's still going strong. So I was the secretary. And the three of us invited every gay friend who was a priest to the meetings.

Mark B: Can you say who the other two people were?

Malcolm J: Peter Elers, E-l-e-r-s, who has died, sadly. And Douglas Rhymes, R-h-y-m-e-s, a canon south of the river in Southwark. He's died as well. And there's only one left. And the three of us asked all our friends—

Mark B: And how did that happen? Did you have lunch together? You had coffee together?

Malcolm J: What we did was, the three of us sat down and just wrote everybody who we could think of who was a priest who was gay. And then we fixed a speaker, who was Norman Pittenger, who'd come over from American and was a priest. He was a friend of mine. He spoke at the first consultation in 1975. And I would think about fifty priests came. And then we said to them all, "Look, this has to be secret. Because people won't come if it isn't secret." We must not say, the rule is, we must not say who was here, and you must not say what we've talked about. And ever since, twice a year, it has continued. And the Archbishop of Canterbury went to speak to the group. I've now left the group, because I've really had enough, to be honest with you. He went to speak to the group earlier, last autumn it was, he went. And it was tremendous for us, of course. All the evangelical Protestants when mad. Why should he go and speak— more of that in a minute. Because his own views are definitely very liberal, but he can't be liberal at the moment. So the Consultation—

Mark B: And you were looking, what was your intent with that?

Malcolm J: Support.

Mark B: Just to make a support group—

Malcolm J: Yes.

Mark B: You were looking for, created—

Malcolm J: Support and pressure group. Because to begin with, it was support. People were feeling very, very lonely, especially outside London. And I would think about a third to a half came from outside London. The numbers increased, of course. We got up to about a hundred, a hundred present, and four hundred and fifty on the books.

Mark B: Where did you usually meet? You always met at the same place?

Malcolm J: St. Katharine's. Then because it was so small, we moved to an enormous church in West London, Church of Christ the King, which was under the aegis of some old religious group, who threw us out. That will come later in the story. We moved there. That was wonderful. We always started with the Eucharist, all of us in a big circle.

**[End Track One. Begin Track Two.]**

Malcolm J: –consultation was 120. And it was because I sent round the photograph of the speaker, who was Professor John Boswell.

Mark B: I was going to guess right away when you said “the picture.” That famous picture of John Boswell.

Malcolm J: That's it. We paid for him to come over to England. And he stayed with me and Robert. It was a wonderful weekend. Because of course we got him to speak not only at Consultation–

Mark B: Do you recall what year that was? What year that was, roughly?

Malcolm J: I would have to look that up. [Added later: Boswell visited in March 1982.]

Mark B: That's fine. That's fine.

Malcolm J: I wonder. In the '80s, I would think. He was terrific. And of course people were so thrilled that he was— and we also had people come over from Berkeley. And Bishop Swing, who I asked to come over from California. And more of that later on. But this was when we were getting more of a pressure group. Because we then started to invite principals of theological colleges to come and join us. We invited bishops to come and sit with us. Of course it meant that some members didn't come, because they were too frightened to be known as gay. But always we had fifty or sixty, seventy, who would talk with the bishops or the theological college principals about being gay. And that pressure has always stayed with the Consultation. We wanted to share our experiences as well as support each other. And I eventually, of course, gave up being secretary after like twenty years. And they made me not an honorary member, a Dame of Consultation. They gave me a special outfit to wear which, of course, I've never worn. But it was very funny, indeed. Dame of the British Empire, or something like that. But I loved that, being secretary. And of course I did stay with the group for a while.

Mark B: So as secretary, you were very much involved in planning the meetings, inviting the speakers as well.

Malcolm J: We had a committee, of course, who would meet and plan the speakers and the meetings. We had two meetings a year ever since. The one year when we had more was 1988. Then we had three. And there was a serious need for support. I can get onto that in a minute or two. But I

think that's all I can say about the Consultation, except that, of course, again, lots of friendship were made, and lots of support was given, particularly to people who came as far away as Cornwall, which is miles. And Northumberland, the furthest they came were from Newcastle and Northumberland. And we would always offer accommodation, of course, in London the night before. Norman Pittenger always came and stayed with us. And talked nonstop from the moment he arrived at six o'clock on Sunday night to the moment he left at eight o'clock on Monday, having been at the Consultation all day. We had a Eucharist, we had a talk, we had a very good lunch. I used to make sure that the person who did the lunch was a caterer, a gay caterer. And really did a good lunch with lots of wine. The afternoon was more relaxed and groups, probably, or a little entertainment. Then tea, and then we'd leave. So it was always a very good day.

Mark B: Do you want to go back to the early '70s arriving at St. Botolph's I know the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement was being formed around there.

Malcolm J: Thank you very much. Yes, 1976, we all had a meeting. I think it was '76. It's in my CV. '76.

Mark B: I think it's '76, right.

Malcolm J: We had a meeting in the summer of people who were concerned about the church and sexuality.

Mark B: Do you remember who called that meeting? How did that meeting come about?

Malcolm J: It was in Southwark in their church hall. Southwark Cathedral church hall. There was a small group that had started. I better not name the person who had got it together, who we didn't like. We felt that he would be a disaster if he pushed his group. And we really needed something different. And so we met in Southwark. And we decided we would form the Gay Christian Movement. There were, I forget how many of us. But the question came—where would we meet? So of course I straightaway said, St. Botolph's. We can have the service in St. Botolph's. And I think it was April, 1976. And we had the meeting in my school. See, we had a primary school, a church primary school, next door to the church. Founded in 1740, believe it or not. So that is what we arranged. And it was perfectly public. We invited everyone to come to the service. And we had a Roman Catholic preaching, whose name I can't now remember. He was a Dominican. And then we all went over the road to the school. But before that, a week before, Norman Pittenger was staying with me. I had a call, telephone call, from the archdeacon of London who said that the bishop was very angry indeed. And as he couldn't see me, would I go and see him, the archdeacon, to tell him what was going on on a Saturday at St. Botolph's. So on the Friday morning, I went to see the archdeacon of London, who came straight out of Trollope. If you've ever read any of Trollope's novels, he was a sort of early nineteenth century character who was archdeacon of London, at that point in charge of the city of London, and a canon of St. Paul's Cathedral. He used to tell the people at St. Paul's, the people that he was far too busy in the city to do anything in the cathedral. And he used to tell the people in the city that he was far too busy in the cathedral to do anything in the city. Anyway, he rang me up and he said the bishop couldn't see me. So on the Friday morning would I go and explain myself? And I went and sat on his settee, chintz-covered settee, sipping Earl Grey tea. And he said, "Now tell me, what does the word gay mean?" I'm not kidding you. "This is a gay Christian movement. What is gay?" So I told him, of course, in no uncertain terms what was going to happen. And he wrote it all down on a piece of paper. He made no comment at all. And he said, "Well now, who's preaching?" So I said, "Well, Father" whatever his name was. [Added later:



preacher was Giles Hibbert, a Roman Catholic Dominican.] “Right.” Off I went. Friday lunchtime. Friday night, Pittenger was staying. And the phone rang at about eleven o’clock. And a very angry bishop of London was on the phone. He’d been to dinner in the city in one of the big companies, you know. And he’d had a lot to drink, by the sound of things. And he said he was very angry, indeed, at what the archdeacon had told him. And I was to present myself at his house at ten o’clock the following morning. Well, the service was, no, nine-thirty, sorry, nine-thirty. The service was billed for eleven. So I didn’t say anything. I just went. And I remember thinking here we go, this is it, really. I went in and he berated me for half an hour. And I heard Big Ben strike ten, because it was very near the Houses of Parliament where he lived. Very grand house. Very deep voice.

Mark B:       And he berated you because he didn’t know about it? And he didn’t want you to do—

Malcolm J:    He didn’t know about it. That was the problem. He didn’t know about it. He’d been to the church, I think three weeks ago, why hadn’t I told him? Very simple. He would have forbidden it, wouldn’t he. That’s why I didn’t tell him. The big thing that he was very angry about was that a Roman Catholic was preaching. And he said, “Has he got permission from me?” And I said, “Well, no. I didn’t think you had to have permission.” “Of course, you have to have permission.” He said, “I’m very angry.” And he went on and on and on. He said, “Now tell me about this movement.” He said, “I want the names of every priest who is there.” I didn’t make any comment. I thought well, I’m not going to give you the names of every priest. “I want a copy of the sermon. And there’s nothing I can do to stop you,” he said, “because you have freehold. You are the incumbent. You are chairman of the trustees of the school. I don’t have any authority over the school. You do. I can’t forbid it, but I want to know a full report after it’s over.” So I then speedily drove back, just got there in time to celebrate the Mass, of course. And we had a full church, of course, people who’d come to start the Gay Christian Movement.

Mark B: A hundred people? More?

Malcolm J: It was all done by word of mouth. I think probably that, there wasn't an advert, I don't think.

Mark B: Okay.

Malcolm J: Richard wasn't around then.

Mark B: About how many people were there? Roughly?

Malcolm J: A couple hundred.

Mark B: A couple hundred.

Malcolm J: Yes, I think so. All sorts.

Mark B: Men and women?

Malcolm J: Yes. Mainly men. So we had our meeting. We decided the constitution. I made a decision not to be on the committee and not to get involved. Because I was vicar of the church, I offered a room in the church, in the tower. I said, "If you want an office, you can have that." So they had an office, which was not very big. As big as the tower, on the first floor of the tower. And I thought if I am to be on the committee, that would be a conflict of interest, really. I told my church

wardens, one of whom was gay, but heavily closeted. The other one was a nurse. And they didn't seem to be terribly bothered. So my church wardens were great. The congregation was so small that of course they didn't know what time of day it was, really. But from then on, of course, the congregation began to grow because gay people came and we were gay friendly.

Mark B: Can you recall who were some other key people of that initial forming of LGCM?

Malcolm J: Kennedy Thom, who is terribly ill at the moment, was one of them. Peter Elers has died, as I mentioned, he was one of them. Douglas Rhymes. I'd have to look up who the committee were. We had a secretary. We advertised for a part-time secretary. So I said I would have her or him in the church half-time, and LG, GCM would have them half time. And a lady called Fiona Campbell, I think it was, Fiona something, was appointed. [Added later: Fiona Morgan.] So there was a very close knit relationship between her and the committee. And I made sure that the congregation knew what was going on.

Mark B: And in those very early years, what was GCM doing? What did it see its purpose?

Malcolm J: It was really again just supporting people, getting members, of course, trying hard to. Of course, not being on the committee, I can't remember all what was going on. I was a bit scared that the church would get bad publicity so I said, "Don't put our address down." So it was: care of box number whatever it was. Our homeless work was taking off in a big way. [phone ringing] We really were, I was employing staff and it was getting bigger and bigger and bigger.

Mark B: Could you say more about that? Just a bit about that ministry.

Malcolm J: Well, when I went there, it was just two passages in the crypt. It was an evening handout of clothing and food. I used to enjoy going in the clothing store, because it was like being in Harrods's, you know, people would come in and say, "That's too big," or "that's too small." We had about a hundred people coming a night. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday. And it was run by volunteers. We had no staff. So all I had to do was really get the staff and get some money to pay them. And the two bays, the other bays of the crypt, the two corridors, was a youth club that really was faltering, so we closed it. Because there were only a very few Bengali boys coming. The church is on the edge of the city of London. It's in the city of London. But all our work was with East London. So it was a Robin Hood ministry. We really robbed the rich to feed the poor. We expanded the center into the whole of the crypt, and then built the building on the side. This is all very much shorthand, but I was there eighteen years. I spent a lot of time on it, obviously. We employed in the end, I think there were about forty-five, because we had four hostels as well. We opened hostels in the East End of London. So it was a big setup when I left, but I was still in charge. I decided I must be director, that I must keep my hands on it. When I left, they appointed someone as director. And then ten years after I left, it went bankrupt. So I was very upset, as you can imagine. My successor just let it go. I was very, very hurt about that, because of course we'd spent millions in extending the premises. And I cleared a crypt out of bones to make another big room under the front steps. That's where my interest came in the crypts, and that's the study I'm doing at the moment. So the homeless work was very, very good. We were a little worried that if it was known that we were a gay church, then that would suffer. And I didn't want to be a gay church, and I didn't want to be a gay priest. I really did try very hard not to be a one issue person. And so the homelessness thing was very important to me. And the school, too, because we had a school, as I've already said. And a senior school. I was chairman of both of them. And I didn't want to be a one issue priest. Nor did I want St. Botolph's to be a one issue church. So getting back to GCM, they didn't actually advertise where they were. And until 1988, I don't think most people knew that GCM was there. Gay people did,

because of course they would come and visit. But by and large, there was no publicity in that time. And as I say, I wasn't on the committee, but after a while, Richard Kirker was appointed as the secretary, full-time secretary. We've always got on very well. He was very abrasive to begin with, but we personally got on very well. And I think he's been the one person in England that's really pushed things forward more than anyone else. And I have an enormous respect for him. However, he was a very strong personality. So we used to include him in staff meetings when we all met, every Monday morning we met for three hours with the staff. If he could come, he would come. And he would tell us what was going on with the Gay Christian Movement. Speeding along to 1987, yes, we got the HIV and AIDS stuff, too, but of course we can do that later, can't we?

Mark B: We can do that whenever you're ready to do that.

Malcolm J: 1987. I went on holiday to America. And I was in an earthquake in—

Mark B: San Francisco.

Malcolm J: No, it was in Los Angeles. When I came back, there was another earthquake. Of course, I was a member of the General Synod, which was the church's parliament. I represented London. And there were ten priests representing London and eight lay people.

Mark B: You were elected or appointed by the bishop?

Malcolm J: I was elected. I always came top of the poll, believe it or not, amongst the clergy.

Mark B: Do you think that was because of your prominent work at St. Botolph's, or just—

Malcolm J: I hope so.

Mark B: –the combination of everything you did.

Malcolm J: Yes. I hope so. I was openly gay, but my manifesto was always I'm a gay man. When I got in, it was proportional representation without any, no second votes or anything, just straight in. For fifteen years, I was on the Synod. And I was on the Synod, and there was a debate about not really homosexuality as such, but about sexuality. And it had been brought by an evangelical priest. I'd have to look at all the, Higton was his name. Mr. Higton. It was a private members bill, which of course is not a good way of getting something discussed, because there was no report about the issue. There had been a report about homosexuality. I can't remember the date now. But there were three people on that report. It was about 1978. It was a report with three homosexuals on the actual body, but they didn't come out. So of course the report was very, very bland, and said homosexuals must not be clergy. And lay people could possibly have relationships, but not clergy. I have to find the date of that for you. That debate in the synod. But it was about late 1970s. Of course, I was furious. I wrote to one of the gay men and said, "How dare you be a member of a group and not come out?" And he wrote me a very, very nasty letter back. So we haven't been friends since. He and his partner have now retired. But I was angry with him. And with the other two. So this debate in the synod in 1987 was a private member's motion in which homosexual acts were condemned. I mean, I would have to look it all up because it was very involved. It was really an attack on the gay world. This man Higton(?) hated, he was a homophobe. And I was the only openly gay member of synod, of course. And so I had to do the speech. Which, believe it or not, people still remember. I saw someone on Monday who said, "I shall never forget your speech." And I said, "It was like motoring along on the freeway, knocking people out, single parents, gay people, bisexuals, knocking them down and not

affirming them. I can't remember what I did say now. It's all in the archives. Anyway, because it had enormous coverage, front page. The bishops watered down this man's motion so that it was very bland. The next day, "Pulpit Poofs to Stay" was the headline on the daily, in the *Sun*, I think. In other words, you can still have gay people in the church. Pulpit Poofs. P-double o-f-s.

Mark B: I've got it now.

Malcolm J: "Pulpit Poofs to Stay." And there was a lot of publicity. It was on my speech, of course, was saying how could this man be a gay priest, really?

Mark B: So that was coming out in a very public kind of way that you hadn't been.

Malcolm J: Yes. It was. And sadly, we had a new archdeacon. The old Trollope figure had gone. I had been told that I should probably be appointed, but had I not been gay. The bishop said to me, it was a new bishop, too, Graham Leonard, he sent for me and said, "You can be the senior priest in the city," which was area dean. "But you can't be an archdeacon." I presumed because I was living with Robert. And anyway, we had a new archdeacon, who was very, very evangelical indeed, and more or less asked me to resign. He's now the bishop of Southwell, S-o-u-t-h-w-e-double l. His name, George Cassidy was his name. I used to call him Butch Cassidy. And I used to get very angry with him. He had his mind blown, I think, by the speech. More because they discovered that LGCM was in the tower. He was furious. And he said they had to leave immediately. They had no permission, which they hadn't. I'd never asked for permission. You have to have a full faculty, which is a legal document saying you can rent space in the church. I knew if I asked, it would be forbidden. And I think they'd been there, something like twelve years or so, anyway. Anyway, he said, "I want them out." And I said, "Can we talk about it? Can we sit down and talk?" No. He wouldn't talk to me.

There was a long, long battle that went on right till the following Easter. It was terribly, terribly draining on me and very wearing. And it was all open, of course. He wanted them out. And he would bring a court case against them to get them out.

Mark B:        So he actually made this a public campaign.

Malcolm J:    Yes. Yes. What I said to him was, in November, early December, “Look, George, if it had been your predecessor,” who actually wasn’t the Trollope one, it was a nice man who called himself a thug who says his prayers, he died. He and I used to get on very well. I said if it was him, I would say, let’s have a beer together, let’s talk about it, I will get LGCM out of the church, I can, because I’ve got sufficient influence. Also, I know they want to go. Now Richard Kirker might say today, “That’s untrue.” But I think it is true. It was a tiny, tiny little office, a little tiny staircase and they really needed new premises. And I think I could have, if George had said to me, “All right, we’ve got six months,” I could have said to Richard, “Let’s look for somewhere.” And of course, that’s what did happen. They had to go in the end. The court case meant they had to go.

Mark B:        So there was an actual court case.

Malcolm J:    Yes, consistory court which was in front of the chancellor, who is the judge of the diocese. He is a judge. His name is George Newsome. I was told I had no chance whatsoever because he obviously was anti-gay, very conservative. I saw him in the Athenaeum, which I’m a member of. He was a member, too. I wanted to push him down the stairs. You know, I mean, he really was a nasty piece of work. He said – and I wrote this down after all the evidence about getting them out – “Much evil has flowed from what the rector has done.” And I can’t forgive him, really, for that. I mean, of course, but they had to go. And we found them somewhere, not just me, I was a governor



of Oxford House Bethnal Green as was a man called Peter Scott. And we suggested that they take rooms there, which is where they are now.

Mark B:       And continue to be.

Malcolm J:    Oxford House. It could have gone, as it was, all in the open, clergy took sides. A large number of London clergy all backed me and said they wouldn't be paying any money to the diocese. The city clergy, with three exceptions, supported me. It was like a rugby scrum. They all came around me. They said, "We don't agree with you, but it's your judgment, your pastoral judgment. If you want to do this in your church, we respect it. We don't approve. But if that's what you want, the pastoral work you're doing is very, very important, indeed, amongst a group who have been ostracized." That was the message. The archdeacon went to see one of the priests. I must tell this story because it's so wonderful. The priest had been senior chaplain in the Royal Navy, so you can imagine what he was like. Very conservative, and of an evangelical kind. I got on with him awfully well. I welcomed him into the city as area dean. And George Cassidy went to see him. And he showed him some pamphlets that he said were on sale, safe sex pamphlets, in the church. They weren't, actually, they were on sale in the office. We had some pamphlets which were very boring, really, theological lectures which LGCM published, in the church. But we didn't have safe sex leaflets. Anyway, he said to this man, "Look what your area dean has in his church!" He went on and on, expecting, of course, the man to be supportive. Chandos, his name was, Chandos Morgan said, "Archdeacon, I don't know how we work in the city, but in the navy if you have a complaint against an officer, the first thing you do is to go and talk to the officer. Have you done that?" No, he hadn't. You see, he wouldn't meet me. So he said, "Well, I think you must talk to Malcolm. Good day, Archdeacon." So the archdeacon left and Chandos rang me up and he said, "Do you know what that man just said to me?" Because he wouldn't come. He wouldn't come and talk to me about it. He

wouldn't come to the meeting of the clergy, which is called a chapter. The chapter of the City of London had asked the archdeacon to come to talk about St. Botolph's, and he wouldn't. And so they were very angry, of course, as you can imagine. But the upshot was that LGCM had to move, had a new office. We suffered a little bit. Two of our most, of our millionaire supporters decided they would withdraw their support or go free as they both came back again. Several parishes who supported our work, we used to have parishes supporting the homeless work, they said that their church wardens and parish council were horrified that we were supporting gay things and were so open about it. They would withdraw their money. One of them from Swindon brought a tape recorder and recorded my comments. Of course, the man who gave the most money to the parish had decided that he would withdraw his funds. And they wanted to show him what my argument was. He didn't change his mind. They decided not to support us anymore. However, the curate of the parish wrote to me and said his money would not be given to the church anymore but would be given to St. Botolph's. So we had all that going on I would think for very nearly a year. It was amazingly stressful. I passed out.

Mark B: I was going to ask you how that was for you.

Malcolm J: Yes. I passed out in the church and found myself on the floor. And they took me to the hospital and did all the checks and everything and I was all right. They just said it was stress. And I had two weeks off. But it was amazingly stressful. But of course there was a lot of support, an enormous amount of support. I had my twenty-five years as a priest celebration. And I would think four or five hundred people came to the church for the service. And we had a party afterwards. And I get a spoof telegram from Mr. Cassidy saying, "Best wishes for your retirement." [laughter] There we are. It went on, and the church went on, St. Botolph's went on. And from strength to strength, somehow we survived.

Mark B: Were things, was life different for you after that in terms of your work in ministry?

Malcolm J: What?

Mark B: Because you were so publicly known.

Malcolm J: Yes. Not really. Not really. It wasn't, I was asked to do various television and radio things, most of which I didn't do. I didn't want too much publicity. Because as I say, the homeless thing was one of my interests. And also, HIV had hit England. And that really was dreadful. I would think it was early '80s—

Mark B: How did you first become aware of that? How did that begin?

Malcolm J: Well, a friend of mine died. He was a prison chaplain. Devastatingly good looking. There were two of them together. I've forgotten what the other one, but he was a priest as well. He died one Christmas. Again, I can't remember when it was. It was early '80s. It was all over the papers. "Prison Chaplain Has AIDS." I think I had become aware of it because, of course, people began to ring me up saying "would I go and see somebody who had HIV," or "could I conduct the funeral," the first funeral I ever had was terrible. It must have been in the mid '80s, I suppose. This man rang me. He lived in Battersea. He said his partner had died. Would I take the funeral? See, that was the plus of all this publicity. People knew that St. Botolph's was a gay friendly church. He said his partner had died. And so I went to see him, of course. And he said, I said, "What about his parents? Will they be coming?" "No, they won't." His parents wouldn't have him to stay, in case he was ill while he was there. There are hundreds of stories like this. I said, "Well, just ring them and see if they would come over." So I rang the parents who lived in the Isle of Wight, which is in South

England. Very conservative place. And I said, "I'm taking your son's funeral in London, in Battersea. Would you come?" "No. We have decided what we should do. We should take a train to Guildford," which is halfway, "and we shall go in the cathedral there at the time of the funeral. And we shall say our prayers there." I said, "You sure you won't change your mind? Because we would love you to be there, and his partner would." No. They wouldn't. I never heard any more. There are so many stories like that. And that's how I was becoming involved, because people were ringing me up. "Would you take my funeral?" one very handsome boy said to me. And I said, "Well, yes. When is it?" [laughter] He said, "Well, I haven't died yet." "Oh," I said, "well, are you thinking of dying?" He said, "It won't be long." And it wasn't. I went to see him. And I got to know so many young men. It taught me what it must have been like to be a chaplain in the war, with all these young men dying, you know. So the first thing I did was to get a group together called the Ministers Group. But it was easy, because I knew all the clergy in London, of course, all the gay clergy. I knew most of them. And I called together the hospital chaplains and people like David Randall, who was the most wonderful person, who had worked for me at St. Botolph's, but was now a parish priest, working in the HIV field. And we had the Ministers Group for support and to arrange things. And I got Bishop Swing from California to come over to talk to the group and to a big conference and do a service of healing, and go and see the bishop of London who was, arranged the other bishops to talk to him. Because I went to the bishop and said, "Look. We're going to have lots of clergy with AIDS. HIV and AIDS. What are you going to do about it?" So Bill Swing went to talk for an hour to the bishops as to what they should do. And after he'd been, he went on the condition, by the way, that the chauffeur would take him to a golf club afterwards. So the bishop's chauffeur took him to a golf club. He stayed with us, and his wife. So the bishops got organized and they decided what they would do for pension and all those things.

Mark B:       Okay.

Malcolm J: And of course very shortly afterwards, the first London clergyman had HIV. And we had to sort all of that out. Went to his funeral in his parish. They didn't know, of course, the parish. He stayed in post until he died. Anyway, but the Ministers Group it meant, of course, that we had a little group who would organize things. The nicest story of all was Richard Holloway, who was bishop of Edinburgh, came to chair the first conference for clergy on HIV and AIDS. And we had a very eminent doctor—how things used to be done—doctor/sociologist/theologian/bishop chairing it, and we had about two hundred clergy there from London. And at the end, Bishop Holloway said, “I've learned some new words today.” He said, “Up till now, I thought that ‘rimming’ or ‘frottage’ were solicitors in Wales.” [laughter] Wales, lovely... Anyway, they all learned a lot. And of course there were lots of other groups like that, who had to learn what to do. And we got going, really, quite quickly with all these, with pastoral care. So we could get someone to someone with HIV pretty quickly. Because we had all over London there were priests who would go take funerals.

Mark B: Probably affected St. Botolph's. There was a lot there, too.

Malcolm J: It did. It was just at the time that I was leaving, really, that it really, it was the early '90s. It was devastating. It did upset me terribly. It was for two years, from about 1989 to 1992, '93, '94, I was taking so many funerals. And we used St. Botolph's, of course.

Mark B: Summing up, is there anything to the church policy regarding gay clergy? Was this ever a point of conversation otherwise? Or either study of gay clergy, talk about affirming gay clergy, banning gay clergy—

Malcolm J: There was a study, because at the Consultation, we had a man called, oh, lord, he was a sociologist, anyway. And he'd done a study of stress amongst the clergy.

Mark B: Okay.

Malcolm J: And he asked could he interview gay clergy who came to the consultation anonymously about their stress. And I think about a hundred filled in his forms. And that was published. And we sent it to all the bishops. But again, not a lot, really, came back. It was a very high level of stress amongst the gay clergy. I don't think the bishops really wanted to discuss it, quite frankly. And invariably they would refer people to me. I think they were quite glad I was there. And I still get referrals, obviously. People, the bishops didn't really want it out in the open, I don't think. I mean, I may be wrong. But I don't think the subject was really discussed at great length.

Mark B: Do you want to say anything about your relationship with Robert, and how that developed during those years, and how that may have affected or supported you?

Malcolm J: It supported me. I mean, of course I couldn't have survived, of course, really, without him. He's given me the security and he's given me stability to do, put two fingers up to the bishops, you know, to be open. I think without him I couldn't have done anything, really. He's not a Christian now. He was, and he isn't any longer. And I am just on the edge, I suppose. I really feel the church has hardly moved forward on this issue in England. Whereas, of course, the ordinary world has moved in England. And civil partnerships, and people are much more open. I mean, there's still homophobia around. But the church is one of the last little ghettos to be worried about. The whole thing, Lambeth will be dominated yet again by gay clergy, and "Are you allowed to have gay clergy?" and "Should they be celibate?" And I'm sick of it, really. I mean, I don't do anything now. I

just retired seven years ago. And feel I've done my bit. I don't want to get involved anymore. So I'm very much on the edge of the church. I will take a service, but what I believe I really don't know any more. I really don't.

Mark B: So you mentioned leaving St. Botolph. Do you want to talk about ministry after that—

Malcolm J: Yes.

Mark B: Kind of what happened there, how did you happen to move on—

Malcolm J: Well, after eighteen years, I'd had enough. But it was desperately difficult to get a job because I was so open, you see. I wouldn't be given preferment, that was obvious. So what would I do? Well, I didn't really want another parish. Because Robert and I have always lived together in our own house. And we knew, of course, if we went to a parish, we would have to live in the vicarage. And again, that would be very difficult. Hardly any priests living with their partners in a vicarage. There are some, very quietly. Robert was never a quiet person, and he's not going to be a lodger. He is my partner. So we knew that a parish really, probably was out. I thought about going into the homeless field, and I did look at one or two jobs running homeless organizations. But I am a priest, and I wanted to carry on doing the work of a priest. And I'm rather glad I did, because, of course, HIV was still very much around. And I was, I think, of use to the men who I got to know. I befriended and helped to hope in the process of their dying. The only thing that was offered was the master of the Royal Foundation of St. Katharine. Back to St. Katharine's again. It had been monks and nuns living together with one of the monks as master. That was the one who let us use the house. They were leaving. And the trustees of the Royal Foundation of St. Katharine wanted a new master. Royal Foundation of St. Katharine goes back to 1147. It always comes under the queen, who keeps it till she dies. And the boss was the queen mother, then, of course. And she knew all about the SK

Group and apparently was very supportive. She didn't say anything. But the master said yes, she does know. And anyway, they wanted a new master. There were eight governors, eight governors. Very right wing, very conservative. The chairman was Viscount Churchill, who was a bachelor. Gentle, I rather thought he was asexual, actually. I don't know if I ought to say that. And they were very grand, the governors. Lord this and Lady that, and the lady in waiting to the queen mum. The queen mum came twice a year. So I thought that would be a very good job for me. And so did the then bishop, David Hope, who was then bishop of London, who was unmarried and gay, of course. Doesn't have a partner. He's retired now. So I think he rather pushed the governors into having me. And the deal was that I would not live in, because we had this beautiful house nearby. And I would be the master. And there would be four nuns and four friars, Franciscan friars. All the friars were gay, by the way. All the nuns had been very supportive, indeed, to me over the years. But it all went terribly wrong. After about two or three years, the nuns started warring with the friars. And I got caught in the crossfire. And we had a housekeeper who was really extremely difficult. Used to side with the nuns. I think it was the women v. the men. And everything went wrong. And I was very unhappy. The governors never said so, but I think were worried that I was doing too much on the gay issue and on HIV, which I was not. Every report I gave them I wrote down all the conferences that have been held in the house and all the groups that had been to the house. It's in Limehouse in East London. It was a very prestigious appointment. The queen mum, as I say, used to come twice a year. I'll never forget, she came into my study and she said, "To think of all the people who have come in here and been helped by you." Obviously she'd been briefed. One of her ladies in waiting was a pal of mine. And she said, "I think it's wonderful all these people have come here and you've helped." That's all she ever gave away. But I fought with the governors and eventually they asked me to leave. And it took me—well, I think...

**[End Track Two. Begin Track Three.]**



Malcolm J: –so I had to negotiate an exit deal. And it took nine months. And the present bishop of London was, I think, very embarrassed about it because he was one of the governors. Although he was not a governor when the decision was made. He became bishop of London, then he became a governor. And he said to me, you know, “you’ll be all right. I promise you, you’ll be all right.” And he negotiated a deal whereby the money that I would have been paid for the following three years was paid to the Diocese of London, who employed me as a counselor at St. Martin’s in the Fields. So my last three or four years were spent at St. Martin’s in the Fields, which is the most wonderful, wonderful church. I wrote a book about it. And I’m very, very grateful that I was there and I was able to do all counseling work and nothing else, really. As the bishop said, “You just do your work.” And I was never replaced, of course. It was a job specialty for me. And I felt rather sad I wasn’t replaced, because there’s such a need for a counselor in the middle of London for the clergy. It wasn’t just the clergy. It was anybody, really, who came along. So that’s how I finished seven years ago, in 2001. And since then, I’ve really gradually gave up. I had a large number of people coming for spiritual direction, and I gave up most of those as I retired. I’ve got another ten I kept for a few years. And one of whom is the most wonderful person in the world, I think. I met her when he was a he. [laughs]

Mark B: Okay.

Malcolm J: And supported him until he had the operation. And I said to him, her, I said, “Why don’t you start a Christian transsexual group?” And she has. Called Sybils. They meet twice a year, three or four times a year, as a support group. And she really is the most wonderful person. Now, of course, I don’t see her anymore. I’ve had to make the decision to give up completely. And I’d rather be friends. I had to say to her ours was a professional relationship. I didn’t actually spell it out, but we’re not friends. Going back to the HIV conferences with Rabbi Lionel Blue, and Rabbi Solomons,

they were the two rabbis. We had a whole weekend. The first one was in 1989. We'd go away from the Friday night to the Sunday lunch. We'd have the Passover meal. The Friday night Sabbath.

Mark B: Sabbath, Sabbath.

Malcolm J: Yes. Sabbath meal. And then on the Saturday, we would have discussions and outings somewhere really nice. Lots of lovely food. Sunday morning we'd have the Eucharist. And there would be about forty, fifty people with HIV—Jewish and Christian.

Mark B: How did they get referred to you? How were they chosen, selected, or was it open to whoever wanted to come?

Malcolm J: They just went. We were in touch with everybody, of course. It was such a terrible time in England. The late '80s and early '90s. Everybody knew everybody else. And if people were being treated at the hospice or the hospital, we all knew who they were. And we would let them know we could go away for the weekend.

Mark B: And you were involved in leading these retreats?

Malcolm J: Yes. Lionel Blue and I did them between us. And we did one in the country down there, Bath, and one at St. Katharine's.

Mark B: He's obviously well-known. How did you get to know Rabbi Blue?

Malcolm J: Oh, I don't know. We've been friends for years. I haven't seen him lately. He's such fun! I don't know if I should say this, his first lover, they wanted a service of blessing. And you see, that's something we haven't talked about. And I did it for them, years ago. And they promptly split up. See, there is that, too, as you know. You have to be awfully careful that it isn't like wallpapering over a crack. We have a service of blessing. I started doing services of blessing in 1968. That was my first one. And again, they were referred by the Albany Trust. Very few rules. Absolute secrecy. Only twelve people present. I suppose I must have done well over a hundred fifty of them, over the years.

Mark B: Were they done in churches, homes, or many places?

Malcolm J: Yes, they were always done, when I was at St. Botolph's, in St. Botolph's. When I was at St. Katharine's, they were at St. Katharine's chapel. But now I don't do anymore. But if I did, I would go to the home, I think, and do the service there. We always, Lionel and I did a sort of booklet. It's long out of print. About possible vows and possible ways of doing it. So they would choose what they wanted. I kept in touch with one or two. Literally only one or two, because it was too difficult, really. We had a narrow escape occasionally at St. Botolph's. The press would arrive because some former lover who had been rejected would say, "If you go to St. Botolph's, you might find something interesting." We had the news of the world on the steps saying, "We heard there was a marriage here today." "No," I said, "there was no marriage." I don't like using the word marriage anyway. "No, there was no marriage. Sorry I can't help you." And they went away. And another couple arrived as a bride and groom. I shall never forget that. I looked out the church door there was full bridal gown, and the other one in a suit. Now since then I've come to realize if that's what they want, let them do it. But it was against all that I was sort of trying to say that the gay thing is quite different than heterosexual marriage. And your mother can sit in the front row and cry, but we don't

really want to ape heterosexual marriage. We had all sorts of people: young men who were car workers from out in East London; to women, girls, working in ordinary jobs.

Mark B: Did the bishop know you were doing—

Malcolm J: Oh, no, no, no, no. Then, if I'd asked him, he would have said no. And we're still not allowed to, you know, I think. You would get into trouble if it was known as a priest that you were taking a service of blessing for a gay couple. You see, isn't that pathetic. Really pathetic. Gene Robinson, of course, has been like a breath of fresh air in this country. I think he's profoundly shocking to most of the bishops. He really is.

Mark B: We had sort of gotten to this from when you were talking about Rabbi Blue and the HIV retreats.

Malcolm J: Oh, yes.

Mark B: I don't know if there was anything else you wanted to say about those retreats. Those went on for a number of years.

Malcolm J: Yes. They're still going on. We finished after about six years, I think, the two of us. And now the committee run it themselves. They were immensely moving, as you can imagine. We tried not to get into a sort of tearful state. But invariably, we did, of course, because people in those days were going to die. They weren't really living. Now, thank God, you can live with HIV. Lots of my friends are. In those days, you knew jolly well time was limited, really. I would do what I could. I mean, I would go and visit a lot. There's one couple I remember they were fearfully intelligent, very

wealthy, living in South London in a huge house. I got to know them awfully well. They were not churchgoers. But they sort of came to faith. And I took their funerals. And their memorial services. One was a famous television producer. And it was so moving. The television producer was just about to expire. And I said to him, “Do you want me to anoint you?” “What’s that?” he said. “Well, the queen was anointed as her coronation for strengthening. And I will anoint you to sort of oil you on into the next world. That’s what I’m doing, really.” “Oh, it’s good enough for the queen, it’s good enough for me,” he said. Lovely. Oh, dear. I won’t go into all the stories. Going back to the archbishops, if I might just say. Archbishop Runcie invited a few of us to lunch. He took the view that if you were gay, you were handicapped, that’s how his, so I used to say, “Can I park on double yellow lines? Does that mean I’m disabled?” You know, that’s what he felt. But he had us to lunch.

Mark B:        Now this is around when, approximately?

Malcolm J:    I would think late ‘80s. He had been my principal at theological college, you see.

Mark B:        So he was archbishop?

Malcolm J:    He was the Archbishop of Canterbury. But I don’t think we changed his mind at all. And, of course, he was against women’s ordination. Similar struggle by the women to get him to change his mind. That didn’t work, either. When George Carey, who was an evangelical, became Archbishop of Canterbury—about 1992—it may have been a bit later, six of us went to lunch, including Rowan Williams, who is now the Archbishop of Canterbury. And Rowan was the Lady Margaret Professor of Theology in Oxford. So he was the theological muscle. And I was the parish priest. And there was a bishop called Peter Coleman. Two lay people, two women. And he gave us an hour before lunch, then lunch, an hour afterwards. And of course Rowan was very liberal and very

supportive of gay things in those days. But now he has to hold the line and not change everything, because he wants to hold the church together. And I feel very sad about that. He gave me an honorary, it's not an honorary degree, it's a Lambeth degree. He gives six a year. And two years ago he gave me an M.A. I think it was a little signal that he still does approve, but he can't say anything in public. But George Carey didn't change his mind at all. He was quite loathsome, in fact, about the gay world. He really was. Rather waspish and nasty. Really jolly good to see the back of him. He sent me the most terrible letter when I was speaking in the synod. I sent him a note saying, "You do realize that I can't in my synod speech say that I love Robert and that he has given me all the security in the world. But I want you to know that, Archbishop." He sent me a letter back saying, "When you and I were ordained," it was the same year, "homosexual acts were against canon law. And they still are." I thought, I was very upset, very upset. He takes a very rigid line. But he's retired now, of course.

Mark B: Are there any other significant people from those years? '70s, '80s, either allies or people in opposition, people who were particularly supportive or helpful for you, or people who were sort of stumbling or blocks to your ministry?

Malcolm J: One of the biggest, the two men who were great support to me, there was dean of St. Paul's, who was Alan, God... Webster. Alan Webster. He'd been up at Lincoln College, a principal, when I first knew him. And he became dean of St. Paul's. And he founded a group called the Central Line group—which is the Underground—for all the incumbents who were in the center, who were feeling got at by the bishop who was very Anglo-Catholic. And it was a support group, not just for gay, one or two of us were gay. He was a tremendous supporter. And his wife was the great leader of the ordination movement, movement for the ordination of women. And Robert demonstrated in support of cathedral along with six others at an ordination. Alan gave them tickets as the dean in front

row. And in the middle, they stood up with banners saying, "Ordain Women Now." It was about 1988. And of course it did happen in 1992. I think that is one of my hopes now is that the same thing would happen about gays. I mean, if you'd said to me thirty years ago that women would be ordained in the Church of England, I would have said, "No. Never." But they were in 1992. And I was in the General Synod when we all voted. We were not allowed to applaud. I'll never forget that. And I think the same thing might be true of the gay, thirty years time, I hope the generations will have gone through and more people will be accepting. But I do wonder because the Africans are so entrenched in their anti-gay feeling.

Mark B: Do you have a sense of, just around the women's ordination, as to why that happened at that point? What were the convergence of factors or things that made that possible at that time in terms of your observation and your reflections?

Malcolm J: I think people felt it was time because they knew so many good women who were deaconesses, they weren't priests. There was, however, quite a large opposition and there still is. And they have their own bishops, called flying bishops. And we don't have women bishops, of course, in the Church of England. But we will. At some stage.

Mark B: I don't even know if that, is that kind of an expected, is it a compromise in policy? Or just not talked about and it just never happened?

Malcolm J: Oh, I think it will happen. The same things will probably have to happen that they will have their own bishops, the churches who don't agree. Though I think it will happen. But of course that's happened. I think I have hopes that perhaps it might take longer. Their acceptance of gay clergy and gay clergy with partners, that's the point, you see, you can't really have a partner. Or if you do,

you have to say it's a platonic relationship. That nonsense isn't really...Jeffrey John who has become the dean of St. Alban's, as you know—

Mark B: I got to meet him this weekend.

Malcolm J: This weekend?

Mark B: When we went to evensong.

Malcolm J: Oh good. You did? Of course.

Mark B: Very gracious. Incredibly gracious.

Malcolm J: Oh, he's a marvelous person. He really is. And he's suffered a great deal because he was turned down as bishop of Reading. Having been asked to be bishop by the bishop of Oxford, Rowan said no. And I don't think he's ever talked to Rowan since, which is very, very sad indeed. We don't know the full story. But the bishop of St. Alban's asked him to be dean. And he accepted. And he has a friend, of course. Yes things are moving in the parish. And there are more openly gay people right now than there were as amongst the clergy. But you'd have to be a bit careful. Because, again, the main problem is when you want to move, you won't get one if you've got a partner, unless they're very understanding.

Mark B: And I saw you received an award from LGCM.



Malcolm J: Yes, wasn't that nice. They didn't tell me. They just sent it to me. I mean, I would have gone, probably. I had a wedding that day. So I wasn't at the meeting. They rang me up and said would I go. And I said no, I've got a wedding that day. Anyway, I haven't been going to meetings, you see. Or to the Consultation. But I would have gone. I'd have got somebody else to take the wedding for me if I'd known. So it came through the post. I'm having lunch with Richard Kirker next week.

Mark B: Oh, good.

Malcolm J: We're still friends.

Mark B: You've done a lot of writing. I know you've done a lot of speaking. Have you done any writing related to lesbian and gay folks in the church that you want to talk about? Or any, I know you had the famous speech before the General Synod. Have there been other times since then, memorable?

Malcolm J: No, I haven't written anything about the gay world. That's why I think I have started to write it down, which I don't know whether anyone will ever publish. But all of what I've told you today is in the diary, the proper dates and what not. Everything is tidied up.

Mark B: You started working on that when?

Malcolm J: Well, I've always kept a diary.

Mark B: Always kept a diary.

Malcolm J: Yes. That was my problem. I've been working at that for the last two or three years, I suppose. But my research into the doctorate, of course, has taken precedence, really. If that goes on, it will probably last another year or eighteen months. If not, I'll get the book.

Mark B: As an archivist, I have to ask, are you making provisions for your papers or your diaries to be preserved somewhere?

Malcolm J: Oh, heavens. I ought to.

Mark B: You'll think about that.

Malcolm J: Yes.

Mark B: I would encourage you to be thinking about that.

Malcolm J: Yes, I do need to. The Consultation has asked if they could have my notes, because of course I've got all the notes of who spoke when, and I will give it to them and I can arrange that. But the other stuff, I haven't kept the diaries, by and large, except when I was in the army, when of course there was nothing going on at all. I have put it all down on Word, there's 60,000 words on, I backed up this morning. I'm trying to think if there's anything else we ought to—

Mark B: I was going to say, this is amazing information. Thank you. If there's anything else you think of that you want to be sure to mention while we have this time together. It's very rich, rich story and history here.

Malcolm J: I don't think so. As I say, I have rather dropped out of the lesbian and gay movement now. I think because I feel I've done everything I can. I'm a bit tired of it, to be honest with you.

Mark B: Any reflections back over all these years? You mentioned that you've contributed a lot and you're feeling tired of that now. Things you feel changed, things you're very grateful for. You've mentioned some of your frustrations. The church has changed so slowly.

Malcolm J: Yes. Well, I'm grateful that the bishops didn't fire me, I suppose. But they'd have had a court case on their hands, wouldn't they? You see, you can't get priests out of a parish unless you take them to court. And Gerald Ellison, who was the bishop, who I suppose I had most disagreements with, was a gentleman. You know what I mean? We had to agree to disagree. He sent me lots and lots of very loving letters, starting with "Dear Johnson," which, of course, in England was actually quite pleasant before the war. Then "My Dear Johnson." Then "My Dear Malcolm." I've lost them all, all the letters. I mean, I'm just hoping one day they will come. They were things like, "I cannot see that this generation has been vouchsafed any information which changes what the church thinks about homosexuality." That was his view. "Why don't you keep quiet" was the other view. He used to say, "Mrs. Ellison and I don't tell everyone what we do in bed." He'd say to me, "You look at Douglas Webster," who was a canon of St. Paul's, he lives with someone, he doesn't keep telling everyone. And I said, "Oh, I'm sorry." But I rang Douglas up and I said, "You'll never guess what the bishop just said." [laughter] "What!" He said, "How does he know? How does he know?" Everybody knows. It's that double standard. Everyone knows you live with someone, yet you don't say anything. Very common, really. Can we turn that off for a minute?

Mark B: Sure.

Malcolm J: I'll just talk a little – [pause]

Mark B: You went to America for some training.

Malcolm J: Yes I did. Bishop Swing came over here in 1987. But that was after I had been to America. And I went to what Norman Pittenger used to call the girls' typing school, which is the General Theological Seminary. And I also went to Hartford to see Canon Clinton Jones. And to Boston to see various clergy who were involved at the HIV scene. And they really just helped me. And I remember, was it Doubleday? Was his name Doubleday? I can't remember, in New York. I think he thought, ah goodness, here comes another Englishman wanting to know more about gay things. But actually he didn't know much about HIV. And I think it was about 1985 that I went over. And then came back. Then I got Swing to come over. He was absolutely wonderful, he was really good. But we did have to pick the brains of people in America who knew a lot more than we did. And also on the gay issues as well. They were years ahead of us in the Episcopalian Church. They really were. And I nearly went to work in America, in Los Angeles, there was a parish that was quite keen to have me go. I thought long and hard. And Robert could have got a job over there, because he was working in computers at the time. But we didn't. We stayed here.

Mark B: At what time? This was in the '80s? '90s?

Malcolm J: '80s, late '80s.

Mark B: Late '80s. Uh huh.

Malcolm J: On the other tape...Boswell came in 1982. And was attractive to just about everybody. As the meeting on the Saturday finished, he was also speaking on Sunday, of course. He was coming back to us, where he was staying for dinner. And I said, "Just look around the room, John. Is there any young man here who you fancy? I'll ask him to come back to supper with us." And he looked around the room and he found a man who is now so eminent a historian, and gay, of course. And he said, "I fancy him very much." And the man had just left the room. [laughter] So he doesn't know how near he came to a little bit of excitement with John Boswell. He told us all sorts of stories about his father-in-law, who was, I think he was a general, wasn't he? He took to his relationship with his son, accepted John in the relationship. We had a civil partnership, I forgot to say, on the very first day that we were able to. That's two years ago this December.

Mark B: You're talking about you and Robert.

Malcolm J: Yes. Yes. We have our civil partnership. And we thought it was really a bit late after thirty-eight years or whatever. We're going to have a party next year when it's forty years. I'm not sure where or when. We would like to celebrate it. We've had our ups and downs, obviously. But we have remained together, thank God.

Mark B: Maybe in summing up, what do you bring from this experience? Wisdom that you have from the work that you've done. You've talked about frustration with the church. Talk about what a rich opportunity for so many people that you've been able to encounter and meet and get to know.

Malcolm J: Yes. I think that I am very thankful for the wide range of people that I've met and known and loved. And also that I do see things changing a little bit. Things have moved on a bit. I don't think I would be ordained now if I was a young man. And I have tried to put people off who

were gay. Because, you see, how can you really live an open life as a priest, a parish priest, anyway, in a vicarage with your lodger there. It is just too secretive now. I would have probably been a social worker, I think, if the opportunity had presented itself. But I have enjoyed it very much, indeed. I mean, I enjoyed being a priest enormously. So perhaps I shouldn't have put them off. But I do suggest to some of them that they could come non stipendiary, so they have a salary separate from the church. So if the church starts being difficult, they've still got a job and a salary. There's a young nurse I've been seeing who's charming and one of the finest nurses in London, really, for children. But he's going to give all that up and go and be a priest. And I keep saying to him that all these gifts, can't you be non stipendiary? You can still be a nurse and you can also still be a priest. But back to 1957, when I said to the bishop of Norwich, "Can't I be a priest and a businessman?" I couldn't then. But I can now.

Mark B: Can now. Thank you very much for your time, Malcolm. This is a rich opportunity.

Malcolm J: I've enjoyed it very much. Thank you very much for coming.

**[End Interview.]**

[123 minutes]