

## PART 9:3 MY MINISTRY THE MINISTRY OF OTHERS

Working with Avec involved a radical change in my vocational life from a hands on local Methodist minister to an ecumenical non-directive trainer and consultant in church and community work. It was a multilayered vocational move:

- from* doing the work myself and managing myself
  - to* helping other practitioners trainers, enablers and supporters to do *their* work;
  - to* helping leaders and bureaucrats to facilitate and manage the work of others;
- from* a servant ministry
  - to* a servant ministry dedicated to servant ministers;
- from* working in my 'own' denomination
  - to* working on a broad ecumenical front;
- from* being a general practitioner in one denomination
  - to* being a specialist in church and community development to practitioners in a wide band of ministries.

In short, my ministry became the ministry of others. It was the nondirective approach which enabled me to do this without patronage or the imposition of my praxis upon others. The aim was to help people find appropriate forms of praxis. Amongst other things, to make this possible it was necessary to design and establish appropriate organisational and administrative structures.

Whilst in many ways this move was a natural and obvious next step from Project 70 – 75 it was one about which I had some reservations and which I took with some reluctance because my calling and training was to a personal pastoral ministry of word and sacrament. A point made by Reg Batten in favour of my making this change, convinced me that I should do so. He noted that as a local minister I would affect change in comparatively few churches sequentially one by one over the course of my ministry whereas as a trainer/consultant my effectiveness would be multiplied exponentially and as a trainer of and consultant to trainers and consultants I would be even more influential. I was utterly clear that I could only be effective in these roles if I continued grappling with the realities of the local church and community development work and to be researching its praxis. The Avec project as envisaged would enable me to do both of those

things through a rigorous programme of working with practitioners and others on the analysis and design of their field work *and* through doing it by action research processes. Nonetheless, to honour my calling and my and my commitment to and love of the ministry of word and sacrament, I was determined to continue to exercise some form of local ministry, especially preaching. And that I did, particularly in Victoria and Chelsea Methodist churches.

At the time I did not realise that the remainder of my ministry would in fact be dedicated to the combined and complementary roles of trainer, consultant, researcher and theorist. Reflecting on this I found myself sketching out the progression of my vocational life in relation to these roles in the following way.

*In the Methodist Church*

Stage I: Orthodox training for the for Methodist ministry.

Stage 2: Deployed as a Methodist minister in two circuits.

Stage 3: Developing and researching a Methodist church as a youth and community centre, Parchmore.

*Ecumenical*

Stage 4: Researching the non-directive approach in churches of seven denominations, Project 70 – 75.

Stage 5: Providing training and consultancy services through an ecumenical agency, Avec.

*In retirement; ecumenical*

Stage 6: Researching and writing up the praxis and theology of stages 4 and 5 and publishing books about them.

Stage 7: Establishing postgraduate courses in consultancy, ministry and mission using what emerged from stage 6.

*In retirement as a Methodist supernumerary minister*

Stage 8: developing and leading an extended preacher development in-service programme.

Stage 9: Researching stage 8, establishing website and publishing a book, *Sustaining Preachers and Preaching*.

Stage 10: Reflecting on my early life, my career as an engineer and my vocational ministerial life and writing up my findings in private papers, *Notes From Retirement*.

These stages are complementary to the seven phases of action, research, study and writing that I established in the introduction to Parts 9:2 – 6.

