

PART 11: TOWARDS AN ASSESSMENT OF MY WORK AND OUTCOMES

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In this Part I venture to assess the value and potential of my vocational work and its impact upon me through reflecting on three perspectives: the *past* – the work done and outcomes; the *present* – current activities; the *future* – the ongoing relevance of the approaches and methods of working with people for development which have evolved. Inevitably this will involve references to and assessments of other people's work and that of churches, projects, consultancies, research programmes, organisations and agencies, courses in which I have been variously engaged, but I do not attempt to evaluate these entities.

I THE PAST – THE WORK DONE, OUTCOMES AND EFFECTS

THERE IS a sense in which different aspects of my work and interrelated and all of a piece. However, before I attempt an overall assessment of it I consider the principal aspects of it. As I do so I indicate the evidence on which I draw.

Aspects of my work

As these notes demonstrate, pursuing my ministerial vocation involved me in a wide range of activities and different forms of work. Here I distinguish them, assess my performance and its effects and reflect on the impact upon me personally. Some work I did on my own, and some with others; some of it was 'my work', my responsibility and some of it was joint work with others with shared responsibility. Together, variously combined, these activities constituted and formed my vocational life and work. The aspects are:

Studying, researching and writing
Preparation
Circuit and local church ministry
Preaching
NDA to CCD
Project 70–75
Education, training and consultancy
Executive responsibility

In these Notes I have: described and assessed these aspects of my work in considerable detail; the different and extensive ways in which it has been evaluated; the various effects and outcomes. Having done that, as thoroughly as I was able, I do not attempt to overview or summarise it: I

restrict myself to describing what I now think and feel about it all. These judgements are variously informed by: my direct experiences of them as they occurred and as I have relived and re-visited them, whilst writing these Notes; my standard praxis of pursuing my work through action research processes and evaluating it as it progresses; recording and journalling about events, crises, my feelings, depressions and work; developments that have occurred in practitioners and organisations with whom I have worked (see *Telling Experiences*); personal testimonies and anecdotal evidence (much of this is in letters and tributes in my files). Some of my work I evaluated on my own, at other times with colleagues. Some of these evaluations, and the methods used have been described in my books, Avec handouts and workbooks for postgraduate courses. Doing this was an important part of the outcome of my work.

An approach I use extensively to monitor and to analyse, design and plan my work and refine my praxis is a 'directional analysis of change' which I developed whilst researching my work at Parchmore Methodist Church Youth and Community Centre for my PhD. To help me to cope with the outcome of evaluations, I have developed ways and means of working at feedback creatively, especially that which is negative (see *Analysis and Design, Consultancy Ministry and Mission*).

Towards an assessment of the aspects of my work

I now attempt to assess these eight aspects of my work.

Studying, Researching and Writing (including these Notes)

I cannot overstate the importance that I attach to studying, researching and writing. Each of these activities has contributed enormously to my professional development, my grasp on 'my' discipline and the development of my abilities as a reflective practitioner. I have read as widely as I could about the praxis and theology or church and community, development and consultancy work to the neglect, I regret to say, of my biblical and theological studies, although I have done some reading in these fields. One of the things that has encouraged and pleased me and stimulated me to do as much reading and study as possible is the enormous benefits that have accrued from that which I have done and the extensive use I have been able to make of it. My books and these notes (see the indexes) indicate what I have read and the uses I have made of it.

What I regret, however, is that I had not the time, energy, nor opportunities to write about other things emerging from studying, analysing and designing such a wide range of church and community work situations. An analysis of the problems encountered could have been quite revealing. Similarly book of the cases we had studied with course participants with the analyses along the lines of the case studies published by the Battens. (Catherine started to do this but pressure of work prevented her from completing it.) To have done this at a time when it reflected the contemporary state of the church and community work situations whilst it was all fresh in my mind could have been extraordinarily useful. The time has gone; my memory of the detail is fading; things have moved on. Nonetheless, as I have already said earlier, the archival material means that someone could carry out useful research into the working situations even though he/she would not have direct experience of them. Whilst it would be historical research my hunch is that it could shed interesting light not only on the past but on contemporary church and community work. I hope this will be done, sooner rather than later.

I have already said much in these Notes about my writing. There are just one or two other things I wish to say here. It has made unique and powerful contributions to: clarifying my thoughts; sharpening my ideas; the generation of new insights; my grasp on and understanding and internalising of all manner of things. In many ways this has enhanced my face-to-face work, my preaching and my lecturing, not least through enabling me to speak and to work with deeper understanding, confidence and added authority that I would not otherwise have had.

Time that I have spent in studying, researching and writing has been richly rewarding. I have valued it as well as enjoyed it and never regretted it.

Preparation

Preparation, on my own privately and with others, falls very much into the same category as studying, researching and writing. I have always given myself to it in a disciplined manner and found it quite testing and demanding but enormously rewarding. I think I am quite good at it.

Circuit and local church ministry

Local church and circuit ministry was fundamental to my vocational life and work in every phase of it. My involvement in it as a circuit minister spanned fourteen years and three circuits. In the first of these, Carmarthen

and Llanelly, I pursued a traditional Methodist ministry very happily; to my great joy and sense of fulfilment I discovered that I was quite good at all aspects of it and people responded to me and my ministry generously and with enthusiasm and gratitude; I enjoined and valued the status that this gave me. My second circuit, Sydenham and Forest Hill, was very different in many ways. I had a very good and productive circuit white Ministry, especially with young people and young adults. One of my charges, Wesley Hall whole, was very difficult; the other, Anerley, was quite responsive. It was in this circuit that I got involved in open youth work in both my churches, the circuit, the district and the connexion. Also, I was involved in developing church and community work in both of my churches. However, for Molly and leave it was not as happy a time as our first appointment. My third circuit appointment was in the Croydon circuit where I had pastoral charge of only one church, Parchmore. I was as well and enthusiastically received as I was in my first church appointment by people in the circuit and in Parchmore who appreciated my ministry. It was the most innovative, exciting and fulfilling and, I believe, creative of my three circuit ministries. Together with the people I began to learn about the NDA to CCD and how to practise it. Molly was deeply involved in the work; we were both happy and deeply fulfilled.

Overall, this fourteen years direct involvement in local church and circuit work formed a sound foundation for my life's work in church and community development and grounded me in local ministry. In all three circuits I had experience of ministry of word and sacrament and being a pastor. In the first I gained experience of ministry in a rural area, and in market and industrial towns; in my second, I gained experience of inner-city life and downtown ministry; in my third circuit I gained experience of ministry in a large conurbation and in what had been a middle-class suburban area which had become a deteriorating urban area with some inner-city characteristics. It was in this circuit that I received training and gained experience in the praxis of the NDA to CCD and researched it through studies which led up to my PhD. I also acquired some experience of training other practitioners in this approach through short courses and in-service training sessions for people involved in the same kind of work in which I was involved. All in all, this was a thorough grounding, preparation and education and training for all that was to follow. It was not preplanned for this purpose, it just evolved, one thing, followed another driven by how, stage by stage, I saw the importance of interrelated church and community development work, the nature of the ministry which would promote it, and the approaches and methods required to exercise it. It was a creative and formative process as exciting and fulfilling in retrospective contemplation as

it was whilst I lived and worked through it. I am deeply thankful to God for giving me this period of ministry and the ways in which I was guided me through it and prepared me for what was to come.

But that was far from the end of my involvement in circuit life and ministry. It was the central subject matter of all my subsequent work. And I have been actively involved in five circuits and exercised a preaching ministry: Sydenham and Forest Hill; Highgate; Victoria and Chelsea; Leeds North East; Leeds; Leeds North and East where I am now based. I greatly valued and have been enriched through participating in circuit life – and continue to be so; amongst other things, it gave me a local church base and Christian fellowship.

There was another extraordinary rich vicarious association with local church work of all denominations through my subsequent work in a wide range of training and consultancy projects and my postgraduate work. This was extremely rewarding and gave me, as I have already indicated, a very broad and deep understanding of most forms of local church work.

Preaching

Introspective and self-centred as it may appear to start this piece by reflecting on how I have benefited from my preaching ministry, that I must do before I can consider other aspects of it. I have no doubts whatsoever of the enormous benefits to me personally of my preaching ministry. They have and continue to be enormous. The rewards and blessings have far exceeded the costs, pain, tension and stress, which I have variously experienced in preparation, in anticipating engagements and in reflecting on them afterwards which at times as been tortuously painful.

I have discussed my preaching ministry at some length in Part 9.7 and described how it has been well received; more often than not members of congregations have been complimentary and grateful and said so to me. For this I am deeply thankful to God. One of the enormous blessings from my preaching ministry is the status and respect bestowed upon me. Another is that it has given me opportunities to give considered expression to things which were exciting me and those which were concerning me. This was releasing and gave me the sense that I was doing something about them in very limited ways. Also, it made significant contributions to my development and the ongoing formation of my theology. Molly too gained from it, and that gave me much joy and pleasure, because she deserved it: characteristically she rejoiced when people said complimentary things about my preaching and shared with her their appreciation; she enjoyed the

reflected glory; it made all the costs and sacrifices she had made worthwhile. This humbles me; I feel unworthy of it, and deeply privileged and grateful to God for having called me to this form of ministry – and through it to aspects of ministry in church and community development that I had in no way foreseen when I responded to the to preach – and giving me the requisite gifts and many opportunities.

Concerns which I have had for some time contrast starkly with what I personally gain from my preaching ministry. They relate to the actualities of the ministry of preaching rather than the theology and theory of it, upon which Neil Richardson and I did some work (see part 9.7 and *Sustaining Preaching and Preachers*). I find myself grappling with, and worrying about the following questions. How important is it to members of the congregation and in church life in general and worship in particular? How do members and church councils view preaching? What do they want from it? What do they get from it? What are the functions it actually performs? How effective is it? These questions and concerns arise from some of the ways I have observed people responding to preaching and hunches I have about what is happening which I have not tested out in any thoroughgoing way. In a sense they are impossible questions to answer meaningfully, not least because the answers are as numerous as churches and members of congregations. Nonetheless, they nag me persistently and I feel bound to explore them, and the experiences which prompt them.

Some sermons – mine and those of others – or more precisely aspects of them, are referred to for some time and their emotional and spiritual impact remain with us throughout our lives, but it seems to me most are soon forgotten. I cannot even remember some of the sermons I have preached fairly recently! Admittedly, the affective impact of sermons, be it positive or negative, is remembered long after the content has been forgotten. Responsive action by individuals is normally private and largely unknown. There is, however, some anecdotal evidence of the effects: occasionally, for instance, people refer to sermons that continue to help them that I preached many years ago and which I have forgotten. Frequently, however, I am disturbed by people responding enthusiastically to preaching and to sermons whilst they are being preached and afterwards to sermons of which I am highly critical. Rarely in my experience are sermons studied formally and purposefully by groups of people or by church councils. Consequently, I fear that much of the extremely valuable potential inherent in sermons is squandered because it is not translated into personal Christian living and the missiological activities of churches.

Sadly, serious preaching is in decline. All too frequently, it is supplanted

by meditations, short addresses, biblical expositions and PowerPoint presentations. These experiences have depressed me and let me to feel and think that: preaching is being devalued and losing its importance and significance and that some people put up with it because they value the worship and the fellowship of which it is a part.

To my shame, I have wallowed in these feelings without thinking them through. Reflecting on them for these Notes has led me to see that I was somewhat and clear about the functions preaching actually perform. At best it informs, educates and challenges people about Christianity and Christian living in contemporary society, but it is not a form of systematic biblical, Christian or theological education. It may stimulate people and the church to action, but it is not intended to be a briefing or preparation for executive action. So what are its functions? Two have become clearer to me.

First, preaching provides sustenance for personal and corporate spiritual life, Christian living, engaging in the ministry and mission of the church. It is food for the mind and the soul. I have been aware of this analogy, but I don't know why I haven't thought about it more rigorously before because it is so apt. Food is required at regular intervals to sustain body and mind because we soon use up the energy that it provides. Eating is both functional and pleasurable. It requires much preparation, but is consumed quickly. The body extracts from it what is required and discharges that which is not. Food does its job, even when I can't remember what I've eaten. A small amount can give an incredible amount of energy as Alexander Solzhenitsyn testified:

(In the camp) you had to eat with all your mind on the food – like now, nibbling the bread, bit by bit, working the crumbs up into a paste with your tongue and sucking it into your cheeks. And how good it tasted, that soggy black bread! What had he eaten for eight, no, more than eight years? Nothing. But how much work had he done? Ah! (*One day in the life of Ivan Denisovich*, p 43f)

Under and over eating, on the other hand, adversely affects us. Healthy living depends upon getting the amount and the diet right.

The application of this analogy to preaching does not need to be spelt out. It is so obvious. There is a close connection between the ministry of word and sacrament: preaching is a form of bread and wine which nurtures Christian living, as does the bread and wine of the Eucharist. (Amongst other things, this and similar passages changed the way in which I take the elements of the Eucharist; it has helped me to take them 'with all my mind'.) In as much as this analogy is valid, my job as a preacher is to feed

congregations with food that energises and nourishes mind and soul for Christian living. Attending to good preaching helps to maintain an appetite for it and keep the spiritual, theological and moral digestive systems in good order. Congregations which I know appreciate and expectantly anticipate it stimulates me in preparation to produce my best material and draws out from me the best of my preaching performances. One of the benefits of the use of the lectionary in worship and in preaching is that I, along with congregations, feed on a balanced biblical diet; prompts me to study and preach on passages which I would not normally do. And this contributes to my all-round formation and that of congregations. This complements what I have written in 9.7 about the systemic nature of the subject matter of my preaching material.

Second, maintaining an effective lay and ordained preaching ministry involves, *inter alia*, developing and maintaining groups of preachers, in contrast, that is, to worship leaders, important as they might be. That means that at the heart of church life there are groups of people committed and commissioned to: studying the Bible, Christian theology, the application of Christianity to personal and social and political life and the missiological task; proclaiming the gospel; applying it to contemporary life; maintaining the doctrinal standards of denominations. Such groups – identifiable, trained and accredited and operating under and within the discipline of the church – are of vital importance to the church in the contemporary situation where there is so many exciting opportunities and needs for Christianity, which can only be realised through sustained critical prayerful thought which informs personal and corporate action. Members of such groups will gain enormously from pursuing their calling, that is, if my experience is anything to go by.

Quite apart from all those who love to hear sermons and who benefit greatly from them, these two outcomes alone indicate that a preaching ministry of high calibre is utterly essential to effective ministry and mission and any indifference to it makes it all the more necessary: the need for a preaching ministry is determined by the purposes of the church, not by whether or not people want it. Poor preaching or the dearth of preaching is dangerous for the well-being and development of the Christian church and its ministry and mission.

This leads me to the significance of feedback, evaluation and obedience and inspiration to my understanding of and commitment to the ministry of preaching. Carefully considered feedback and evaluation have made important contributions to me and my preaching ministry. That which has been positive – when accepted with due humility and acknowledgement

to the part played by divine inspiration and help – has variously flattered, affirmed, encouraged and stimulated me to continue and to try to do even better. That which has been critical – when considered seriously, even when it has been difficult to accept and face up to it – has helped me to refine and develop my preaching and tempered propensities to be complacent and to think more highly of myself than I ought. Together they have helped me to a balanced and healthy understanding of my ability and status as a preacher. Responses people have shared with me have given me privileged insights into: their inner spiritual lives and aspirations; what they need and want to get from preaching, the kind of preaching that helps them to get it, and the ways in which it affects them. Such sharing induces personal and spiritual bonding and rich experiences of Christian *koinonia*. As I write, I feel overwhelmed by being privileged to experience over so many years these out workings of preaching ministry. And what has been revealed to me may well be only a small part of what has actually happened.

Nonetheless, preaching is essentially an act of faith substantiated and justified by Scripture, reason and experience not by its achievements or lack of them, or interim evaluations of it. My belief in and commitment to preaching, promoting and pursuing it faithfully is deeply rooted in the theology and praxis of the nature of the church and its missiological task. And that is my case for it. Even though it can and must be developed and refined through reliable information and insights gained from diligently pursuing the questions I posed. Being obedient and faithful to the call to preach is of the essence of the ministry of the word, whatever the responses might be. Even though there is so much evidence for the effectiveness and validity of preaching, it must remain an act of faith if for no other reason that any assessment of its impact that we might make his interim, provisional and incomplete.

The NDA to CCD

Discerning the relevance of the non-directive approach to church and community development work and consultancy and developing its praxis was one of the most important things that I have done I have described this in considerable detail in several books and papers, and in these Notes. Quite soon after I had made what I have described as a providential discovery – in the sense of finding and identifying rather than of inventing the approach – I decided that such was its importance that I must give myself without reserve to studying its praxis and theology, becoming competent in it practice and researching it in order to become a properly equipped, qualified and professionally recognised practitioner. It has been my life's work since I attended the Battens' three months' course in 1967. I believe

that it was and remains an important part of my providential ministerial vocation to which God called and equipped me. To have been given this task I consider an enormous privilege. Applying myself to the work has not always been easy, but it has been very exciting and deeply satisfying and fulfilling; I feel I have achieved something incredibly worthwhile and justified my existence and my ministry. It took me over 30 years to do this and to write up textbooks about it, much longer than I ever envisaged in 1967. Inevitably, there are things that I wish I could have done better but I did the best job that I could possibly do given my limitations, circumstances and resources. In all humility, I feel and think that I did a good job and I am more grateful than I can say and proud to have been so used of God and at the end of my life to feel like this. This judgement is substantiated in many different ways: the efficacy and the effectiveness of the work done; many different personal testimonies; reviews of my books. Then there are many assessments and testimonies to the value of my work, some of which are on file. Three I wish to mention: *Telling Experiences*; the DD awarded to me by the Archbishop of Canterbury, and particularly the citation and the supporting submissions bound in the 'Red Book'; many people have said to me that courses and my books transformed their way of working and radically changed their ministry; recently, some people have said that the work radically changed the approach to working with people of a generation of ministers and lay workers – moved and overwhelmed by this, I suggested is that this was too extravagant claim that they insisted that it was not so; I can scarcely credit it.

I have, however, three regrets. The first is that, whilst derivatives of it – such as 'collaboration', collegiality', promoting 'egalitarian participation', 'subsidiarity' and working to 'consensus' – are widely practised, the non-directive approach itself is not more widely understood, accepted and practised. The second is that to date no one has followed me and picked up where I left off and therefore there is no future custodian known to me of the heritage built up by so many people over so many years at an enormous cost. The third is that there is no institute or agency committed to promoting, providing training and consultancy services and continuing to research the praxis of NDA to CCD. Sadly, there is not what is termed, 'a centre excellence' actively capitalising on the heritage. Section III discusses the situation and spells out ways in which it could be redeemed. There could be a glimmer of hope that something might be done to remedy the situation in the responses to a paper I produced on the subject. Also, in that section, I describe new literature of enormous importance to church and community work praxis for this and the next generation. And this is not all, as we shall see. The absence of someone and/or an institution to capitalise

on what has been achieved enhances the importance and enormous value of having extensively documented the praxis and theology of NDA to CCD and the ways and means of practising and promoting it and establishing accessible Archives. I am more thankful than I can say that this has been done and deeply reassured that there is or will be permanent access to a large amount of material accrued about this approach. So all is not lost!

Project 70-75

Project 70-75, was an important and successful action research programme with many outcomes of enormous importance and value. The action research previously carried out on the NDA to CCD demonstrated beyond any doubt that it was essential to promoting human and spiritual development in Methodist churches and through them in their local communities and by extrapolation that it had equal value for churches of other denominations. This has already been established in the earlier description of my work at Parchmore and the Project and I do not intend to go over this ground again. Project 70 – 75 demonstrated beyond any reasonable doubt that the approach was of equal value to the work of all the major denominations.

Consequently, by the mid-70s the accumulated research provided a reliable base and invaluable experience and resource material for a thorough going ecumenical education, training and consultancy programme designed to promote the NDA to CCD and to equip and support its use by lay and ordained workers. Thus it was a vital contribution to a disciplined professional approach to the NDA to CCD.

Through this Project, Avec was conceived and given birth and it inaugurated and established an invaluable creative colleagueship which has proved to be lifelong.

Another very important outcome of this Project was that I became committed to the missiological and strategic principle of getting churches as churches engaged in their own development and of their neighbourhoods. The painful way in which I learnt this lesson meant that it was burnt more deeply into my person and praxis than it might otherwise been. Somewhat ironically that it was a non-churchgoing person, Reg Batten who taught me this lesson.

At a personal level Project 70 – 75 facilitated the following radical transitions in my vocational life:

- *from working in one denomination to working ecumenically;*

- *from* being engaged full-time as a local practitioner *to* being engaged full-time in educating, training and providing consultancy and support services to other people, variously engaged in the church and community work;
- *from* being employed and directed by the Methodist Church *to* being employed by an ecumenical agency;
- *from* the security of having a stipend *to* the and insecurity and onerous business of having to help to raise my salary.

These transitions undoubtedly enhanced and extended my overall effectiveness at the cost of much insecurity and being distanced from the core life of my own denomination. Retrospectively, I think this was the right vocational path for me to take and I am thankful for all that I gained from taking it. Nonetheless, I regret not living and working at the local and connexional heart of my beloved Methodist Church for such a large and definitive period of my ministry.

Education, training and consultancy

Up to the time of my retirement almost all the education, training and community work that I did was under the aegis of one or more of the following bodies: Avec; Roehampton Institute of Higher Education; West Minster College, Oxford; Cliff College; the Urban Theology Unit; the Leeds North East Circuit. The training and consultancy work was under the aegis of Avec; the postgraduate courses being under the aegis of the other institutions.

It was standard practice to evaluate this work as it proceeded and when it had been completed by staff members and members of courses and those with whom we worked on consultancy projects. Also, I evaluated programmes of work and developments with my colleagues in Avec and the Trustees. Additionally, there were independent evaluations by Mark Europe and by churches and organisations who used Avec services. Overwhelmingly, these evaluations have been positive. Consequently, it is known that significant contributions have been made to the life of work of a large number of practitioners and their churches, organisations and agencies. What, also has been achieved is the development of praxis, thoroughly researched and tested and proven which is of continuing and universal value. Material has been preserved and properly archived which facilitates continuing research of the praxis which could be of contemporary and historical relevance.

However, like all such attempts, these can only be partial and interim assessments and evaluations: comprehensive and definitive evaluations of

work done with people can only be made at the end of time by God; all other evaluations are of necessity partial and interim assessments in relation to purpose. Nonetheless, given this understanding of the status of the evaluations, those that are honest and technically competent are important and useful.

All the courses were, in one way or another, about the nature, relevance, praxis and theology of the NDA to CCD, and its application to the work in which the participants and their organisations were engaged. Participants learnt about this approach through lectures, structured discussions, work, study, practice sessions and case studies in plenary sessions, groups and tutorials. Also, they learnt by the way in which the staff embodied and used the approach. Consequently, the approach and the education/training events were all of a piece: they were academic and experiential learning events for participants and staff alike. Consultancy sessions were thoroughgoing applications of the NDA to relationships between consultors and consultants and the way in which together they engaged with the work and concerns that consultors brought to sessions. In short, this approach was entirely in line with my commitment to the NDA to CCD and my conviction about its relevance. Happily, I was entirely comfortable with it. It suited my personality and my preferred way of relating to and working with people; it became natural to me and a way of life. Finding that this approach is as efficacious to education, training and consultancy as it is to local church and community work was – and that I was equally good at it – was a great and wonderful discovery.

Pursuing opportunities to meet these educational and training needs, led to the gradual development of an impressive comprehensive programme. It provide inductive, in-service and postgraduate training for and facilitated research into the NDA to CCD and missiology in relation to:

- all the levels of church and community work from local to international and those with responsibility for them;
- no fewer than seven denominations; diverse forms of church and community life, organisation and work from religious to secular;
- churches and Christian organisations and agencies.

I count myself, and deeply privileged and proud to have been involved in all of this. I see it to be a witness to and vindication of my vocational calling and aspirations. Thanks be to God.

Executive responsibility

Earlier in these notes I discussed in the nature and extent of my executive responsibility for Avec and how it eventually brought me to the point of breakdown. Taking this as read, I now want to try to articulate how I now feel about the executive responsibilities I had in Avec, in the light of other experiences of being responsible for education and training programmes administered and validated by institutions to which I had responsibilities for the work that I did, but did not have any for the institutions. On balance, I think I preferred this latter arrangement even though I was subject to and dependent upon the policies and some decisions about the courses made by others. In the main those with overall executive responsibility with whom I had to deal were directly accessible to me and my relationships with them were collegial. Exceptions to this have been noted. Working relationships with RIHE, Westminster and Cliff Colleges were conducive and highly productive. Similar arrangements to these, however, were simply not available when the follow up to Project 70-75, was being considered. Had they been so, it is an open question as to whether they would have facilitated the creativity achieved in and through Avec. They could, of course, have been available somewhere, but we and those with whom we founded Avec were not aware of them. Indeed, those which eventually did become available to me did so as a direct consequence of the work of Avec. Nonetheless, the question has arisen in my mind quite persistently. Examining it has helped me to see just how hypothetical it is and how unrewarding it is to pursue it. Except, that is, to clarify the two modes of operation and to facilitate proper consideration of their respective merits which could help in making good decisions between them.

Developments that have occurred did so through seizing the opportunities that *were* available, creating some that weren't, making the most of them, paying the personal costs of doing so, attempting to capitalise on the outcomes and rejoicing in what was achieved: that is a measure of the existential reality we experienced and with which we engaged. On the one hand I thank God for what was achieved and for the potential built up for the future (which I consider in Section III). On the other hand, I regret and grieve about other developments that I yearned and worked for with all my heart, but which just didn't happen; that remains unfinished business that gnaws away at my vocational soul, as does the fact that no one emerged to succeed Catherine and I and to work at the agenda of unfinished business.

II THE PRESENT — CURRENT ACTIVITIES

On the whole, I find myself happily engaged and living a very satisfying vocational life even though the range of my activities has been significantly reduced. For all that I consider myself providentially privileged. I am deeply thankful that I continue to be able: to think critically and creatively and to write; to preach; to engage in work. Howbeit not at the same pace or to the same extent that I could even a few years ago as my energy is diminishing, but thankfully at a slow rate! My enthusiasm for this work continues unabated and I gain much satisfaction from the desire to do it, and the doing of it. I consider myself very fortunate. Since I lost Molly, my vocational work has been my salvation.

Apart from preaching appointments – next April I returned to Anerley – there are deeply satisfying ongoing pieces of work in which I am very interested: a consultancy with Steve Wild in preparation for his presidential year; a consultancy with Maggie Patchett in relation to a three-year action research project into rural church and community development (see next part). Then there are ongoing discussions and seminars about ministry in retirement, which I describe below. Also, I am involved in discussions about the potential in the NDA to CCD and their possible future uses which I also describe in the next part.

As I come to the end of these Notes I am deeply thankful that it seems I will be able to complete them. Increasingly, I am looking forward with eager anticipation to considering and discussing the uses to which they might be put and what I should do with.

During 2012 through to the beginning of 2014 we – my co-consultancy colleagues Charles New, David Copley, Ian Johnson and I – gave much thought to critical aspects of our experiences of ministry in retirement. Eventually I decided to write a paper about these discussions in an attempt to get a purposeful grip upon my emotions and a more balanced picture of life in retirement and to understand and to determine the implications of the anxious and distress I was experiencing. The four of us produced a paper based on that draft, *Reflections on Life and Ministry in Retirement*. The impact of this analytical reflection, reproduced and discussed in part 9:6, has been encouraging: arrangements are in hand for supernumeraries to discuss it; various people responsible for ministers and their vocational deployment and lives are considering it. The nature and effects upon the four of us has been considerable, as is indicated in the following quotation from the conclusion to the paper.

It would be difficult to overstate the importance to us personally of working rigorously, together for two or three years at critical issues about ministering in retirement and the ways and means of repositioning ourselves. It has had positive effects on our vocational effectiveness and satisfaction. Each of us has made significant changes for the better in our approach to ministry in retirement, our attitudes and behaviour and our work programmes. We are repositioning ourselves in relation to many aspects of our vocational life in retirement and our experiences of and encounters with contemporary Methodism. It indicates that, whatever the church does or does not do towards the vocational and personal well-being of ministers in retirement, there are personal and structured ways and means by which we can contribute to our own salvation by working at things ourselves.

Consequently, some aspects of the paper do not now represent me in the same way as they did when it was written. Following the rubrics about repositioning ourselves and especially those related to controlled emotional involvement and circumspect deployment and participation have greatly improves the quality of my vocational life in retirement: I feel that I am much more purposefully and positively engaged with what is happening in the Methodist Church and that enhances the quality of my life in retirement.

Several features of my present position are conducive to this vocational work during the period of my life in retirement when my abilities and energy levels are declining, howbeit slowly and imperceptibly, and not as reliable and predictable as they used to be. They are: I do not have demanding executive responsibilities; I am responsible for the work I do; I am able to finance the work I do so I am not dependent upon income from it and fees some of which I now dedicate to charities; most of the work I do is done privately in my home and at my desk and therefore not subject to the uncertainties of my energy levels and the worry and pressure that goes with public appointments.

All in all, God has been good to me for which I am deeply grateful.

III THE FUTURE — ONGOING RELEVANCE OF THE NDA TO CCD

As far as I am concerned there can be no doubt about the ongoing relevance of the NDA to CCD to wide ranging church and community work. That seems to me to be proven as witnessed by these Notes and so much more. Securing its future use is quite another matter to which I have given much thought. In the absence of an agency or organisation or personnel dedicated to carry on this work progress will be made in a

fragmented manner by people developing one aspect or another in an ad hoc rather than not in a concerted way. The ongoing relevance and possible opportunities are well represented by: something Catherine Widdicombe has written about neighbourhood work and workers, an article I wrote about the resources that are available and a paper about the future, relevance of this approach. In this section I quote from the first of these, introduce the second and reproduce the third. These are appropriate ways in which I can indicate the ongoing relevance and possible ways in which the potential can be realised.

1. Neighbourhood work and workers

Catherine Widdicombe describes the work and workers to whom the NDA to CCD is relevant as follows.

Some, if not most ... local or neighbourhood community work is... with ordinary people of all ages and social standing and meets their leisure and welfare needs in their everyday lives. Much of it covers several educational, personal, social, spiritual and recreational needs through clubs of all kinds, uniformed organizations, community arts such as choirs, special interest groups, sports and yoga sessions, art and embroidery circles, computer and literacy classes, drop-in or day-centres, charity shops, environmental and community gardening schemes. Other community work is concerned with people who, in acute need of help, turn to associations such as the Samaritans and Alcoholics Anonymous, or who are destitute, trapped in poverty, corruption or addiction, and feel alienated from the mainstream of society. ...

A vast number of very different people and secular and religious organisations are engaged in all these kinds of community work... Those engaged voluntarily and part-time in this wide ranging community work are variously deployed, managed, supported and trained by: full-time professional workers; full-time courses on community work and community development; induction and in-service training courses; community work consultants; management committees.... The range of work is matched by the variety of titles: volunteers, assistants, youth workers, group or community workers, helpers, staff members, visitors, carers, helpers or befrienders. Others call themselves activists, instructors, cooks, housekeepers, cleaners, telephonists, care-takers, residents, and community members, or they simply don't give themselves titles at all! Others, particularly those who have overall responsibilities may call themselves chair-person, trustee, councillor, administrator, support team member, organiser or stake holder. Another group of people are those with particular expertise variously responsible for a specific activity may be described as fund-raiser, treasurer, secretary, consultant, facilitator, adviser or counsellor. Vast amounts of this local

community work is done on a voluntary basis, but as organisations become larger it is increasingly the practice to have one or more people such as centre managers, wardens, team leaders, administrators, and co-ordinators and maybe a few of the staff on the pay-roll. They may work full- or part-time. (

I quote from Catherine's draft of yet unpublished book with her permission.)

2. Some resources for realising the future potential

Considerable resources – bodies of knowledge, apparatus and evaluated experience – are available to realise the future potential of the NDA to CCD. Various they would facilitate the application, study and research of it. An article I contributed to the *Epworth Review* entitled 'Some Resources for Contemporary Ministry and Mission' (Vol 32. No 4. October 2005 pp 3 – 50) highlights the following as resources: thoroughly tested and fully described underlying practice theory (the NDA to working with people, the practice of the operating through work, views, aids to conceptualising and thinking things through, the action research praxis); underlying bodies of knowledge and experience; accessing the resources. Other resources are described in the next sub-section.

3. Future Uses

At the President's dinner at the Methodist Conference in June 2014 the Rev Dr Martyn Atkins General Secretary of the Methodist Church and a former colleague at Cliff College on the postgraduate MA courses put a very important question to me during our conversation about the ongoing relevance of the work in which I have been engaged. It was about what I consider to be the future of church and community development in the emerging socio-religious context which, as he rightly said, is, in some ways significantly different from the one in which I worked in the 1960s – 90s and established the praxis which has been and is still widely practised. He questioned me about the community subject matter and needs upon which it might engage and the shape it would take, the kind of projects that would evolve. I felt I could not make an adequate reply around a celebratory dinner table and sentenced I would think about it. Since then I have thought about this vitally important question and have been glad to do so because I am convinced it raises very critical issues and it relates to these Notes.

After a hesitant start I eventually got into the first draft of the paper. As I did so I began to wonder why the questions had been put at all: the answers seemed so obvious from Avec's track record and mine. For many years Martyn and I had worked very closely on postgraduate degree courses. He had waxed enthusiastic about the work I did with students on their action research and dissertations and the ways in which I supervise them through tutorials. He wrote many letters to me expressing this. In the light of this experience and taking the questions on their face value as genuine, how could he put the questions at all? Future applications should have been obvious to him. If there were not, how much more would those without any experience of the approach, see the future relevance? In view of this, I decided that I would take the questions he had raised seriously and write a paper which would spell out the future relevance of this work readily understandable and accessible to anyone, regardless of their experience of it.

Future Uses of The Non-directive Approach To Church and Community Development and Work Consultancy

These notes are a considered response to a question put to me during the 2014 Methodist Conference by the Rev Dr Martyn Atkins. As I recall it, he asked me what I see to be the future of church and community development in the contemporary and foreseeable future in a socio-religious context which in some ways is significantly different from the one in which I worked from c1960 – 2000 and established the praxis which has been and is still widely practised. He questioned me about the community subject matter and the needs upon which it could engage, the shape it would take and the kind of projects that will emerge. In formulating my response I was helped by conversations with my co-consultancy colleagues, Charles New and Ian Johnson and comments they made on an early draft of this paper.

I. The non-directive approach (NDA), church and community development (CCD) and work consultancy

I use the term *the non-directive approach* (NDA) as shorthand for an intricately nuanced approach which places high value on maximising opportunities for people to engage in critical imaginative thought about the missiological purposes of the Christian church and their contributions

to pursuing them in concrete local situations and acting creatively on the conclusions. The nature and praxis of this approach has been developed, researched, widely practised and carefully formulated. (See, for instance, *The Non-directive Approach* by TR and M Batten and my books *The Church and Community Development: An Introduction Analysis, Analysis and Design* particularly chapter 5 et al. These books along with most of those referred to in this paper can be accessed online at www.avecresources.org). Deploying this approach involves getting participants involved in work programmes thinking, deciding and acting together. Workers and facilitators must continually ask: What must I do *for* these people? What must I do *with/alongside* them? What must I *leave them to do* by and for themselves?

I value the approach for what it contributes to: human and spiritual growth and well-being; the development of autonomy and healthy socio-religious interdependence in religious and secular life; the development of church and community life; the contributions it makes towards achieving the pastoral and missiological purposes of the Christian faith.

Church and community development (CCD) aims to promote inter-related human and spiritual development of: people in churches and in secular societies; people and environment; churches and communities; religious and secular organisations. (See *Human and Religious Factors In Church and Community Work*, pp 12 – 14 and the *Church And Community Development: An Introduction* and particularly pp 32-35.

Work consultancy for Christian ministry and mission is a specific application of the non-directive approach and is now established as a discipline in its own right. (See *Consultancy Ministry and Mission* and *Consultancy Modes and Models*.

The praxis of NDA to which I refer draws upon aspects of various religious and secular disciplines. These have been carefully tailored to serve the purposes of Christian ministry and mission. This is also true of the praxis of CCD and of work consultancy for ministry and mission. As a result, all three are firmly located in the profession of Christian ministry and formulated to pursue it. Non-directive praxis is foundational to the praxis of CCD and work consultancy; but these disciplines incorporate concepts and methods other than those in NDA praxis.

These approaches were variously developed and deployed extensively through: my ministry in Parchmore Road Methodist Church, 1966 – 72 (See *The Parchmore Partnership*; an action research project 70-75, 1972-76) (See *Churches And Communities*); an ecumenical training and work

consultancy agency in CCD, 1976-91 (see *Avec Agency and Approach*); work consultancy postgraduate diploma and MA courses, first in Westminster College, Oxford then in Cliff College and the York Institute for Community Theology, York St John's University from 1998 – 2014 (the future of this course is currently being negotiated following the closure of the York Institute.)

Through this extensive experience of these three principal disciplines their nature, praxis and theology has been worked out in some detail and thoroughly documented (see www.avecresources.org). I have described them briefly to inform what follows and to minimise the danger of it being misunderstood.

In the remainder of this paper, drawing on this and other experience, I discuss the present and future deployment of these approaches.

II Ongoing uses of these approaches

It is possible to indicate ways in which these approaches and disciplines could be of continuing importance to the ongoing life and the work of the Christian church in the Western world but not to forecast the shape that resulting programmes will take. What follows is a somewhat miscellaneous collection of such ideas indicating ways in which these approaches will be necessary to further the missiological purposes of the Christian church.

I. Purposes dependent on the non-directive approach

The non-directive approach is required in one way or another and to varying degrees to achieve some purposes essential to the ministry and mission of the church and to working with people for the promotion of human and spiritual development. Among them are the needs:

- to get people to think for themselves;
- to get people to think realistically about their own needs and those of others;
- to get people to think pragmatically and theologically about the socio-religious contexts in which they and their churches are set and their responses to them;
- to promote creative and critical thought about church and community work and putting it into good practice;
- to practise subsidiarity;
- to promote development from below and from above and below;
- to engender collaboration and egalitarian participation;

- to foster teamwork;
- to assist practitioners and people to engage in the analysis and design of work programmes and to tackle problems they encounter etc;
- to get people to evaluate their work and reflect on it theologically. Undoubtedly these purposes will feature in church and community work in the foreseeable future just as they have in the past because they are essential to human and spiritual development. (I have written about promoting these processes in *Analysis and Design*.)

2. Discernible specific applications

Programmes of work, situations and projects are emerging to which these approaches could make significant contributions well into the future; they are indicative of a wide range of applications.

Local church and community development work

In 1971 I explored the relationship between the mission of the church and community development in an article for the *Expository Times* which was subsequently re-published in the *Social Sciences and The Churches*, CL Mitton, Editor, T and T Clark 1972 and in 1996 I returned to this subject in *Avec Agency and Approach* pp 177 – 85). Also in 1996 I described the theological, educational and sociological developments which had been favourable to the development of Avec and its church and community development work (see *Avec Agency and Approach* pp 172 – 6). Some of this work I believe is still relevant; other aspects may need revision in relation to the contemporary situation.

The wide ranging application of the approaches described earlier in and through Avec and many practitioners, churches and religious agencies is based on the conviction that church work is essentially local and that the church in mission is primarily the local church everywhere in the world (David J Bosch). It established beyond any doubt that the approaches to non-directive church and community development and consultancy work are highly relevant to local church work in all its diversity. Churches are involved in a miscellany of church and community provision and work. I am absolutely convinced that these approaches will be needed as long as the Christian church exists because local work is a permanent part of the life of the pastoral and missiological strategy of the Christian church. Indeed it could be argued that they will be even more necessary in the foreseeable future during times of radical internal and contextual changes: church

membership is falling; radical organisational changes have been introduced; the social, political and religious context is changing rapidly. Local churches and particularly their leaders and workers need all the help and support that they can get to meet these challenges in the immediate and long-term future.

In the 1970s I outlined ten local church and community development models in relation to the life and work of the church and government policy at the time (see *The Church and Community Development: An Introduction; and Human And Religious Factors* chapter 2). I believe these models are still valid, or most of them; the context has changed significantly and continues to do so. Indeed, David Andrews, a Christian community development worker in Australia is using them extensively and incorporated them in a book he wrote in 2006, *Compassionate Community Work: An Introductory Course For Christians* (published by Piquant). But I do not know if what I did in *The Church and Community Development* has been done more recently, if not it could be an extremely useful thing to do in determining just how the approaches we are considering could serve the Christian church in its work and ministry in relation to current government and social policy.

Sustaining preachers and preaching

Over a period of ten years three of us used these approaches to conduct preacher development programmes in the Leeds North East Methodist Circuit which provided personal and interpersonal support. They were well received and by common consent were helpful. Accounts of them are in *Sustaining Preachers and Preaching* chapter 11 and on the website <http://www.leedsnandemethodist.org.uk/preachers/index.htm> . Also in that book there is a chapter (10) about facilitating local development programmes and interpersonal support. Such programmes could be used widely well into the foreseeable future and to the advantage of the preaching ministry of our church.

Rural church and community development

At the beginning of this Connexional year an interesting three-year action research project was inaugurated by the West Yorkshire District of the Methodist Church into promoting sustainable community development projects in a number of rural churches in three circuits. Church and community development and work consultancy processes are proving to be essential to this project. The outcomes could indicate the feasibility of rural development programmes and what is involved in promoting and servicing them in the future.

Reshaping for mission

These approaches would be enormously valuable to circuits which are working out their future mission strategy including priorities, staffing and buildings. It would help Circuit policy committees and local congregations to explore the realities of their call and context and to think through the issues and implications and come to sound economic, pastoral and missiological conclusions which they 'own'. They can then take their share of the responsibility for the implications of the decisions and the required action. Given the mismatch between our current membership and the number of buildings, closure of churches and chapels is likely to occupy Methodism well into this century. The use of the non-directive approach could help all concerned to make good decisions, minimise the danger of faction and maximise the possibility of the development of good interpersonal relationships. In the late 1990s the field staff of the newly formed Resourcing Mission Office attended the two-year MA diploma course in Consultancy Ministry and Mission to equip themselves for the work of helping churches to discern and pursue their missiological purposes.

Support Services for missionary organisations and mission partners

From 1975 to 1996 Avec under the aegis of The Methodist Missionary Society and The Methodist Church Overseas Division (MCOB) provided reorientation courses and work consultancy services for missionaries and missionary organisations. By common consent this extensive programme became valued by both organisations and greatly enhanced their work. In 2013 I presented a paper to the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Bicentenary Celebrations Conference about these services (see www.avecresources.org). This paper demonstrated the value and the continuing universal validity of non-directive work consultancy processes for missionary organisations and mission partners even though the Methodist Church does not field as many mission partners as it did in the period 1976 – 96. It is also relevant to the missionary activities of churches in different countries.

Sadly such services are no longer available at a time when they are needed. At the time when I presented the paper I was engaged in consultations with a returned mission partner finding the transition extraordinarily traumatic and desperately wanted the services Avec provided and would have benefited greatly from the opportunity to attend an Avec type reorientation course. Some of these courses were and remain highly

appropriate to ministers in transition from one appointment to another or from active ministry to retirement in this and any other country. This is yet another example of the continuing need for work consultancy services tailored to specific phases of ministry. (On the transition from active ministry to retirement see *Reflections on Life and Ministry in Retirement* by David Copley, Ian Johnson, George Lovell, and Charles New, March 2014. There are plans to put this paper on the Methodist Connexional Website.)

The increasing divide between 'rich and poor' and the resultant deprivation

The increasing divide between rich and poor experienced by many people is of enormous concern. Clearly politicians and economists have major contributions to make to overcoming this insidious problem. At the same time, this is an area of social and humanitarian concern to which the non-directive approach to church and community development could make significant contributions to human and spiritual well-being and development. For instance, it could be used to ameliorate problems related to increasing dysfunctional dependency through such much-needed provision of help through charitable services such as food banks. (Helen Cameron has written an important article on this subject entitled: 'The Morality Of The Food Parcel: Emergency Food As A Response To Austerity', *Practical Theology*, vol 7 no 3, September 2014 pp 194 – 204).

Interfaith working relationships

A major feature of Avec's ten-day co-consultancy work and theory courses was the in depth analytical study by staff and participants of each other's work and the beliefs which motivated them. (These courses are described in *Consultancy Ministry and Mission*, Appendix II.) Highly valued outcomes were: the way in which people of different denominations and beliefs were able to help each other with their work; deepen their understanding of each other's working situation and the beliefs that motivated them; explore common ground and shared aspirations and purposes. These courses demonstrated beyond any doubt that there is a developmental alchemy in working together which is not present in the same way in discussing, reflecting and praying together important as these activities are.

Such co-consultancy processes have an extraordinarily wide application. They could, for instance, be used to great advantage to develop the understanding between people of different faiths, deepen relationships and discover ways of working together on current critical religious issues and

problems. Deploying them would make significant contributions to the inter-faith agendas outlined by Hans Kung:

There will be no peace among the nations
without peace among the religions
There will be no peace among the religions
without dialogue among the religions
There will be no dialogue between the religions
without investigating the foundations of religion
There will be no survival of our globe
without a global ethic.

Hans Kung concluded a lecture I heard him give on the above in 1988 in this way.

We need people who will understand other people
We need people who do not use other people
We need churches which do not react in bureaucratic ways to
new religious movements
We need churches which stay near to the practical issues
We need dialogue
We need teachers and textbooks which promote interreligious
teaching
We need churches for peace
religions for peace
We need institutional dialogue
every day dialogue
inner dialogue
more intensive philosophical and theological dialogue.

The approaches described in these notes have unique powers to generate meaningful and creative dialogue and to make notable contributions to all the points listed by Kung.

Work consultancy

Project 70-75 identified and the need for training and consultancy help (see *Churches and Communities*, 1978 p pp 209-11). Now its value has been proven. I cannot foresee situations in which lay and ordained ministerial practitioners at all levels in different denominations will not need work consultancy help of one kind or another and experience indicates that a growing number will avail themselves of consultancy services and training in this discipline. In fact the more complex and difficult church life and

work becomes and the greater the demands made upon primary workers, the more it will be needed.

Continuing need

Significant contributions are being made by many people, churches and organisations in relation to all these matters. Nonetheless they are areas ripe for further action based on the approaches in consideration. I have listed them to illustrate where these approaches are appropriate to the wide range of work in which churches are engaged and are likely to be so in the future. Therefore, it is imperative that people engaged at all levels have ready access to them and are trained to use and deploy them.

III. The non-directive approach (NDA) rather than its outcomes is permanently and universally important

All my experience and research and what I have written above convince me that the non-directive approach is permanently and universally essential to the praxis of working with people for human and spiritual development in churches themselves and through them in local communities. I have yet to meet an aspect of church and community work at local to international levels to which the non-directive is not applicable and necessary.

Humanly speaking, without its objectives of ministry related to inducing deep-seated inner changes for the better in people groups communities and churches simply cannot be achieved: it makes unique contributions to individuation. It is most effective when it is integral to the idiosyncratic praxis of practitioners and executive groups. Non-directivity induces human and spiritual processes which have their own outcomes.

But, it is of vital importance that the approach is not confused with outcomes. It is the approach and methods that are endlessly replicable to development work rather than particular outcomes of using it. When this approach is applied appropriately, skilfully and sensitively it produces programmes and projects, which fit the individuals, groups and communities like made-to-measure garments fit people. Copying the outward shape of projects may be beneficial but only if it is a reasonable fit. However, to opt for a garment made-to-measure for someone else rather than going for a bespoke one is to neglect the heart and soul of the approach and the methods and processes presented here and to miss out on the creative energy generated by them. Therefore good practice focuses on using and promoting the approach and not upon replicating the outcomes of particular applications.

These processes have the potential to affect a broad spectrum of inner and outer changes in people and their environment. Forecasting the material outcomes of using the approach is problematic; but it is possible to predict changes in people that are invariably associated with the proper practise of the approach and it is these changes that I particularly value. Amongst other things, it enhances self-confidence, self-worth and the ability to think for themselves and with other people about work with people, it helps people to feel they belong and are equal partners, collaboration and facilitates egalitarian participation, it generates a sense of community ('we/ours' rather than 'them and us'), it empowers people.

This somewhat extended discussion is necessary because of the widespread propensity that I have experienced and observed over more than fifty years for people to think of outcomes in church and community work and to go for their replication rather than to work from the first principles of the approach.

By way of conclusion, it is possible to state categorically and confidently that the non-directive approach is essential to achieving Christian purposes through the local ministries of practitioners, churches and religious agencies in future generations.

IV. The dearth of training in the non-directive approach and church and community development work and in-service support creates a very worrying situation

The closure of Avec and the uncertainty about the Consultancy Ministry and Mission Course means that, to the best of my knowledge, there is a dearth of training in the non-directive approach and church and community development work and in-service work consultancy support for practitioners. Given the permanent and universal importance of this approach and work consultancy provision, a critical need exists, without the means of meeting it in the next generation. This is tragic, deeply worrying and personally painful because the Church in which I exercised this field of ministry failed to find the means by which it could be sustained. Now, increasingly I feel impotent to do anything further but I would rejoice if ways were found to re-establish the Consultancy for Ministry and Mission course, the renewed promotion of these approaches and training in them in and through the Discipleship, Ministry and Learning Network.

V. The situation is redeemable

Providentially the situation is redeemable. Resources are to hand that could form the basic content and conduct of church and community development in-service training for lay and ordained leaders/workers. The question remains, however, whether the values of the non-directive approach, church and community development and work consultancy are sufficiently recognised by our decision makers for adequate funding to be allocated to training. And of course it need not be a consideration for Methodism alone. Is this not precisely the sort of project in which we should be encouraging our ecumenical partners to join us? The following are the resources that come to mind; there may well be others in our denomination and others and in religious and secular agencies.

First, there is a good number of practitioners still active with the ability, skills and experience to provide training and consultancy skills but many of these are nearing or in early retirement. Capitalising on this considerable asset is, therefore, urgent.

Second, the considerable body of knowledge, research and seriously evaluated experience which has accumulated over the past fifty years in relation to the non-directive approach, church and community development work, initial and in-service training of practitioners in these approaches and ways and means of providing work consultancy help have been extensively documented. This is readily accessible through books, articles, websites and archives (see for instance www.avecrestresources.org). Consequently there is literature available for those who wish

- to learn how to practise this approach;
- to provide training for would-be practitioners and consultants;
- to provide in-service training and consultancy support for practitioners.

However, helpful and necessary as this body of knowledge and literature may be, it is no substitute for face-to-face training in the subtleties of working with people non-directively and consultancy praxis. And it does not offer consultancy support to people directly.

Third, a new wave of literature which offers much needed help to people engaged in local church work and complements that already described. I am thinking of the work of David Dadswell, Helen Cameron and Heather Walton et al: a list of them is attached. I consider these books to be of enormous importance to church and community work praxis for this and

the next generation.

These are three principal ways in which the situation can be redeemed:

- would-be practitioners can themselves use these resources to equip themselves with some of the skills;
- the church takes prompt and determined action to remedy the situation drawing upon the resources listed above.
- the prompt reinstatement of the postgraduate MA in Consultancy, Ministry and Mission.

These are important ways of redeeming the situation. Practitioners can avail themselves of some of them directly. But without the church tackling the needs seriously the impact of the first will be limited and practitioners in Methodism will be deprived of the Connexional support that they need and deserve.

Conclusion

I cannot overstate the importance of the church taking urgent action to redeem the loss of support and training services in order to meet proven substantive needs more adequately.

23rd October 2014

Appendix: Some recent books on local church and consultancy work referred to in the paper

Studying Local Churches: A Handbook, 2005, Edited by Helen Cameron with Philip Richter, Douglas Davies and Frances Ward

Resourcing Mission: Practical Theology for Changing Churches (2010) by Helen Cameron and Catherine Duce

Talking About God in Practice: Theological Action Research and Practical Theology (2010) by Helen Cameron, Deborah Bhatti, Catherine Duce, James Sweeney and Clare Watkins

Consultancy skills for mission and Ministry (2011) by David Dadswell

Theological Reflection for Human Flourishing: Pastoral Practice and Public Theology (2012) by Helen Cameron, John Reader, Victoria Slater with Chris Rowland

Researching Practice in Ministry and Mission: A Companion (2013) by this Helen Cameron and Catherine Duce

Writing Methods In Theological Reflection by Heather Walton (2014)

All of the books are published by SCM.

Subsequent developments

The paper has been quite well received. Martyn Atkins response was disappointingly muted but he did refer it to colleagues. It read:

Dear George,

Thank you so much for your letter and the paper that accompanied it. Rarely has an informal question posed over a dinner produced such a thorough response: bless you! Not surprisingly you make the case thoroughly and passionately for the value of those principles and practices that has shaped your rich ministry, and enriched the ministries of so many others.

You sent the paper to Richard Andrew¹ (whom I copy in here), mainly I suspect because of his involvement in the CMM course when in York. But Richard is also, as you will know, a director of our Discipleship and Learning Network with responsibility for ‘pathways’ and is therefore a significant recipient of this paper in this respect too. I am also copying in one of Richard’s colleagues, Stephen Skuce, responsible for ‘research’ in the Network (to whom I will send a copy of your paper). Between them they hold considerable responsibility for the development of training and learning in the Methodist Church over the coming years, and will, I am sure, be pleased to read the paper to benefit.

Every good wish to you,

Martyn

Richard Andrew responded to the paper positively in the following way and is coming to see me in early January. This is encouraging.

Ian raised some similar issues similar to George and I indicated that one way in which we might look to work in the future might be to create a network of volunteer accompanists (‘consultants’) who might be resourced by the network and trained in a couple of specific tools (e.g. non-directive

¹ The Rev Richard Andrew is the Director of Learning and Development (Pathways) and The Rev Dr Stephen’s Skuse is the Director of Scholarship, Research and Innovation for the Methodist Church in England, Scotland and Wales.

consultancy; appreciative inquiry) to work with local churches and circuits on a variety of things such as strategy and resourcing, learning and development, missional priorities, etc – this seemed an obvious way of developing beyond the DDE scheme without incurring lots of additional cost for the church. I know Ian is keen on this as a possible model...

I am quietly but guardedly optimistic about the outcome. Time alone will tell what will transpire.

TOWARDS AN OVERALL ASSESSMENT

As I turned to the section I am finding it difficult to remember what I have already written! This will become apparent in the overall editing and indexing of this Part. Looking back over the collection of notes I have made en passant, the following points emerge on which I want to comment at the risk of someone repetition.

1. Previous reviews

Over the years on my own and with others I have reflected and reviewed my life and work in various ways. I plan to gather them in a file and list them. And of course there are the assessments made of my ministry.

2. Phases, cycles and systems in my praxis and its development

I have identified the following phases in my vocational ministry.

- Phase 1: becoming a preacher, pastor and Ministry of word and sacrament *through* initial ministerial training, and subsequent church and circuit ministry.
- Phase 2: becoming a non-directive practitioner in holistic church and community development *through* training and research *through* my Parchmore ministry.
- Phase 3: researching into and theorising about phase 2 *through* my PhD studies, Project 70-75 and Avec.
- Phase 4: becoming a trainer in relation to phase 2 *through* Project 70-75 and Avec.
- Phase 5: becoming a consultant in relation to phases 1 to 4 *through* Avec, Westminster College and consultancy work.
- Phase 6: training people in relation to phase 5 *through* post -graduate training at Westminster and Cliff colleges.
- Phase 7: training preachers *through* in-service training programmes

in the Leeds N E Circuit.

- Phase 8: theorising and writing about phases 1- 7 *through* my researching writings in retirement.

As I pursued these phases I developed six key aspects of my non-directive praxis. They are the practice, theory and theology of:

1. preaching, pastoral ministry and church work;
2. working with individuals, groups, churches and communities for their interrelated human and spiritual development;
3. the analysis, design, research and evaluation of church and community work;
4. facilitating the study, analysis, design and theological reflection upon practitioners' work, situations with them;
5. in-service training of practitioners in 1 to 4;
6. consultancy and co-consultancy in 1 to 5.

These six interrelated and interactive aspects of the non-directive approach form a systemic core to my praxis. (See diagram). Each aspect formed a sub-system in their own right as can be seen for instance, in relation to my preaching ministry and the fundamental consultancy model that I described in *Consultancy Modes and Models*. They evolved in the given sequence i.e. 2 emerged from 1, 3 from 1-2 etc. Stage by stage I found myself working at each stage. Each of them was a 'discovery' as was, for instance, distinguishing between analysis and design. (I am reliving some of the excitement of these moments as I write!) Throughout I remained a ministerial technician and theoretician and studiously avoided becoming caught up and preoccupied with ministries, which involved administering church structures and bureaucracy important as these functions are. (See my discussion with Alan J Davies, 9.1.225.)

This resulted in me being a general *and* a specialist, trainer and consultant in the NDA to CCD. As the specialist function is about a particular aspect of the general practice of ministry and invaluable in-service support resource to it, this distinction is too sharp; they were, in fact, essential to each other and in a creative symbiotic relationship. Developing and maintaining this relationship in my own ministry and that of others was extremely important to me. I was at pains not to allow my specialist role and function to eclipse my general practice of ministry. Some people knew me in both capacities; others as a general practitioner only; some of these were vaguely aware of the other aspect of my ministry. I believe that I did maintain both aspects of my ministry; these Notes substantiate this, as do the ongoing positive responses to my preaching and pastoral ministry.

3. Closures

During my ministry, and particularly during the latter part I have experienced many closures including: the closure and demolition of Mary Street Methodist Church where I spent much of my early years; the demolition of Carmarthen Chapel to make way for the building of a shopping precinct (the developers built a small chapel quite nearby, but it is not the chapel that I loved); Avec ceasing to trade; the collapse of the Westminster brilliant theological department and the associated religious units; the ending of the Consultancy, Ministry and Mission Course (CMMC) at Cliff College; the closure of most of the Methodist ministerial training colleges and programmes through the implementation of the Fruitful Fields Projects; the ending of the CMMC at York St John's. Reference has already been made to these closures in these Notes. Here I restrict myself to noting the ways in which with varying degrees of success I have responded to and tried to cope with these events which I found painful and distressing.

I had no control over most of these closures. However, in relation to the closures of Avec and those related to Fruitful Fields I tried to resist, reverse or redeem them with very little success: see for instance the sections on Avec and ministry in retirement.

There are two or three ways of thinking about the life and death phenomena associated with these events, which have helped me to make more creative responses to them, eased my emotional responses to them and brought me some consolation. Organisations, like, human beings have life and death cycles. Using the 'stages of life' and 'life cycle' concepts has helped me to consider and to analyse closures and death and to come to a better understanding about how to deal with them emotionally, conceptually and practically. I have used them, for instance, to study the phases and dynamics of vocational life cycles. (See for example, chapter 3 of *Sustaining Preachers and Preaching*). Also, it has helped me to construct structured ways in which preachers and church and community worker practitioners can orientate themselves to, think about and reflect upon phases of their life cycles creatively. (See the section on ministry in retirement and some papers in my files). In these ways I have been helped to a better understanding of the processes and dynamics that lead up to and cause them. In turn this has helped me in working with some churches to avert closure and find new modes of institutional life. Emotional benefits have accrued to me through using these approaches: I have become more objective and philosophical about closures and death and it has eased the pain they cause me. More recently I have been helped in different ways by reflecting on

life and death as integral natural parts of human existence. People and the organisations and agencies, which contribute so much to their human and spiritual well-being, development and salvation, are finite: by the mysteries of creation they come into being and, through complex life cycles, make their contributions and fade away. There are countless millions of these creations. That is how things are. Nonetheless, I find it difficult to overcome the deep desire for permanence and continuity to accept this existential awareness and understanding. When I do I feel much more at peace and one with myself, other people, my experiences of life and death and with God.

4. Uses of autoethnographical writing

I have already written much about the value of writing these Notes, their impact upon me and their uses. In the epilogue I attempt an overall assessment. Recently, I realised that autoethnographical writing is an excellent way of preparing and equipping oneself in depth for consultancy work and pastoral care and counselling in very much the same way as the psychoanalysis is, I believe, required of analysts. It is, of course, useful to practitioners of all forms of Christian ministry.

5. Impact

At various points in these Notes I have attempted to make interim assessments of the impact of the various aspects of my ministry and work upon me and upon others, whilst acknowledging the impossibility of making definitive assessments. Here, I restrict myself to testifying to the enormous impact that I feel that my ministry and work have had upon me. Like my experience of becoming a Christian, becoming a minister was tantamount to a second birth, as indeed was adopting the NDA to CCD. Together in two stages they transform me and my life. They gave me:

- a college education;
- professional status, first as a Methodist minister and then as a specialist in the NDA to CCD with postgraduate qualifications;
- kaleidoscopic experiences of contributing to church and community development work at every level in no less than seven denominations through working with the personnel through in-service training, project and consultancy programmes;
- experiences of being a course leader and lecturer to postgraduate university courses;
- extended opportunities to reflect, research and write;
- all this and so much more...

- the added bonus of being able to round it all off through writing these Notes.

I do not know how to express my heartfelt gratitude to God and all those who enabled me to do this and not least to Molly my late wife. How I wish she were alive to read this testimony. Without her support I could not have responded to the initial call to ministry. I am indeed fortunate and blessed

