

PART 9: MINISTERIAL LIFE, 1958 – 2013

PART 9:1 CIRCUIT MINISTRY

Background papers, information on the Internet, photographs and slides
Reflective Note

Llanelly (now Llanelli) and Carmarthen Circuit, 1958–62
Carmarthen
Kidwelly
Pontardulais
Burry Port

Sydenham and Forest Hill Circuit (1962 – 66)
Wesley Hall
Anerley
Appendices

Croydon (South Norwood) Circuit (1966 - 72)
Parchmore
Appendices

In this part I concentrate on the local churches for which I had pastoral charge with some reference to other churches in the circuit and community to my experiences of the Circuits and Districts of which ‘my’ churches were an integral part. From 1958-72 I was a circuit minister in three different circuits and two different districts. As a Methodist minister, whatever I am doing, or however I am employed, I am automatically allocated to a circuit and expected to take part in the life of that circuit and the district in which it is set as much as I am able. As a sector minister in the Victoria & Chelsea Circuit I was an ‘associate minister’ and acted as superintendent for one year. In retirement I was very active in church and circuit life. But here I focus on my appointment by Conference to circuits as a circuit minister and distinguish it from all other forms of participation in local church work.

Much later, having written the early sections, I wrote this additional note on 22.10.12 when I came across a circular letter I had written to some of my close college friends and to those of my year as a contribution to a round robin agreement. It expresses some of my thoughts and feelings after two months in Circuit. It follows this page.

Background Papers to this Part

- Files in the filing cabinet containing notes and correspondence (some correspondence destroyed).
- Church newsletters for Wesley Hall and Parchmore: articles I wrote monthly reflect my interests and concerns.
- Personal diary, September to December 1958. Appointments diaries September 1958 to August 1972.
- Articles and books noted in the text.
- Preaching registers.
- See also 9:7: Preaching Ministry.
- Pastoral visiting registers.

Reflective Note

Returning to write these notes in chronological sequence – I broke off to do sections 9:7, 8 and 10 – I need to remind myself that I am not drafting an autobiography nor a carefully crafted history, I am writing ‘notes’.

Slightly confusingly, as a consequence of writing out of sequence, there are notes in later parts of this part relevant to the ones I am about to write! My present intention is to work sequentially through the outstanding sections of this part.

As can be seen from the list of contents, this long part attempts to survey the actualities of my ministry from 1958 to the present, highlights critical events and engages in some reflective analysis and evaluation of my ministry. By doing this I do the groundwork for my overall critical reflection on principle basal features and structures of my ministry in the concluding sections of the Notes and make it available for others to study.

Information on the Internet

¹It was only when I got well into this section that I realise that there is a considerable amount of information on the Internet about most if not all of the churches about which I am writing. All web sites give current information of the church’s some give accounts of their histories and outstanding events that have occurred.

Generally speaking I have not listed nor directed readers to these web sites, apart that is from the few I have referred to and drawn upon, because

they can be readily accessed through the names of churches.

Importantly, these web sites enable anyone so interested to set my Notes about my ministry in them in their historical and contemporary context more comprehensively than I have done.

I. LLANELLY (NOW LLANELLI) AND CARMARTHEN CIRCUIT, 1958 – 62

District and Circuit:

District and its Chairman, The Rev. Dr. Maldwyn Edwards

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My Section

Maximizing presence and pastoral visiting

Carmarthen

Teaching sessions

Christian unity

Centenary of Wesley Methodist Church

The renovation of the Church, April 1960

A mission to the Church

Centenary services

The celebration of the life and ministry of the Rev Hugh Price Hughes

Chaplaincy

Sunday school and youth club

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New Church

Revisit

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The flood

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Pontardulais

Burry Port

Leslie Griffiths

An abiding regret

After thoughts:

Reflecting on the impact of this first phase of my active ministry upon me

Leaving Wales

The District and its Chairman

²This Circuit had eight churches: Llanelly, Hall Street and Victoria Road; Carmarthen; Kidwelly; Pontardulais; Burry Port; Ammanford; Cwmgors. (See copy of the ‘Plan.’) They were situated over a wide area from Carmarthen (where we lived): Llanelly c. 20 miles; Kidwelly c. 7 miles; Pontardulais c. 18 miles; Burry Port c. 12 miles; Ammanford c. 15 miles; Cwmgors c. 30 miles. I had pastoral charge of Carmarthen, Kidwelly, Pontardulais and Burry Port and preached in all the other churches. And the Circuit was in the Cardiff and Swansea District of the Methodist Church with its highly distinguished Chairman, The Reverend Dr Maldwyn Edwards; scholar; charismatic preacher and lecturer; an authority on Methodism and the Wesleys; much published; and to become the President of the Methodist Conference in 1961-62. During his Presidential year he gave the memorial address on Hugh Price Hughes at Wesley Methodist Church and addressed the clergy and ministers (see below). Dr Edwards was appointed Chairman in 1957 and retired in 1971.

Earlier (p328), I described my indignation at being appointed to Carmarthen; soon, however, I came to see the appointment as a great blessing and as providential: I was blessed by the Circuit, ‘my’ section, the District and by having Dr Edwards as my first Chairman of District. (Mention has already been made of Dr Edwards, and particularly to when and how he wrote sermons.) By the time I arrived he had already made a great impact on the District, in fact, I realize that he had impressed me. Two cuttings from the *Methodist Recorder* which I found as I sorted out my files on that period pre-date my knowing that I would start my ministry and serve my probationer’s period in his District; one is dated 10th April and the other 15th May 1958³. They describe how in his first year or so as Chairman he had organized and led an incredible number of in-service training events on a wide range of topics for ministers and lay leaders and workers District wide. The lectures he gave advocated the highest standards of ministry and cooperation with Free Churches (sic) and between English and Welsh speaking Methodists. At the time these articles appeared he was planning a conference representative of the ‘historic Free Churches’ to discover ways of working together in ‘evangelism, youth activities and instruction and in social witness.’ Christian citizenship was one of his major themes – he had been the Connexional Temperance Secretary, the Department which, under Edward Rogers was to become the ‘Christian Citizenship Department’ – indeed, he was deeply committed to holistic evangelical and socio-political

2 5.10.12

3 They are in my file.

ministry. This was the exciting and challenging ministerial ethos into which I entered. He inspired us all with his lectures and sermons – all delivered without notes – to Synod and to the wonderful annual retreats at Lindors, a beautiful place. His scholarship was of the highest; he was always inspiring, intellectually and spiritually; he was scholar, preacher, pastor – and a lovely, warm, humble man to boot. He, and his wife Eleanor, took a great personal interest in me and Molly. Mrs Edwards wrote to me in her late 90s when I was awarded the DD (Lambeth). I was greatly privileged to be in his group for probation ministers for two years which, as far as I can remember, he held quarterly – he came to it on his bike, and one of the probationers from a well-to-do family came in an expensive Rover!

Pastoral prayer advice: Dr Edwards and Mrs Sarah Hebb

Browsing through the articles brought back to mind an incident that occurred in one of the meetings for probationers. Dr Edwards was urging us to do what he recommends in the article, to approach all pastoral work with ‘a determination, when visiting, to take prayer into the houses of the people.’ I can see him now, rolling off his chair onto his knees in an attitude of prayer to illustrate how he did it and to enforce his point. ‘As you do this,’ he said, ‘You say “Let us pray.” This prevents refusal. And it is an effective way of bringing the visit to an end and circumventing an invitation to a cup of tea.’ This was not my practice. I had to screw up my courage in many situations to ask if those I was visiting if they would like me to pray with them. A few actually declined, asking me to pray for them rather than with them. In many homes I was too embarrassed to ask. When I did it often caused embarrassment – possibly a projection of my own feelings – and the atmosphere became somewhat tense. Rarely did I impose prayer or kneel. Manipulating people in the way he suggested, was anathema to me long before I became committed to the non-directive approach. As I left the group I felt under judgement. As I drove the thirty miles home, I felt dreadful; I had betrayed my high calling; I was a pastoral failure; I must redeem my ways.

Mrs Mary Sarah Hebb lived at 1 Waterloo Terrace, near the manse. She was a very old lady, blind and housebound and confined to one room. During the day she sat by her bed, well-dressed, always holding a silk handkerchief in her right hand. She was a highly intelligent, gracious and sophisticated lady; she was very kind; I greatly valued and benefitted from her wisdom; she took a great interest in me and my ministry and my family and was most concerned that old family factions in the Church did not

adversely affect me and my ministry. I held her in great regard, respected her highly, visited her regularly and felt more ministered to by her than ministering to her.⁴ As I passed the house I felt I should visit her, the feeling was illogical and compelling. As soon as I entered the room and greeted her she said, “Mr Lovell, I am so glad that you have not prayed with me when you have visited. I greatly value your visits but I didn’t want you to offer to pray with me.” I was completely taken aback. It was as though the Lord was speaking to me in my distress about not having prayed with people and I think I had entered Mrs Hebb’s room determined to redeem myself by praying with her. I was overwhelmed by gratitude to her and to God for speaking to me through her and utterly amazed at her perceptivity, almost as though she had a seventh sense. I cannot remember precisely what I said and whether I shared what had happened, I probably did. What I do remember is that she told me, by way of explanation for what she had said, that Charles Wesley’s hymns went through her mind all night long and that I asked her what she wanted from my visits that I had not previously brought. She wanted me to read to her from the Bible. The quality of our relationship and my visits deepened.

Formulation for my praxis of pastoral visiting

A considerable time later I was brought up sharply by an incident on the forecourt of Gravel’s garage in Kidwelly. As I was pulling away in my car after filling up with petrol, a local Welsh Minister rushed towards me gesticulating for me to stop. He was highly excited and emotional. As I lowered my window he pushed his head right inside and said that he must share a marvellous experience with me, he had just prayed with someone in hospital at their request. The first time he had ever done so in forty years of ministry. I was shocked. Dr Edwards’ challenge was a necessary one.

These incidents led directly to me formulating my praxis of pastoral visiting. Negatively it was the reflection of habitual standard prescribed behaviour of any kind, e.g. always praying/never praying. Positively it was

4 Mrs Hebb’s husband was killed during the First World War and his body was never recovered. She searched the area in France where he was last known to be to see if she could find him but to no avail. She was devastated. There were no children. Desperate to make contact with him she resorted to Spiritualism and mediums, but again without satisfaction. Throughout the time I knew her she had a picture, ‘The Great Sacrifice’, framed by her bed. When she died, I conducted the funeral and afterwards her niece, Kathleen Brooks, insisted I had it. It is in my file.

being as open and sensitive to each pastoral situation as I could be and acting upon my reading/interpretation/understanding of it. Such an approach is quite demanding; it involves abandoning the relative security of always... for the uncertainty of making existential responses and the exacting and wearing discipline of feeling and thinking and inner praying my own way through each situation as I treat it as I approach it for what it is, unique and being vulnerable because there is no guarantee that I will get it right

27th Oct 1958.Epworth
47 Myddelin Cae.
Caernarfon.

Dear Brother,

It was grand to hear from you are all joining in civinit life. I am quite isolated here in Caernarfon. My super is 18 miles away; the nearest F.W. meeting is 25 miles away & consequently I am unable to go. There are four English ministers in the town but there is no fraternal. My neighbours west are 40 miles away. Consequently fellowship is my 'phone! In spite of this we are very happy - the house is very convenient; the Crescent is full of very friendly people and Janice has found good friends and above all I have had the tremendous experience of being convinced and assured that this is the place that God would have me be. If I can go through my ministry having this experience in all the places I will have to go to I will be a very happy man.

Caernarfon is a very interesting historic place in many ways life here has the characteristics one imagines in England fifty years ago. The church here was the one in which Hugh Price Hughes was brought up from which he was sent forward as a candidate for the ministry. It has a membership of 120, and is the problem church of the town under my charge. I have had an amazing and frightening experience of seeing my fellowship maintained at 7 members for many years multiply by four in as many weeks; my congregations have soared & a youth club established last week had great support. One is afraid of quickly come, quickly go. The assurance is that if it be a movement of God's Spirit the work will succeed, if not it will fail.

Yours G. L. L.

— and after I don't know it! Working from first principle in this way means each pastoral visit was the potential to be an adventure into respecting people and the authority of situations and the holy ground of deep pastoral encounter. But how movingly satisfying and fulfilling and humbling when it comes off! Situational pastoral praxis resonates with situational ethics and is consistent with the non-directive approach. Consequently, I was committed to situational rather than absolutist a ethics — a lonely moral place and times.

Dr Edwards' approach was consistent with and an integral part of the

of the other 3

The circuit is very scattered my nearest church is 11 mls away — my others are 13 or 16 mls away. Very often on a Sunday I travel 50 to 100 mls and I have travelled 350 mls in four days. It is a good job I have a car — and a friendly garage proprietor to keep it running! These other three churches are vital & self-running. The laymen are on their toes and running the Church as Methodism intended they should. Twice a week as a rule I leave home about 2pm and return about 9pm. The time being spent in visiting these societies and conducting a Fellowship meeting.

The life is exciting & demanding. Oh, the mistakes I have made! I hope the City will forgive them.

We are expecting an addition to our family in March — three will become four.

I am sorry I have not been able to write to you individually. It is good to read of the happiness that has come with marriage.

My prayer is that all your labour may be greatly blessed. My wife sends her greetings.

Always yours
George Llewellyn

directivity of his era and my early ministry. Here I was breaking out of it. This, however, does not detract in any way from my enormous debt to and gratitude to beloved Dr and Mrs Edwards. (After taking Molly's funeral and whilst still robed, Leslie Griffiths lifted the end of his stole and told me it was Maldwyn's given to him by Eleanor and he chose to wear it especially for this service because he knew my great love of and indebtedness to them. I was deeply moved to tears.)

An important development

A nephew and niece of Mrs Hebb were very devoted to her. I think she has brought them up or been much involved in doing so. The niece, Mrs Kathleen Brooks, was an extraordinarily fine woman, a French teacher, married to a Methodist minister who was mentally ill and corresponded with me at great length on the most obscure topics. They lived in Nelson. (Kathleen's uncle, a Professor James, had retired to Carmarthen. He had helped to reinstate the French Department in a famous French university after the 1939-45 war.) The nephew, Kenneth (Ken) James (I think) was a sports master, or the sports master at Truro Methodist College/School; a Methodist local preacher, a fine man with a great personality. I liked him. By encouraging me to write to Douglas Hubery (and I think recommending me to him) about helping to staff summer schools, he changed my life. It was through that that I not only helped to staff many schools but I also became extensively involved in the educational and youth work of the Methodist Youth Department

⁵Highlights of my time in South Wales were the annual 'Refresher Courses' for ministers led by Dr Edwards and a series of outstanding lecturers. They were held at a beautiful conference centre, St Briavels in the Wye Valley. How on earth I can have omitted to mention them I cannot tell because I valued them so highly. Earlier today I came across the programmes for the years 1959, 1960, 1961 and 1962 and the notes I took of the lectures. I was enormously blessed to have such high quality in-service training during those first four years of my ministry. The notes are now in the file, 'Some Background Papers' for section 9.1. Many years later in 1977 or 1978 I was privileged to be one of the lecturers at such a course along with B Arthur Shaw during his presidential year. I could not possibly have foreseen that in 1962!

But I have now well and truly drifted into my Carmarthen Ministry and I have still other things to say about the Circuit! The truth of the matter

is that I simply had to write my way into this section. Reflecting, revisiting of a happy and fulfilling period of our lives was somewhat painful without Molly and hard to write. Now I feel I can take up the story from our entry into the Circuit.

Back to the Circuit Again!

Personal and family significance and impact

⁶Moving to live and work in Carmarthen was an exciting time for all three of us. It was the beginning of my active ministry and Molly's new life as a minister's wife and, as she was pregnant, our son John would be born in Wales. We were going to live in another country with its own language and culture. This was brought home to me forcibly on our first night as a family in Wales. On Monday the 1st of September we had travelled as far as Llandovery. In my diary I noted: 'After we had....unpacked I walked round. It was very romantic – another age and world. Welsh was being spoken and I was taken back very forcibly to North Wales' [the home of my Uncle Bob and family where I spent some memorable and impressive holidays]. After searching around we got bed and breakfast in the Dyffri Hotel. During the evening meal in a crowded dining room there was much animated conversation all round us in Welsh. Janice, normally very talkative, was reduced to silence: she was looking all around in open-mouthed bewilderment; all these people talking and she could not understand a word that was being said – neither could we but we understood why! Her first experience of culture shock but within weeks she was speaking with a pronounced Welsh accent and had acquired a limited Welsh vocabulary!

Domestically, it was an enormous improvement for us: a house to live in for the first time in our married lives: a detached house with a nice garden; a bathroom (we had been without one for six years and three or was it four bedrooms?) Epworth was the kind of house we had dreamed of, detached, set in a crescent. Janice found a new freedom and a group of children and their houses and gardens in which to play. Molly and I were taken aback by the size of the house, set right in the centre of the Crescent. Everything pleased us very much even though the kitchen looked awful, it smelt, in a terrible state of decoration and the three piece suite was crawling with maggots (the Circuit steward told us to put it on the lawn and he would see to a replacement. But nothing could compromise the thrill at moving into

a house. Moreover the three of us were to be together; the pain of three years of long weeks of separation for Molly and me were over.

Personal finances

But, and it was a big but, financially we were straitened; all our reserves and the soft furnishings allowance had been used up on living expenses during the summer when I failed to get work; we were living hand to mouth and borrowing on small amounts of book money from various purchases from Epworth Press! An incident at my first Quarterly meeting meant that this went on throughout the connexional year. At that meeting someone proposed that, as I was to do an ordained minister's work and was married with a child, I should be paid an ordained minister's stipend not that of a probationer. Immediately, and angrily, the Superintendent got to his feet and said, "If you do that, my stipend must be increased pro rata." That was the end of the proposition until much later. When the Circuit Steward died it was discovered that he had been embezzling Circuit funds to a considerable amount for years. The Superintendent rang me to tell me in great distress and asking me to help him decide what to do. His distress, it emerged, was compounded because, he said, the Steward had been paying him £50 a year above stipend from the beginnings of his ministry in Llanelli off the record, as it were. I was appalled but, right or wrong, given the state he was in and his fear of this coming out, I simply got on with helping him decide what to do. For the sake of the steward's widow and to avoid scandal it was decided not to go public. But it was a salutary lesson which made me extra careful over financial matters throughout my ministry.

Lack of welcome

To our surprise there was no one to welcome us when we arrived in Carmarthen. A note told us to pick up the keys from a house in the Crescent – the house of one of the society stewards; he was at work but his wife, a thoroughly Welsh lady who went to a Welsh-speaking church handed them to us; dashed were our expectations of a warm Welsh welcome and tea; we had to go into the town for a meal. (Other church members were very upset when they discovered what had happened.) Nonetheless, we had found our first manse but not without difficulty – we couldn't pronounce the name of the Crescent, Myrddin, and had to show our new address to someone to find the way!

Home Life

⁷Home life during our time in Carmarthen was great in most ways. We soon came to love and get enormous pleasure from the Pembrokeshire Coast and especially Saundersfoot and St David's. One of the downsides was that Molly was unable to enter freely into the life of the Circuit in general and Carmarthen Church in particular, because she was preoccupied with first Janice and then John. This meant missing worship and enduring lonely nights and Sundays when I was frequently out all day. Another problem was our personal finances. As the first year proceeded this became increasingly more serious – all our underclothes were threadbare, Auntie Constance on one visit bought me a suit so that publically I was respectably dressed; we lived frugally but had no reserves. Maintaining the car which was essential and buying petrol were the main drains on our income: the travel allowance was nominal and by no means met the costs. (That was so even though I was greatly helped by Tom Gravel, husband of one of Kidwelly's organists who had a garage in Kidwelly and his foreman, T.J. Evans who was one of our members and a Congregational lay preacher who had a small garage in Carmarthen. I did as much of the maintenance as possible myself – Tom Gravel allowed me to do repairs such as changing pins in his garage. They had never seen a minister do that before. It caused something of a stir! During the second part of my first year it became obvious that I had either got to find a way of supplementing our income or asked to be appointed to a Circuit where I did not need a car. We went for the first option because we simply did not want to leave. The Circuit and Dr Edwards gave me permission to seek some limited part-time teaching.

And people were generous. Frequently I came home with gifts of vegetables, meat from a butcher in Pontardulais and so much else. And Mrs Owen's husband left delicious fish on our doorstep, sewin, which he had caught in the Towy overnight.

Salvation through Pibwrlwyd

In June 1959 I wrote to the Director of Education for Carmarthenshire and fortunately found a part-time post teaching 'science' – calculus, heat engines, mechanics, lab work, materials and experimental work – to first and second year students on a City and Guilds of London Motor Vehicle Mechanics Course. Students were motor mechanics on day release at Pibwrlwyd Rural Technical College. ⁸ The Principal couldn't find anyone to

⁷ 8.10.12

⁸ I should have mentioned that the College catchment area was very wide. It

teach the course during the day and I couldn't have taught it had been in the evenings! It was providential; it was our salvation. (Mentioned already in 3.25, 28; 5.73.) As I recall it I taught on Monday mornings with one period after an excellent free cooked meal and was paid the equivalent of a week's stipend! How well I remember a great day's shopping for underclothes and some other things in Swansea when the first cheque arrived from the Education authorities. Not only did it solve our financial problems and enabled us to accumulate a little capital, it enhanced my status in the eyes of the church members who set high value on education, they were proud to have a minister who taught engineering science. Gradually I found myself becoming the unofficial chaplain for the students of the College. I remember particularly a small group coming to see me on a lovely summer's evening for some reason and standing around the gate talking about life and religion. Further, I got lots of practical help and advice regarding my old car, a Morris Eight, 1936. CWE 417 – someone pointed out to me when I was having steering problems the line “Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it” in hymn 417 in *The Methodist Hymn Book*! It was a rich as well as rewarding teaching appointment; my last excursion into engineering. To my great sadness I cannot now read the equations I came across in my notes.

Liberal Studies

Sorting through my papers I discovered an extremely interesting memorandum on ‘The Introduction of Liberal Studies into Pibwrlwyd Rural Technical College’ by the Principal, Mr Phillips, which I had forgotten all about. At the time I must have been quite excited about it – I annotated it carefully – because it was a subject about which I felt quite passionate. What an interesting developmental educational situation I had entered through financial necessity. (The memo is amongst the background papers.)

[Stuck again: overwhelmed and paralysed by possibilities!]

⁹Once more I became stuck! The sheer amount of material that I could write about froze me into a writing paralysis whilst my mind whirled in all kinds of directions around so many stories that came to mind. At the same time I began to think yet again about the value of what I was about. Eventually I came to the conclusion that I will never be absolutely certain

drew students from long distance – 20/30 miles – in West Wales. Automobile engineering was big business in a heavily mechanised agricultural economy.

about the value of the Notes and my motivation in writing them. What I do know is that it is therapeutic for me and is proving to be an insightful experience and stimulating me to sort out a messy mass of papers. I must continue. However, attending the President's luncheon session with other supernumeraries gave me much food for thought which I have not yet digested. One of the supernumeraries asked me if I was still writing – she had attended the launch of *Sustaining Preachers and Preaching* so I told her about the Notes and the section on preaching. She immediately said that would be interesting. This rekindled thoughts I have had about using that section for some form of publication. I must give more thought to that. The President, Mark Wakefield, in a most stimulating short address suggested that Christianity may well be in its very early stages of development. Its 2000 years of history is quantitatively infinitesimal in the span of human history. We have seen only its initial evolutionary cycles, what is to come? I found this dynamically inspiring; an enormous reorientation to a long view perspective. What is my short cycle of ministry and life in this context? Nothing, if it is not integrated into 'Christianity's future' as well as his past. However, it is worth recording if only for my well-being.

Focus on inner life

Other thoughts emerged. Possibly I ought to try to find some purposeful framework for the mass of anecdotal material, give it some shape which this section so far seems to lack. Another thought was about the relationship between the historical accuracy of the Notes, the direct effects upon me of the events and what I felt and thought about them at the time and subsequently. Historical accuracy is clearly important and I have aimed for it but it is neither helpful nor necessary to be pedantic about it as the Notes are about the inner and outward aspects of my life and in many ways the former is of greater interest and concern than the latter. Outer aspects follow a time line. Inner aspects do not as they move backwards and forwards along the time line; they are not bound by it, they transcend it. And these notes are essentially or finally about the inner aspect of my inner vocational life in its dynamic relationship with the outer aspects, that is the psycho-spirituality of this aspect. A concept in a book by Alistair I. McFadyen,¹⁰ who I met whilst I was at Westminster College in the mid-1990s, helps me to understand what I am writing about. It is that of 'sedimentation' which he describes as follows:

Persons are structures of response sedimented from past relations

10 *The Call to Personhood: A Christian Theory of the Individual in Social Relationships* (Cambridge University Press, 1990)

in which they have been addressed, have been responded to and have communicated themselves in particular forms. (p41)

My position is that individuals are formed through social processes, their identities sedimented from histories of significant relation. (p72)

Sedimentation, as I understand it, occurs through significant experiences of life, of self, of others and of God and my direct responses to them and my subsequent reflections upon them. Initial layers of sedimentation are reinforced (if that is the right word) and new layers are added by on-going reflection and by subsequent congruent experiences and events. These psycho-spiritual processes of sedimentation can layer our personalities with good or bad characteristics; they can channel the flow of creativity or block it as physical sedimentation do harbours. Timing and dating is not always critical to examining the effects of these processes. In these Notes I am dredging old layers which are dysfunctional and hopefully laying new layers.

Now back to the subject matter of the section having got all that out of mind where it was distracting me on to paper where hopefully it will not.]

My Predecessor, Maurice Cartledge

¹¹My predecessor was Maurice Cartledge. He had an outstanding academic record at Richmond College: he took a first in his BD and went to do a year's further study at Marburg University, Germany, immediately following his time at Richmond. In the summer before we went to Carmarthen he came to see us in Aldershot to help us to prepare for our ministry in Wales. Over tea I asked him if he spoke German prior to going to Marburg. He said not but that he had a couple of months to learn the language but he had to use a dictionary occasionally in lectures up to Christmas and that he was ashamed about that! It was part of Richmond's folklore that he just missed getting 100% in his final Hebrew exam because he forgot to go back and print a word that he had left and that when an outstanding German scholar came to see him they conversed in Hebrew. Yet, like me, he had a technical school education, not a grammar school one. Brilliant as he was, he was socially inept; entertaining him was difficult. Consequently, although he was very kind and a dedicated pastor, people in Wales did not find him easy to interact with. He had to leave the Circuit early because his German wife had had a serious nervous breakdown and was suffering from religious mania. His preparation for my ministry and our move was generous and meticulous. I loved to receive his letters, which I have kept. They were so beautifully written. His style was reminiscent for

me of John Wesley's, his handwriting was elegant; I treasured the visiting registers he prepared for me which I also kept and marred them with my own clumsy writing in comparison. For the first phase of his ministry in the Circuit he travelled everywhere on a push bicycle. He was an easy man to follow because he was loved and respected but not popular and his domestic difficulties made things difficult all round.

Superintendents

Whilst I was in the Circuit I had two very different superintendents, Harold Evans, already mentioned, and Wilfred James Hill. Harold was a gifted musician, a popular minister and preacher and an extrovert. Within a very short time in a public house or a church hall he would have people singing popular songs and old hymns round the piano. He had a very attractive manner and could be extremely good and interesting company with an endless store of good yarns. But, he was inconsistent, unpredictably volatile, ill-disciplined and verbose. One example must suffice of the downside of this man who had so much going for him. Having been severely rebuked for presenting a scheme to him for his approval without checking out whether it complied with CPD (*Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church*) I carefully checked out an idea before consulting him which I did on the phone. (Incidentally, phone calls could last up to a couple of hours. Fortunately in those days local calls were not charged by time.) Having outlined the idea, I concluded by saying that I had checked it with the CPD. This is precisely what followed; it is etched upon my mind. "Have you got CPD there?" "Yes." "Is the window open?" "No." "Open it." "I have opened it." "Throw CPD out of the window, don't retrieve it and never refer to it to me again. Understood?" "Yes." Idea accepted! He was deadly serious of course. A future discussion could, of course, revolve around the importance of CPD. Indeed, he gave me brilliant advice in relation to it. I was having great difficulties with the Pontardulais Trustees: all men; hard line trade unionists; worked together in the steel works. One of them a somewhat self-opinionated man who had been a shop steward but now retired was punctilious about sticking to organizational rules and hectored me about the Methodist rule book – CPD, which I did not know as well as I should. I told Harold about this. Again he said, "Have you got an old copy of CPD?" "Yes." "Give it to him." I did. Within a short time he had mastered it and consistently used it in my favour quoting it with great pride in his new found authority. He never gave me another moment's difficulty.

Making the plan with Harold was difficult. If I arrived a moment before

time (I had to travel 20 miles to his manse) he would say angrily, "Can't you sleep?" If a moment after time, "What time do you call this?" Frequently throughout the day, and it took at least one and sometimes two days to do the plan, when we had finished a column, "My, that was difficult. Let's have a break." That meant a walk in the garden, a cigarette for him and tea for us both! His concentration was limited. He was not academically inclined. I had a student working with me for a time. Harold asked him how he got on with me and said, "In my time I didn't know at times who was the super, him or me." Our working relationship was not an easy one. Years later, during my time at Avec, he chaired a meeting of ministers that I addressed and I was amazed at the good things he said about Dr Lovell! Recently after not seeing her for over fifty years, we visited his widow at her invitation at her home some 15 miles away, and were surprised at what she had to say about what he thought about my ministry.

Wilfred Hill was very different. A quiet, highly organized very intelligent man of few words; entirely consistent and totally supportive; a private man. Without fail we completed the plan by lunch time and then had fish and chips! I liked him very much and kept up with him until his death. He retired to Canterbury. It was he who introduced me to the Chairman of the London South East, when I was seeking a post in a city appointment. They had been chaplains together during the war. Wilfred was a very courageous man and had been awarded the M.C.

I had a great welcome Circuit-wide and enjoyed a circuit ministry. My preaching was well received. At the March quarterly meeting of my second year, on the day of John's birth, 7th March 1959, which I think was held at Pontardulais, there was a very enthusiastic and pressing invitation extended to me to stay for at least one more term. I said that I could only commit myself to another two years and so it was. (On the Friday evening I chaired a leader's meeting at Carmarthen even though Molly was in the early stage of labour. I remember asking that we might conclude the meeting a little early. Someone was with Molly. John was born in the early hours of Saturday morning at home. I attended the Quarterly Meeting in the afternoon. Mr Hindley took me and my Mrs Marjorie Sanderson Williams stayed with Molly. I feel ashamed that I did that but it was what was expected at the time. I would not do it now.)

Probation Studies

During the first two years in Circuit work I was a probationer minister, with an extensive programme of studies, examinations, written and oral, trial sermons, written and preached. Throughout this period I had a

dispensation to administer the sacraments in the Llanelly and Carmarthen Circuit in order to meet the pastoral needs of the people I served. Notes of my studies are still on file. I gave myself enthusiastically to these studies. I recall getting up at 5am or earlier in order to be able to do them and my pastoral work on various occasions. Browsing through these notes I was reminded that I did quite well, especially in the second and final year. To my surprise I was in Class I with an average mark of 80%, along with academics and scholars such as Brian Beck, Keith Hurst, Bernard Holland, John Newton and Peter Stephens... All people who featured in my subsequent ministry. I became particularly interested and wrote essays on Christianity and Time (Oscar Cullmann), the Historical Jesus (Joachim Jeremias), and Christianity and Communism (Edward Rogers' book, *A Commentary on Communism*). Almost fifty years later I discovered through identifying his hand writing that Edward Rogers marked my essay on Christianity and Communism, 'my summer study'. His comment in miniscule writing was, 'A very good essay, showing original thinking and dealing with all the major points at issue.' It was awarded a mark of 94% and I was awarded the Connexional Probationers Committee's first prize – the princely sum of £1.10.0. – one pound and fifty pence! (The essay is in the box file 'Articles and Papers II!') I even got 84% for my study exam of Revelation 1-7! This was a very rich time of study in depth of the Greek text, biblical theology and social studies. It established in me an in depth study as a part of my ministerial working life which I have by the grace of God been able and privileged to continue throughout and to this day.

¹²However, whilst I am proud of what I achieved, especially in relation to my bad educational start in life and the difficulties I encountered at the beginning of my time at Richmond College, I am under no illusion that I am not in the same academic class as Brian Beck, John Newton, Peter Stephens. Although, I do have originality and an independence of thought that has served me well, but I do not have their scholastic ability and confidence.

My Testimony Service and Ordination

Probation studies and the pre-ordination testimony service for ordinands were the preludes to ordination at the 1960 Conference. My testimony service was at Newport on 3rd May 1960. To my lasting disappointment Molly was not able to be present. I remember nothing about the service but have vivid memories of staying with my hostess (along with Rowland Bamford of blessed memory), Miss Elsie Basham, a devout and lovely

elderly Methodist lady who was very wealthy. She was very gracious. Her housekeeper had prepared a delicious feast for us after the service. A perfectly roasted crisp brown duck was the centrepiece of the main course. How I wished Molly could have been there. I think I must have stayed two nights because a two-day Synod followed the service. On the morning of my departure, Miss Basham came to my room. She said with tears in her eyes that she was so sorry Molly had not been able to come to the service gave me a large box of glazed fruit for her and an envelope with a message and a £5 note – a small fortune to us at the time.

I was ordained at the Liverpool Conference on my birthday; that has always been meaningful for me; it seems to underline for me I was destined for ministry. Thank God Molly was able to be at my ordination as were my Father, Auntie Enid and Susan, Norman and Mrs Heaps (with whom I stayed for the Conference period). It was a great day. I believe I sat next to Colin Lake during the service, now, after a ministry apart, such deep soul-friends. Having been ordained on my birthday, I have no difficulty in remembering and celebrating the event year on year. I get down my ordination bible in its original case with the service booklet and a cutting about the service for the *Methodist Recorder* (see below). I read from the Bible and through the service, quite a challenge and a salutary rebuke regarding my failure to keep the vows as completely as I have aspired to. The Rev. Dr. Harold Roberts gave the charge. Some aspects of his emphasis of ministers being ‘separated’ are no longer in vogue, others certainly are for me. The Rev. Charles E. Deakin assisted in my ordination for which I was so thankful. The moment of ordination was awesome. I can still feel the highly symbolic pressure of the hands on my head as the officiating president pronounced the words of ordination. The Rev. Walter Goss was in attendance. So many people were around who had or were to be significant in my ministerial journey. And to cap it all, The Rev. Edwards Rogers was the President that year. He was magnificent. I still remember – and quote – an illustration he used in the magnificent sermon he preached in Liverpool Cathedral on the Sunday afternoon of Conference. Already, unbeknown, he had played a part in my ministry, influenced me deeply by his writings and his stance on social issues and he was to play a key role in Avec’s story. How fortunate I have been in those who have believed in me, ministered to me and furthered my ministry. But there was more to come, The Rev. Dr. Maldwyn Edwards was elected president at that Conference of my ordination. God works mysteriously as he weaves our histories or as our histories are woven.

Circuit Initiatives

Local Preachers' Fellowships

¹³Three of the Circuit initiatives for which I was primarily responsible need to be mentioned. First, was a local preachers' fellowship which met in the manse. I think it started with a meeting on the 4th May 1959, some eight months into my ministry. It was a lovely sunny evening I remember. Mr Isaac James was there, I recall – after the meeting he was keen to see what I was making of the garden! Mr Willows gave an address (see 9.7.96). Whilst it was open to all the preachers in the circuit, travelling meant that it attracted those living in Carmarthen and Kidwelly. At the time there were nine in Carmarthen and two in Kidwelly – half of the Circuit's lay preaching force and including some of the most able. A monthly preachers' fellowship meeting emerged quite spontaneously from the first gathering, mainly supported by the Carmarthen preachers. This group introduced, organized and staffed a circuit-wide team preaching programmed (there are some notes about it in the file). Discussions were lively, profitable and greatly valued. I suspect that some of the momentum was lost when first the Owens and then the much later the Collobys (both husband and wife preaching pairs) left. But the fellowship, I believe, continued for a long time

After writing this section I came across notes about a local Preachers' One Day Retreat at Wesley Methodist Church Carmarthen 31st March 1962 organized by the 'Carmarthen Local Preachers' Fellowship'. I have no recollection whatsoever of this event which was quite ambitious. The guest speaker was the Rev. Dr. A. R. Hubbuck for whom I had great respect. He was an outstanding Methodist minister, a scholar, deeply spiritual, a saint. It indicates just how vigorous the Fellowship was three years after its formation. (Papers on file.) How interesting that there was an emphasis on in-service training of preachers at the beginning and final stages of my ministry.

Dr Harold Roberts giving the charge, spoke of the minister as a "man of God." This meant, he said, first, that the minister was separated unto God. The People of God in the Old Testament were separated, our Lord was separated throughout His life and ministry—a separation which reached its fulfilment on the Cross—and the Church through the centuries was a succession of separated men and women.

The minister, as a separated person, must have a certain detachment from the world. Ministers today were anxious to bridge the gulf between themselves and other people; but they should not be so much like other people that they lost their detachment. They must never be dependent on any man or group of men in their churches, and they must never be prevented, through friendship from speaking the Word of God. Separation was the essence of holiness.

Secondly, the man of God was a man of peace. Not a peaceable man—the minister must resist that temptation. The forces of evil gathered under the shadow of men who were afraid to speak the truth lest they should cause offence. The true man of peace was the man who had the peace of God in his heart. He was the maker of peace, a man who suffered persecution, a man who knew the meaning of conflict and loneliness. Such a man could come through tumult and turmoil because his eyes were fixed on Him who brought peace through the blood of His Cross.

Finally, the man of God was a man of joy. The early Christians had it; the early Methodists had it. Its source lay, not in an optimistic

[Continued at foot of column five]

Methodist Recorder 14.7.60

[Continued from column four]

temperament, but in Christ. Who died and, in the very place where evil seemed to have triumphed gained the victory by rising from the dead.

If that victory had been accomplished in the minister's life, if Christ had come in to solve his problems and send him forth as a servant of God, then there would be a joy in his worship and service and dealings with others that would see him through to the end.

Avoid Sin of the Closed Mind

Staff Report on Cathedral Service

SO many Methodists attended a service of Christian unity at Liverpool Cathedral last Sunday afternoon that the seating was taxed to the limit, and many people had to stand. It was estimated that the congregation totalled between 1,500 and 2,000.

Arranged in connection with the Conference, the service was held at the Cathedral by invitation of the Dean and Chapter. The preacher was the President, the Rev. Edward Rogers, and the lessons were read by the Ex-President and Secretary of the Conference, the Rev. Dr. Eric W. Baker, and the Chairman of the Liverpool District (the Rev. Gilberthorpe Harrison).



Others who took part in the service, a notable feature of which was the fine singing of the Cathedral choir, included the Bishop of Liverpool (Dr. C. A. Martin), and the Dean (Dr. F. W. Dillistone).

At the beginning of the service, the Dean said that what should have been a welcome must be an apology. The number attending had surpassed their expectations and they were unable to make adequate provision for everybody. Even if they had known so many were coming, he did not think they would have been able to provide sufficient seating. There were not even enough hymn sheets to go round. It gave them at the Cathedral "supreme joy" that they could come together in a service of Christian unity. He prayed that the blessing of God might rest upon those who had come, and on all the work that had been done that week in the Methodist Conference.

The President said he did not propose to preach a sermon or give a scholarly dissertation on Christian unity. The service itself was a symbol of Christian unity. They who represented the Methodist Church

and Conference were most happy to share in it, and were grateful to the Dean and Chapter for inviting them to attend.

Mr. Rogers preached on the text, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ," Galatians 6. 2. He said that the members of the Galatian Church feared that they would have to become Jews under all the bondage of the Jewish law, including the law of the Pharisees, before they could hope to be accepted as Christians.

The letter to the Galatians was the charter of Christian liberty, for in it Paul told them to stand fast in the liberty with which Christ had made them free. They were no longer under the detailed and burdensome law of the Scribes and Pharisees, but they were not, for that reason, free to please themselves. They were put under the simple but far reaching law of Christ, the law of love of God and love of one's neighbour.

This was not an arbitrary law, continued the President. It was a statement of the method and the purpose of God. The things from which Christians retained—envy, murder, malice, and drunkenness—were not so much forbidden to the Christian as impossible to the Christian, for the man who truly loved God would in consequence love his neighbor. It was God's method, because it was the way in which the power of the Holy Spirit could be released into the life of man or Church.

The gifts of God were freely given but never wasted. If we prayed fervently for things which in our hearts we did not want, they were not given. If we prayed humbly for the things we truly desired, they were made ours. During World Refugee Year people of all denominations prayed together and never, at any time, asked who is going to get this and who is going to get that. In common service the different denominations sought to bear the burdens of other people, and he would dare to say, that as a result, every local church that worked for Refugee Year had experienced some spiritual renewal.

Other criticisms
with my Quakerian
Bible.

LOCAL PREACHERS' ONE DAY RETREAT
-at-
WESLEY METHODIST CHURCH, CARMARTHEN
Saturday 31st March 1962

THEME: "PREACHING THE GOSPEL"

GUEST SPEAKER: REV. DR. A. R. HUBBUCK of Swansea

10.30 – 11.00 a.m. Introductions and coffee.

11.00 – 12.30 a.m. 'PREACHING TO OURSELVES'

12.30 – 1.30 p.m. Lunch.

1.30 – 3.00 p.m. 'PREACHING TO SAINTS'
(Discussion following)

3.00 – 4.00 p.m. Break

4.0 – 5.0 p.m. 'PREACHING TO SINNERS'
(Discussion following)

5.00 – 6.00 p.m. Tea.

6.00 – 7.00 p.m. Communion Service.

The Carmarthen Local Preachers' Fellowship extends a warm
invitation to you to attend this retreat.

(N.B. Will those attending please bring their own food for a Sandwich
lunch)

Scripture Examination

Second was the ‘Circuit Scripture Examinations’ programme which started in 1959, was enthusiastically adopted and supported by the whole Circuit with children and young people from six of the eight churches participating (it is hardly likely that the other two had children). Those over eight years of age participated in the Connexional Scripture examinations. Also, I introduced oral examinations for those under eight. This was very popular but in later years I had serious reservations about this idea and some about examinations. But the whole scheme was very popular and continued for several years after my time in the Circuit as I discovered when I revisited in 2002 when some people I met spoke about it with pride. A considerable number of people were engaged in organizing and running the programme which was done very seriously, see for examples the analytical schedule someone did for 1962 which is on file.¹⁴ One of the most creative and exciting aspects of the programme was the annual presentation of prizes and certificates at a Circuit service and rally for teachers, young people and children in May. I have kept the programmes for 1960-62, properly printed. It brought together large numbers of people which filled the chapels – the first two in Carmarthen and the third in Kidwelly. There were guest speakers from Cornwall and delicious teas or was it suppers? Always exciting, they brought the Circuits Sunday School people together as they had never been brought together before in Circuit rallies – other rallies were for adults.

Kilvrough Manor Inters’ Conference

Third there was a weekend conference for 11s to 14s from the Circuit at Kilvrough Manor and run jointly by Tom Davies and me with the help of Rosalie James and June Chubb from the Llanelli and Carmarthen Circuit. Tom was in the Neath Circuit and I cannot remember whether some young people from his Circuit joined the conference or not. It was an outstanding weekend, 10-11 March 1961. An anecdote I cannot resist: on the Saturday afternoon we took them on a long walk; Tom led it and by agreement I was rear guard. Two boys walked painfully slowly, which I found frustrating and which caused me to be very stiff the next day because I normally walked at a brisk pace. Later that evening I heard the two boys saying to

¹⁴ This programme must have given me a seat on the Connexional Scripture Examination sub-committee of which I was a very active member for 1962-67, variously attending meetings, setting and marking exam papers. I have destroyed most of the papers. At my suggestion, Eddie Roos from Richmond days joined the Committee.

each other that it was a good job that they were on the walk because poor old (I was 31!) Mr Lovell simply couldn't keep up and he would have been left behind! On the Sunday during an act of worship we made an appeal to the young people – there must have been about thirty of them – to give their lives to Christ. To our utter amazement all but one or two of them did so. It was deeply moving. To ensure that they were not carried away by the excitement of a weekend such as they had no previous experience, we counselled them as carefully and responsibly as we could. The impact on us all and our churches was enormous, greatly encouraging.

'My Section'

¹⁵The section of the Circuit which I had direct primary responsibility comprised four churches: Carmarthen, Kidwelly, Pontardulais and Burry Port with memberships of 114, 95, 17 and 33 respectively in 1961. Donald Davies, Maurice Cartledge's predecessor, gave Carmarthen's membership as 132 in March 1956 (letter to M.C.). His worship attendance figures were mornings 30, 30, 25-35 and evenings 60-80, 60, 40-60 for Carmarthen, Kidwelly and Pontardulais respectively; apparently he had charge of Ammanford not Burry Port so there are no figures for that church. Burry Port did not have a morning service; my impression is that the evening service would have been an attendance of around 20. During my time, I think, the attendances were slightly lower than those quoted by Davies except, that is for Pontardulais. For most of my ministry the church was generally full for the evening services that I took and I think that would be around 90 worshippers.

The four churches were very different from each other in their memberships, ethos and they were set in quite different communities. All of them were English chapels in Welsh communities. Very few of the people had Welsh as their first language and as I remember it only a small number spoke it fluently. All services and meetings were conducted in English. By far the greatest majority of the members were Welsh born; Carmarthen was different, it had a considerable number of English members whose work or marriage had brought them to Wales. And both ministers were English as were their families! I learnt to pronounce Welsh words and a few words of greeting but that is all.

Maximising Presence and Pastoral Visiting

One of the things I wished to do was to maximise my presence in Kidwelly, Pontardulais and Burry Port and my pastoral visiting. As it happened Normal Heaps was staying with us early in the first year in Carmarthen. So I put this to him. Two things emerged from his calculations: by changing the days of the mid-week services (all my churches had them) I could organize circuits of travel so that I either visited for meetings or passed through all three churches; similarly on Sundays when I was out and about the circuit I could arrange to do services, attend Sunday Schools (all in the afternoons in those days) and visit hospitals and homes. This increased my presence and potential for visiting enormously. I expected some resistance to changes in the days of the week of their meetings which were time-honoured. But when I explained to the leaders' meetings what I proposed and why (important) they couldn't have been more pleased and cooperative. Moreover, they knew of the pattern and could arrange to see me and or alert me to pastoral needs. It worked well.

¹⁶Having written most of this section I realize the *Centenary Handbook Wesley Church Carmarthen 1861-1961* gives an excellent introduction to the church as it was in my ministry and its history. (Copy on file and on my shelves.)

Carmarthen

Carmarthen was a vigorous, wealthy, prosperous, prestigious and ancient county and market town with a predominantly Welsh speaking population and a Welsh culture. Centrally located in those days were the cattle and general market; on weekly market days the town was crowded with farmers and their families. Most of the church members – or a good proportion of them – were well-to-do and some quite wealthy business people. Then there were expatriate English people amongst whom were the borough treasurer and the heads of both the gas and electricity boards in West Wales – chief executives, I think they would now be called, the administrative secretary for the hospital and the tax officer. Seven of these incomers were local preachers. They were formal and informal leaders of the Church. I worked well with all these people, but I found it hard to get the native Welsh members involved. There were bad feelings still around from factions in the past which I never really understood. I got on well with them as individuals personally and pastorally. I am struggling to give a representative picture of the congregation. I established quite

deep relationships with so many of these people but I didn't get the native Carmarthen people as vitally involved as the English incomers.

¹⁷[Looking through the *Centenary Handbook*, which I should have done earlier, I have come across pieces I had long forgotten from Sarah Hebb, Kenneth James and many of the members of the church of my day. They contain so much I thought was lost to history.]

On reflection, I think that I ought to be a little more open and explicit about negative feelings I had about the congregational life at one stage of my ministry, possibly in the second year. Welsh and English members alike gave me great welcome; they were very enthusiastic, complimentary, and full of praise for my pastoral and preaching ministries and most supportive. I had no problems with them individually and personally; collectively as a congregation I did. At times feelings that all was not right with congregational church life overtook and even overwhelmed me, leaving me somewhat perplexed and disturbed because I could not put my finger on its origins and causes. On one occasion when I was bewildered and depressed I was talking to the organist one morning in the church – he was an elderly retired headmaster from England who had come to Carmarthen recently to be near his son and his family who was a consultant in Glangwilly Hospital. In an unguarded moment I said I thought there was something evil about the place. Deeply disturbed by what I had said he advised me to be careful about what I said no matter how I felt. On the following day, still very concerned about me and what I had said to him privately in the Chapel, he came to see me at the manse. He counselled me to be cautious and helped me to reconsider what I had said. He helped me to talk and think less emotively and to be more objective and to use less inflammatory language about my feelings and concerns. Wisely, he was not dismissive about my feelings, nor did he try to 'correct' them. I sensed that he too felt things were not as they might be. What he focused on was the danger of my interacting with the situation inappropriately and with the people. That would be seriously detrimental to me and my ministry and would exacerbate the problems. I was able to think more rationally about my instinct that, spiritually and interpersonally, there was something not right which I sometimes sensed in the atmosphere in the church and congregation. I did contain myself thereafter. Mr Davies kept my confidence. How fortunate I was. I think some of the work I did caused or led to some improvements.

¹⁸Keeping things in proportion and presenting a balanced picture

17 19.10.12

18 16.10.12

through these notes is difficult. My propensity is to focus on good and bad outstanding events rather than the everyday life and the continuous pattern of interaction with people that was the bedrock of our lives. This came to mind as I returned to these Notes this morning. Wesley Church folk were enormously kind and generous to us supporting and encouraging us in many ways through gifts, hospitality and practical help – Mrs Muriel Bowen cleaning, Mr Charles Powell gardening, Miss Helen Willow’s holidays in her Saundersfoot caravan...and so on and on. We were happy there and received similar kindness from people in all our churches and, indeed from others in the Circuit.

Whatever my feelings might have been about the congregational life, responses to my ministry in general and to my developmental initiatives left no doubt that the congregation as a whole wished and willed to further the work and witness of the Church in every way possible. Some of these have already been discussed or referred to. The principal development events were as follows:

Teaching Sessions

Each session was about an hour or slightly more in length. They were formal occasions; I gave a talk/lecture lasting 35 minutes or so on the particular subject which I addressed seriously. I wrote out the talks in full, summarized them and delivered them without notes. There may have been questions, but I don’t think there were; certainly there was no discussion. Sessions started and ended with a hymn, contained prayers and readings as appropriate. They were extremely well supported, stimulated much interest and enthusiasm.

Christian Unity

Christian Unity was one of the major issues of the day; it was seen to be vital to Christian ministry and mission and our divisions were considered a scandal and one of the reasons why some rejected the authenticity and viability of the Church and its teaching especially that related to peace, forgiveness and reconciliation. At Richmond I had studied under and been greatly influenced by one of the great ecumenical figures and leaders of the time, The Rev. Dr. Harold Roberts. He played a central role in the conversations about uniting the Anglican and Methodist Churches. The third World Council of Churches was much in the news during my time in Carmarthen: it took place in New Delhi on the 19th November – 5th December 1961 and the Archdeacon of Carmarthen and the Bishop of St David’s attended as delegates. The Archdeacon and I were highly committed to the ecumenical movement, got on well and worked together

assiduously for closer relationships between ministers, clergy and churches. We organized and led meetings for local non-conformist English and Welsh ministers and Church in Wales clergy (sadly in those days we had no contact with Roman Catholic priests and churches.) Through these meetings we organized services of/for unity in Wesley Methodist Church. Consequently the Archdeacon and I and St. Peter's (the parish church of Carmarthen, the Archdeacon, The Ven. W. Ungood Jacob was its vicar) and Wesley Methodist Church became key players in the local ecumenical initiatives: he preached in Wesley and I did so in St. Peter's – I believe both were 'firsts'.

Ecumenically, the Bishop was somewhat ambiguous, some said hypocritical; he went to New Delhi presumably because he supported the WCC and its agenda and, around the same time, he issued a directive forbidding Anglican clergy from participating in nonconformist weddings and funeral services and nonconformists from participating in Anglican services. And yet he attended and gave the benedictions at unity services at St Peter's and Wesley from which it could be assumed he supported the ecumenical movement. The directive was highly divisive; the Bishop's integrity undermined. The directive was much resented and hurtful because joint participation in these services was highly valued, built bridges and was widely practised: many families were separated in their religious loyalties to Anglican or Methodist or English or Welsh churches. It was very important to them that their respective ministers and priests could share in moments of great joy and profound grief: it brought their denominational worlds together. So, the practices contributed significantly to socioreligious cohesion, solidarity and to harmonious relationships between denominations and Welsh and English traditions. I did not experience nor hear of the directive being implemented; my hunch is that it was neglected. Had it been implemented it would have adversely affected the good will and interdenominational relationships that had evolved organically over many decades through processes of growth from below to be an integral part of West Wales's religious and secular life. See below.

Earlier I describe how, to my astonishment, my protest against this directive appeared as the main headlines on the front page of the *Carmarthen Journal* (I still have not found it). I wrote a long, hand-written impassioned letter to the Editor and in the early hours of the morning went into town to post it into the Journal's offices. I was doubtful if it would be published, if it was I expected it to be vigorously edited and tucked away in the correspondence columns. But published it was and in full it caused quite a stir!

SERVICE OF UNITY

Carmarthen Journal

ARCHDEACON OF CARMARTHEN AT WESLEY CHURCH

January 19th 1962

Wesley Methodist Chapel, Carmarthen, was this year's host church for a service of unity on Tuesday evening, 16th January. It was an occasion when ministers and clergymen and members of the churches and chapels of the town and district gathered in worship together. The service was conducted by the minister of Wesley Chapel, Rev. George Lovell, and the address was given by the Archdeacon of Carmarthen (Ven. W. Ungood Jacob, Vicar of St. Peter's Carmarthen).

The Archdeacon, at the commencement of his address, thanked Rev. G. Lovell for the invitation to preach in the chapel and expressed good wishes to the minister and members of Wesley Chapel, who recently celebrated the centenary anniversary of the church.

In a sermon appropriately devoted to the unity of the churches of the world, and the challenges facing unity, the Archdeacon said that already much had been achieved in that the barrier between God and men had been broken down. There had been an implanting of the peace and unity of God in many a human heart.

It was for these people who knew the unity of God in their own hearts to share it with others. It was the obligation of the Church itself to reveal the power of God to the whole world.

The Archdeacon said that before any attempt could be made to unify the Church individuals should come to terms with God themselves. "But cannot we make something of what we already possess?" he asked.

Unity was not utilitarian. It was the passion of God which must express itself in action.

LESSONS OF NEW DELHI

The Archdeacon, who had attended the recent Assembly of the World Council of Christian Churches at New Delhi with the Bishop of St. David's (as representatives of the Church in Wales) spoke of the entry of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Pentecostal Church of South America into the council. These churches had nothing in common but the same Lord and the same cross.

"We in Carmarthen share the same Lord and the same cross. So let us begin with what we already have," said the preacher.

There could be no unity in the Christian Churches unless it was strong enough to call on everyone. Unity meant mission and it could only be expressed by action.

It was brought home to them in New Delhi that you cannot have unity unless there was a passion for human souls everywhere. "There is a challenge once again to assert the sovereignty of God over the secular love of God, and not to retreat into the fastnesses of denominational tradition and keep God only to the souls of the church," said the Archdeacon.

LOOKING FOR CHEAP UNITY?

"There must be a depth of love and suffering in unity," said the preacher, who asked: "Can we hope to have an easier passage than our Lord had? Can we hope to achieve anything without the Cross? Aren't we looking for a cheap unity? Perhaps the truth is that we are not prepared to pay the price; we cling to our sovereignties and traditions. We have to learn the whole truth. We must not be too parochial in our theology, but theology must be the servant, of the church and not the master."

TREMENDOUS CALL

The Archdeacon said that to the laity, as well as to the ministers and clergy, there comes a tremendous call to go out into the world to do God's work among His people.

Stating that there were wonderful opportunities for working together, the preacher said that one of the principles of the ecumenical movement was that there were some things they could do together and must do together. They must evangelise together; go out into the mission field together and study the Bible together.

One of the most memorable occasions at New Delhi was that of 2,000 people partaking of communion from an Anglican communion table. It left an indelible impression on all present. It was a foretaste of the real unity of the people of God.

The church would be really united when the whole world was brought to acknowledge God as creator and redeemer. The Archdeacon said the vision of unity was a challenge to Christians the world over.

Also taking part in the service were: Rev. James Thomas (Tabernacle) who read a lesson and Rev. Emrys Jones (Llannas Street, Welsh Congregational Chapel) who led the congregation in prayer.

The Bishop of St. David's (Dr. J. R. Richards) closed the service with prayer. The organist was Mr. W. Davies.

The Archdeacon and I never discussed the article as far as I can remember, but, as our collaboration went on apace and intensified, I can only assume he felt much as I did about the directive and the damage it had done whether or not it was implemented: it was an act of ecumenical vandalism.

From the outset of my ministry, therefore, I was committed to local ecumenical engagement and involvement. The foundations were truly laid in Carmarthen and the nature of it established. The focus then and increasingly throughout my ministry was upon getting local Christians of all denominations to work together and with members of neighbourhoods for the socioreligious inter-related development of their churches and communities (see *The Church and Community Development: An Introduction* especially pp 34-35) and the common good. This is a different approach to much ecumenical activity: discussing unity; organizing interdenominational worship and study groups. This of course is commendable and necessary and has gone on to develop unity schemes and local ecumenical projects and programmes. My focus has been on working together collaboratively and nondirectively, formally and informally in all the different modes that emerge from ecumenical promptings, including dialogue and conversations. Working together for local development in the ways that I have indicated is significantly different from working for Christian unity. In the former, attention is focused on local situations and their organisational structures holistically and what will lead to overall human and spiritual development and the common good. That could involve affecting changes in the structures of and the relationships between religions, secular organizations, institutions and agency and working for Christian unity and inter-faith engagement. But all that is seen as necessary and subordinate to the basic purposes of overall holistic human and spiritual development in specific localities. It is a multifaceted approach. In the latter the focus is on organisational developments of a unitive kind between churches, denominations, and Christian agencies. The assumption being that this single faceted approach will inevitably and automatically improve the ability of the organizations involved in pursuing and achieving their purposes and the mission of Christ; it is a desirable end of itself. Unity is development. Undoubtedly both are necessary and can and do contribute to human and spiritual well-being. However, I am bound to say that I am committed to the former and its priority in the economy of Christina ministry and mission because my experience, particularly that in Project 70-75 and through Avec, is that working together for common aims seriously is a unique and powerful way of bonding: it emerges almost as a side project in a way that does not always occur when the attention is on bonding. Moreover it occurs between

WESLEY CHURCH

RE-OPENING SERVICES AT CARMARTHEN

After being closed for several weeks during which time services have been held in the schoolroom, the Wesley Chapel, Carmarthen, was re-opened for public worship on Thursday evening, April 7th. The large congregation included members of the Anglican and Free Churches of the town and many from Llanelly, Burry Port, Kidwelly, Pontardulais and Ammanford representing the English Methodist Churches which comprise the Llanelly and Carmarthen Circuit.

The opening devotions and an act of dedication were conducted by the Rev. Harold Evans, superintendent minister of the circuit.

The Rev. George Lovell, resident minister of Wesley Chapel, referred to the tremendous effort put in by so many at "Wesley" to achieve what was to be seen that night. The improvements included a new acoustical tile ceiling, new lighting, and the chapel had been re-decorated in delightful shades of French beige, eau-de-nil and russett.

MEMORIAL TABLET

A memorial tablet has been placed on the front in memory of the late Rev. Guy Morris who entered the ministry from the church. The rev. gentleman was a brother of Messrs. Spencer and Louis Morris, Carmarthen. The font was presented to the church in memory of baay Guy Morris, child of the Rev. and Mrs. Guy Morris.

It is hoped to place some memorial in the church to the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes, the famous superintendent of West London Methodist Mission, who was a native of this town and a "Wesley boy."

In his sermon the Rev. George Lovell stressed that three essentials of a house of God were two windows and a door. A window on heaven, a window on the world, and because the beauty of windows can only be seen from the inside so with the window on heaven and the window on the world, the true vision is seen when we leave the street and enter through the door of God's House.

The collection amounted to £230 3s. 6d.

people who differ radically in beliefs and morals and dialogue about moral and spiritual issues and differences that arise from working together and prayer and worship have depth and quality all of their own.

Centenary of Wesley Methodist Church¹⁹

The first English Wesleyan Chapel was opened on the site of the Church. It was enlarged and reopened on the 4th October 1821. Beneath the Chapel was a cellar which at that time belonged to the local brewery. Of this strange combination someone wrote:

'Spirits above and spirits below,
Spirits of bliss and spirits of woe,
The Spirit above is the Spirit
Divine,
The spirit below is the spirit of
wine.'²⁰

During my ministry the whole building belonged to the Church and the cellar was a hall used mostly by the Sunday School. Early in my ministry it was decided to celebrate the Centenary in style and to use it to revive the life of the congregation and to further

Carmarthen Journal
Friday, April 15th 1960.

¹⁹ 9.10.12

²⁰ Wesley Church Carmarthen 1861-1961: Centenary Handbook. There is a copy on my shelves.

its development. To these ends the following ambitious programmed was undertaken:

- The publication of a Centenary Handbook (December 1960)
- Renovation of the Church (April 1960)
- A mission to the Church: An Easter Campaign 1961.
- Centenary services, October 1961
- The celebration of the life and ministry of the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes, October 1961

The Centenary Handbook

The Centenary Handbook, edited by Helen Willows and Mary Evans is a substantial publication of some eighty pages (unfortunately it is not paginated). It contains an important essay by Maldwyn Edwards, one of the greatest authorities on Methodism, “High Price Hughes: The Greatest of the Sons of Wesley Chapel”.

The renovation of the Church, April 1960

It was the first major piece of work that they had undertaken in a long time. The work was extremely well done and the decorations made the chapel beautiful and contemporary. It had a very positive effect on Hugh Jones and his family as their family carried out the decorations. They gained new status after a period when they had been somewhat estranged for reasons I know not of! It was a good place in which to worship and the people were proud of their achievement. Doing this successfully gave them/us confidence and energy to do other things. It was a good place in which to worship and the people were proud of their achievement. Doing this successfully gave them/us confidence and energy to do other things.

A mission to the Church

This was an Easter campaign, a joint venture between the leaders of the Church, a team of six students from Didsbury College, all of them training for the Methodist ministry and me. Church leaders undertook a visiting programme to pave the way for an intensive week of team work leading up to a concluding service and sacrament on Easter Day. A number of handouts were used in sequence in this build up period. A prayer pamphlet and the week’s programme are reproduced below. (The pamphlets are on file.)

A major objective to establish ongoing house meetings was achieved.

They continued for some years after I had left and were greatly valued. A moving incident occurred in the communion service which had a telling effect on the Campaign. I took the service helped by one of the students which brought the Campaign to a climax and conclusion. I was covering the elements at the end of the administration when I saw the organist, Mr Davies mentioned earlier, coming to the table saying something to the effect that he was not going to miss taking communion on this important occasion. Everyone heard him in the deep reflective post-communion silence. I uncovered the elements and served this solitary figure kneeling at the communion rail in an electric atmosphere as we all realized and entered into the significance of this unrehearsed enacted parable of committed participation of a very senior citizen.

Centenary Services

The five Sundays in October 1961 were given up to Centenary Services with guest preachers: The Revs. Normal Goldhawk, Harry Lockwood, Wilfred Wade and Fred Milson (later he was to play a significant role in my ministry). The middle date was a 'Reunion Sunday'. (Details at the end of the Handbook.) I believe we entertained them all at the house which enabled me to have some interesting conversations with them.

The Celebration of the Life and Ministry of the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes, 19th October 1961

This was a high moment in the Centenary Celebrations, a visit of the Rev. Dr. Maldwyn Edwards, The President of the 1961 British Methodist Conference and the celebration of Hugh Price Hughes' life and ministry – both heroes of mine. Dr. Edwards spoke to the ministers and priests of Carmarthen at Wesley in the morning, gave a memorial address in the afternoon when a plaque to the memory of Hugh Price Hughes was unveiled and preached at the Presidential Rally in the evening; he was brilliant at all of these events.²¹ After the morning meeting he had lunch at the house as did Sir Arthur Dixon who chaired the afternoon meeting. Molly was nervous but she entertained them splendidly. Dr. Edwards asked if he could have a rest when he had finished his lunch – doctor's orders, he said. I took him to a bedroom and suggested he might like to lie under the quilt. Uneasily he stalked around the bed several times so I asked him if all was well and was there anything I could do. "Well," he said, "I want to lie down but I don't want to crease my trousers." He had taken off his

²¹ The Bishop of St David's was present in the morning and I think in the afternoon.

frock coat (traditional dress for Presidents at the time) and I had put it on a coat hanger. Somewhat tentatively I said, "You could take them off Dr. Edwards, and hang them up!" "What a splendid idea, George. I'll do just that!" So I left him and returned them with a cup of tea at the time he had suggested. His trousers were hung up, he was lying on his side with the quilt tucked under his chin. I asked him if he was rested. "To be quite honest, George, I wasn't tired. I just couldn't get the end of my lecture for this afternoon quite right. But I've got it now, so I am ready." He had composed it in his head, just as one might do mental arithmetic.

(Incidentally, my Father told me that my great Aunt Nan would walk miles to hear Hugh Price Hughes. How proud she would be that her great nephew was involved in honouring him.)

Hugh Price Hughes was born in Carmarthen. His father was a member of the Church and a local doctor. Mrs Hebb remembered him and was treated by him. She said he was well ahead of his times in relation to medical practices. At a time when people kept their windows shut to prevent catching diseases which they thought were airborne he insisted on them opening the windows of sick rooms. Should they be still shut fast on his next visit, she said, he broke them with his walking cane! Expensive visits and lessons!

THURSDAY, 19th OCTOBER, 1961, at 4 p.m. and 7 p.m.

VISIT OF

THE PRESIDENT of the 1961 BRITISH METHODIST CONFERENCE

THE REV.

MALDWYN L. EDWARDS,

M.A., B.D., Ph.D., Hon.D.D.

AND

Sir ARTHUR DIXON, C.B., C.B.E.

(The President of the Laymen's Missionary Movement)

At 4 p.m. Unveiling of a Plaque to the memory of The Rev. Hugh Price Hughes by Mrs. F. T. BRIGSTOCKE, J.P.
and a memorial address by The Rev. Dr. M. L. Edwards.

ADMISSION BY PROGRAMME ONLY

At 7 p.m. Presidential Rally. Chairman: Sir Arthur Dixon.
Speaker: The President of Conference—Dr. M. L. Edwards.

Light Refreshments will be available at moderate charges between the meetings.



PRAYING HANDS

Albrecht Dürer

CAMPAIGN . . .

24th MARCH, 1961

to

2nd APRIL, 1961



CARMARTHEN METHODIST CHURCH

IS COMMITTED TO PRAY

FOR . . .

The Church That the Minister and people be guided in their preparation, believing that with God all things are possible.

The Visitation That those who undertake this vital work may truly show forth Jesus not only in their words but in their lives.

House Fellowships For a deepening of the spiritual life of all who will share in these Fellowships, asking that the Holy Spirit will reveal the things of God.

People That more and more men and women will respond to the call of Christ and become involved in the work of the Church.

The Holy Spirit For His guidance and that He will be to us the power of endurance, victory, Fellowship and the power of effectual service.

The Team Pray for the team by name : Paul Agombar, Bill Murphy, Phil Hickey, Donald Sampson, David Baker and Michael Cooke, that they may faithfully proclaim the way to new life in Christ Jesus.

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were an offering far too small ;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.

PROGRAMME FOR THE WEEK

Saturday	...	7 p.m.	Reception of Team.
Palm Sunday	...	10.30 a.m.	Sunday School.
		11 a.m.	Divine Worship. Sermon Subject: "Misunderstood?"
		6 p.m.	Divine Worship. Sermon Subject: "No Disguise?"
Monday	...		Family Visitation.
Tuesday	...	2.45 p.m.	Womens' Fellowship. Subject: "More than Money can Buy."
		6 p.m.	'Tween-agers Round Up.
		8 p.m.	House Meetings.
Wednesday	...	5 p.m.	'Tween-agers Round Up.
		7.30 p.m.	Church Fellowship. Subject: "Crisis in Jerusalem."
Thursday	...	5.30 p.m.	Childrens' Films.
		7.30 p.m.	Film—"Shield of Faith."
Good Friday	...	10 a.m.	Divine Worship and Holy Communion. Sermon Subject: "Christ For All."
		2 p.m.	Ramble and Rally.
Saturday	...	8 p.m.	House Meetings.
Easter Sunday		10.30 a.m.	Sunday School.
		11 a.m.	Divine Worship. Sermon Subject: "Our Contemporary."
		6 p.m.	Divine Worship. Sermon Subject: "He Is Risen."
		7.15 p.m.	Communion Service.

Book the Dates Now! We invite you to all the Services and Meetings.

Each day of the week a member of the team will be in the Minister's Vestry in the Chapel between 10.30 a.m. and 11.30 a.m. and would be very pleased to discuss anything with anyone in private and confidence.

PLAQUE TO MEMORY OF FAMOUS DIVINE

Carmarthen Journal
27 Oct 1961
UNVEILED AT CARMARTHEN

Wesley Methodist Church Ceremony

A feature of the special services in connection with the centenary celebrations at the English Wesleyan Methodist Church, Carmarthen, was the unveiling of a plaque at the church to the memory of a famous divine, Rev. Hugh Price Hughes, a noted son of the church. The ceremony was performed by Mrs. F. T. Briscoe, J.P., Carmarthen, at a special service on Thursday, 19th October.

The brass plaque is inscribed with the words: "The Rev. Hugh Price Hughes, M.A., 1841-1902, a son of this chapel, who was in word and deed a great prophet of the Lord."

The minister of Wesley Chapel, the Rev. George Lovell, said that they were fortunate in having Mrs. Briscoe to unveil the plaque because her father-in-law (the late Mr. T. E. Briscoe, J.P.), had been a close friend of Hugh Price Hughes.

A memorial address on the life and work of Hugh Price Hughes, one of the pioneers of Methodism in Carmarthen, was given by the president of this year's British Methodist Conference, the Rev. Dr. Mervyn L. Edwards, of Cardiff.

Dr. Mervyn Edwards is recognised as an authority on the history of religion, of Methodism, and of the times of Hugh Price Hughes. A scholarly and critical essay by him has been published in the Centenary Handbook of the Wesley Church.

"REAL SON OF JOHN WESLEY"

The Rev. Mervyn Edwards spoke of Hugh Price Hughes as being a "real son of John Wesley." He was one of the three great figures in the history of the Methodist movement there being John Wesley and Jacob Bunton.

The president said that the early Methodists had a richer inheritance than those to-day. He spoke of the great use made of the Common Prayer book and the practice of an ordered act of worship which John Wesley himself wanted.

The preacher spoke of the gradual link with the Church of England weakening and finally the loss of all contact with the Anglican Church. This break with the Anglican Church was a loss, in part, to Methodism.

Hugh Price Hughes set himself to bring Methodists back to the "original inheritance." He had a profound sense of mission, said Dr. Mervyn Edwards. He wanted, like Wesley, to have worship as ordered as that of the Anglican and as spontaneous and as fresh as that of the Free Churchman.

GREAT SOCIAL REFORMER

Hugh Price Hughes was a prophet of "social holiness" and not only an evangelist. He was a great social reformer, said Dr. Mervyn Edwards. He wanted, like Wesley, to have worship as ordered as that of the Anglican and as spontaneous and as fresh as that of the Free Churchman.

The preacher spoke of the condition of Britain after the death of Wesley, of the Napoleonic Wars, and of the poverty and distress which was rife. During this period the Methodists did not understand the social ideas of John Wesley, said the president. Charity was considered partly the answer and there was an underlying humanitarianism, but not a real understanding of radicalism.

"We had to wait for Hugh Price Hughes," said Dr. Mervyn Edwards. "He was in the true tradition of John Wesley. He saw the poor and the exploited and realised that 'charity' and humanitarianism were merely palliatives."

Hugh Price Hughes identified himself with the radical forces, but was careful to dissociate himself from any political

party. He was undoubtedly a Liberal at heart, and all public issues interested him.

WEST LONDON MISSION

The president described Hugh Price Hughes as being "a torrential writer as well as a torrential speaker." He also mentioned the great man's most influential book "Social Christianity" which he said was "electrifying" to those of Hughes' day. Never before had anyone related Socialism to Christianity.

Dr. Mervyn Edwards said that Hugh Price Hughes would be remembered by his important contribution to the West London Mission.

One of Hughes' greatest desires, said the speaker, was that of a united church. He attempted to unite both the free churches, and the Church of England. He worked incessantly for the union of Methodists and his work was crowned by the setting up of the National Free Church Council. He was the Council's first president.

NONCONFORMITY AT ITS BEST

The preacher said that Hugh Price Hughes probably inherited much of his genius from his talented parents and became the national figure he was through his up-bringing in Carmarthen, and in his local church during a period when Nonconformity was at its best.

The president ended by saying that worship should be expressed with dignity and spontaneity and that "you must be the friends of all and enemies of none." His service was conducted by the minister of the Wesley Church (Rev. George Lovell), and by the Rev. W. J. Hill (superintendent of the Carmarthen and Llanelly Methodist Circuit). The organist was Mr. W. T. Davies, Bronwydd Road. The hymns "How beautiful are their feet," "O God, to whom the faithful dead still live," and "Christ for the world we sing" were sung.

Among the large congregation were the Mayor and Mayoress of Carmarthen (Coun. and Mrs. T. Idwal Jones) and members of the Borough Corporation, ministers from the free churches of the town and Justices of the Peace. The surviving son and daughter of Rev. Hugh Price Hughes were unable to attend the service owing to ill health.

CIVIC RECEPTION

Prior to the memorial service the Rev. Dr. Mervyn Edwards was given a civic reception by the Mayor (Coun. T. Idwal Jones), who was accompanied by the Mayoress (Mrs. Idwal Jones). Welcoming the president of the Methodist Conference, the Mayor said: "The unveiling of a plaque to the memory of the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes, who was a native of the town, is a very important occasion in the history of the Wesley Church."

The President suitably responded. Among those at the reception were: Sir Arthur Dixon (president of the Laymen's Methodist Missionary Movement), Rev. G. Lovell, Revs. W. J. Hill, Frederick W. Milson, Westhill, and Mr. Wilfred Hindley (circuit secretary).

On Thursday evening a "President's Rally" was held at the Wesley Church. The Rev. Dr. Mervyn Edwards delivered an impressive address and Sir Arthur Dixon was chairman.

USED 100 YEARS AGO

The china used at the tea served after the memorial service to the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes at the English Wesleyan Methodist Church, Carmarthen, was used on a similar occasion 100 years ago. The china was the property of Mrs. Mollie Hebb, of Waterloo-terrace, Carmarthen, who passed away a few months ago.

BISHOP AT FRATERNAL

The Bishop of St. David's (Dr. J. R. Richards) was present at a special meeting of the Carmarthen and District Methodist Church, Fraternal, at the Wesley Chapel, on Thursday morning, 19th October. The Archbishop of Carmarthen (Dr. W. Gwynedd-Jacob), who is the chairman of the Fraternal, presided and extended a cordial welcome to the Rev. Dr. Mervyn Edwards. Dr. Edwards spoke of the problems facing ministry of the gospel in the present day and age. The Rev. D. E. Jones, minister of Zion English Presbyterian Church, took the devotion.

I have just discovered something. I have completely forgotten two pages of recollections from the oldest member, Sarah Hebb, in the Centenary Handbook and pieces by Kenneth James, her nephew, and Professor P. Mansel Jones.

Chaplaincy

One of the things that I was looking forward to very much was that the Carmarthen minister was expected to act as a part-time chaplain to the Methodists studying at Trinity College, an Anglican foundation for teacher training. I made no headway whatsoever with this aspect of my ministry. I vaguely remember one or two students being referred to me by their home churches but all my efforts to make effective contact failed. Throughout my time no students came to services at Wesley. I tried to find a way of getting into the life of the college but failed.

Feeling bemused and guilty I decided I didn't know how to go about this side of my appointment and to seek help. At my own expense I went to a one-day conference at Shrewsbury organized by the Connexional Secretary for Education. I got up at the crack of dawn to get a train on the beautiful line over the Sugar Loaf Mountain and through the centre of Wales on a lovely October morning (28th, 1958). Arriving full of anticipation and bursting with questions and desperate for help, I was ignored. George Osborn, The Secretary of the Education Department (1951-1970) barely acknowledged my presence. (Douglas Hubery followed him as Secretary. What a different story it would have been had he been there.) Informally, the Conference was a social occasion for old friends who were having a great time catching up with each other and telling their stories. I got neither a hearing nor help and came away angry and disillusioned having spent time and money I could ill afford on an abortive journey. I think I lost heart, decided that I was unlikely to make any headway and concluded chaplaincy was not for me – but then God gave me a good experience at Pibwrlwyd Rural Technical College, on my doorstep and in relation to students with whom I could empathize.

Sunday School and Youth Club

Norman Moyle and his wife and others managed to get a much more effective Sunday School and, I think we worked together to establish a youth club but it never took off.

People

As these Notes illustrate, it is people, relationships (good and bad) and critical interpersonal incidents as well as events and how we face and tackle them that weave the tapestries of our lives. That is to state the obvious. My Carmarthen ministry was rich with people – so much that I must be highly selective at this point because time is too short for me to tell the stories of so many of them that I have already mentioned. I have chosen to write briefly about some of the people and incidents that have profoundly affected me and my praxis of ministry and/or become part of my story and my folklore.

Throughout my life and ministry close friendships I could trust have been important to me and soul friendships precious. At the beginning of my ministry the accepted wisdom was that ministers should avoid developing such relationships with members of their congregations for fear of being compromised and losing one's independence and being seen to have favourites. [See Harold Robert's ordination charge.] I lived by this whilst being empathetic and developing a wide raft of close and

meaningful relationships with Helen Willows, Charles Powell, Mr & Mrs Hindley, the Sanderson Williams' ...and so many more across a wide socio-religious spectrum. My relationship with a young English Baptist minister, Malcolm G. Haddock, was close, creative and meaningful. Whatever I did, I tried not to be in 'anyone's pocket'. I learnt so much from all of these people. Charles Powell was a retired railway signalman as was our next door neighbour, Levi Evans. On one occasion when Mr Powell—I never addressed him in any other way—was doing our garden with some hesitation and embarrassment and in a gracious and non-judgemental way warned me out of deep concern to be wary of my dealings with Mr E with whom he had worked for many years. He was well-known for being a somewhat devious trouble maker. Molly and I suddenly became aware that Mr Powell had been absent for an hour or so. When he returned he looked much happier and told me that he was very uneasy about what he had said about Mr E and had been down to the chapel and knelt at the 'mercy seat' (his words) and got right with the Lord. "I am all right, now," he said. I was moved by his deep spirituality and what it had cost him to warn me. I got to know the Powells well – they had friends in Pontardulais and quite regularly I took them there on my way to appointments. The car journeys were times of great blessing; they both had a lovely spiritual presence. Mr Powell died in 1972. I recall well writing a letter of condolence to his widow – who I did not know as well as I did him, she was thoroughly Welsh and a member of a Welsh chapel. It was almost midnight when Catherine, Molly and I finished a long day's work. As they were about to go to bed I said that I simply must write to Mrs Powell, tired as I was. They remonstrated but I knew I had to do it. Sometime later I had a reply, a lovely letter which is on file. She said that she sobbed her heart out as she read it which she had not been able to do since his death. Then she told me of a most incredible premonition, see below for a copy of that part of her letter. How wonderful are the promptings of the Holy Spirit when we read them aright. I take all such promptings seriously even though some of them seem to be misunderstandings or false trails!

My first real encounter with severe mental illness was through a young lady who came to an evening service at Wesley fairly early in my ministry. She was living alone deep in the country many miles from the centre of Carmarthen. Later, after periods in St. David's Mental Hospital and other institutions, she had a caravan. She aspired to be a published poet and she was good at art. Bent on helping her and believing I could, I spent inordinate amounts of time with her and travelling considerable distances to visit her: I remember getting up at 4-5am to do my Greek studies and then see her about the latest emergency. I got too emotionally involved. I

was still in contact with her by correspondence in 1966. Molly and I stood by her at some cost but we did not see any improvement. Through bitter experience I learnt or came to terms with several things which have guided my subsequent pastoral ministry: I am a layman in relation to mental illness, at best a first-aid counsellor;²² I am unlikely to be able to heal those when skilled doctors cannot; tending pastoral care to them must be done with controlled time and emotional involvement – they will devour any amount of time and emotion; maintaining a balance between loving empathy and objectivity is difficult but essential for their well-being and mine and for my effectiveness; enveloping them into one's family and private life can be unwise and dangerous and possibly unfair but I admire those who do so.

I cannot resist one story about burying the wrong man. Late on a Saturday night in April 1961 an undertaker rang to ask if I would bury a man on Monday. He had been dead some time but now he had been identified by his sister, a teacher from Minehead. The post mortem had shown that he had epilepsy and he had been found dead in a country lane with his knife sharpening trolley and equipment. He was known to be an itinerant tradesman. I said I would but as I was travelling to several appointments the following day the only time I could see them was early Sunday morning which I needed to do. I went to their hotel. The mother was ill, highly emotional and distraught; the daughter was somewhat austere and very business-like. She was in no doubt that it was her brother who had epilepsy

and was an itinerant knife grinder well known in west Wales. There was no church service, we buried him on a lovely spring morning and I remember birds sang as we did so. Shortly afterwards I was told that the son walked into his mother's home! My Father sent me the cutting on the opposite page. So, I know not whom I buried!

Writing

I wrote my first thing that was published on Christianity

the Youth Worker as First Aid Counsellor

so what a relief³ I felt when the sorting continued. That morning when your letter came I got up earlier than usual because I somehow felt that the Postman would bring me a special letter so at 7 a.m. he brought your letter! as there was no likelihood of any one dropping in or calling me I cried & cried, & oh Mr. Lovell I have felt a different person since you see Mr. Lovell my husband

DAILY HERALD
SAT 22.4.61

d on

THEIR DEAD SON TURNS UP

A MOTHER embraced her son again yesterday four days after she had attended his "funeral" and had laid a spray of flowers on his "grave."

The son she thought had died is 36-year-old Norman Thornton. He walked into his mother's home at Minehead, Somerset, yesterday, for a reunion with the elderly parents he had not seen for two years.

A man who was found ill last week at Llanilwl, Carmarthenshire, and who later died at Carmarthen was believed to be Mrs. Thornton's son.

So she and her schoolteacher daughter Hilda went to the funeral.

Only mourners

They were the only mourners, and at Mrs. Thornton's request the Rev. George Lovell read out Norman's favourite hymn.

Then they went along to the cemetery, where three sprays of spring flowers were laid on the grave by Mrs. Thornton and Hilda.

A few days later Mr. and Mrs. Thornton got a letter. It was from their son, Norman, who has been living at Leatherhead, Surrey.

Surrey police arranged yesterday's reunion and last night police at Carmarthen were trying to find out: "Who is the man in Norman Thornton's grave?"

at my desk, an enormously large square old fashioned dining table, in the Carmarthen manse, a pastoral booklet, *Ten Days in Hospital*. Moreover, an eighteen year old student from Burry Port who stayed with us whilst working at St David's Mental Hospital during the summer vacation, Leslie Griffiths, sat at the same desk and proof read the manuscript for grammar – and particularly, as now tells the story, for split infinitives! The idea for this publication – its content, structure and title – came to me in a flash of inspiration in a moment of time as a much needed pastoral aid as I was visiting the patients in Glangwilli Hospital one afternoon. Remarkably, people still find it useful even though the common length of stay in hospital at that time of ten days has been drastically reduced.

Carmarthen New Church

Less than twenty years after I left the old church was pulled down and a new one built a short distance away. We could not have imagined in 1962 that this would happen. In some ways it makes me sad but the new building is much more affordable, manageable and suitable for the present day but it does not have the dignity and it is not saturated with the memories of the old 1861 Chapel. Mrs Muriel Bowen and her husband showed us around with great pride when we visited on holiday. Property developers initiated this dramatic change in order to build a new shopping precinct: they built the new church as part of the settlement. How I would like to visit again – or would I be disturbed at the thought of that which was lost and my memories of it all?

Revisit

Molly and I did re-visit in July 2002. At that

time the minister was the Rev. Adelaide Wheeler-Cox, a URC minister of ‘Carmarthen United Church and Trinity Methodist Church’ in Kidwelly. Wesley was now a Methodist and URC Church. She couldn’t adjust to the Methodist Circuit system and ministering to – and of course ‘belonging to’ – a group of churches. Her experience had been of pastorates. Very generously she invited us to tea at the manse with some people who remembered us and asked me to preach at Kidwelly on the 7th, my birthday and, more to the point, the 42nd anniversary of my ordination. Ernie and Elizabeth Ball were the ones we most remembered – they had children the same age as ours and, as they passed the manse on their way home from Church, they often brought our children back with them. It was great to revisit the manse and to learn about what had happened to the people we had known but sad that so many had died.

A Reflection²³

I suspect that the Stationing Committee sent me to Carmarthen because I was a good fit for a difficult situation as I was a married, older probationer rather than because it was appropriate for my formation. However that might be, in the providence of God it turned out to be for my good and that of the Carmarthen and the Circuit. It was an excellent place for me and for the family. Incredibly, it was rich in experience; over the years I have benefitted from all that I learnt and became; and it is proving to be a source of much blessing in and through this reflection. I am extraordinarily fortunate. Thanks be to God.

Kidwelly

Earlier today as I prepared to write this section, an image of Kidwelly Methodist Church as I experienced it suddenly came to me. It was vivid and warm. Frustratingly I am finding it difficult to capture it in words to my satisfaction. Movingly this mental picture encapsulated the communal Christian character of the people of that Church, or more precisely that of the core membership who generated it, in much the same way that I have conceptual images of the quintessence of individuals and my affective relationship with them. Essentially, it showed that I feel that the Kidwelly society of some seventy seven people was formed around and by a group of leaders who epitomized what I understand to be Christianity at its best. Uncommonly, the key members of this group were men; ordinary working class men whose faith in and experience of Christ made them extraordinarily refined Godly men – I want to say holy men. What I discerned in and



through that image was that for me Kidwelly was an outstanding expression of the body of Christ, properly articulated in a local setting. Little wonder that I loved that Church and felt myself deeply privileged to be its minister.

²⁴On reflection, this image is something of an idealisation of the church although there is much truth in it and it represents a continuing reality for me. When I come to substantiate it, I am surprised to find that three men were the formative influence: Isaac James, Gerard Jones and Albert Morris. Morally, spiritually and pastorally they fashioned and represented the character and ethos of the Church; they set the standards. Other men and women looked to them for leadership. Isaac James' wife was an old lady suffering from the early stages of dementia when I knew her but she was an outstanding Christian lady as was her daughter, Rosalie, who became a deaconess and a lifelong close friend. Rosalie and her friend June Chubb spent much time with us. June taught English and French and had an extremely high I.Q. which, so it was said, took her into the genius level. Sadly, she developed acute mental problems and never fulfilled her great potential as a teacher, academic and local preacher. But she became a deeply devout and spiritual Christian and found her home in the Roman Catholic Church. During my ministry they were deeply involved with me in church and Circuit work with children and young people. Gerard Jones' wife, Olwen and her close friend and neighbour Annie Wilkins, were lovely Christian ladies. Then there were two elderly sisters, the Miss Isaacs, Maria and Bertha. They were lovely, gracious, refined ladies of independent means. And Rosalie's aunt, Miss Lily Walters and several other fine Methodist women to the core. By and large they were 'followers'

rather than leaders.

Earlier, I described the society as ‘working class’. This was so in that they were artisans, Isaac James and Albert Morris were labourers in a brick works, Gerard James owned a general stores and ran it. But they were not like the working class people of Pontardulais or of my native Lancashire. They were culturally different somehow and religiously, educationally and socially more refined: it was a country rather than an industrial culture even though Kidwelly had been a vigorous industrial town of some 3,000 people there was no evidence of that in my time.

Isaac James was retired when I knew him. A big man with a lovely voice – they called him the singing preacher; a Pembrokeshire man who had come to Kidwelly for work many years previously and found his wife and his future home. He died in 1960 and I was privileged to conduct his funeral. His daughter, Rosalie, offered and sold me his car – a Ford Popular – at a most reasonable price. I missed him greatly in the second half of my ministry there.

²⁵This is a most inadequate note about Mr James. He was a profoundly spiritual man with a big heart. He exercised an outstanding pastoral ministry – to the people and to me, the minister. I vividly recall his welcome to me when I made my first pastoral visit. On opening the door to me he flung it back in a welcoming gesture, half turned to the interior and said in his rich Welsh voice, “The Minister,” so that all could hear. He was dressed in his weekday gardening clothes, shirt with no collar and rolled up sleeves. After his greetings he gave me the first of so many pastoral briefings of people he had visited, their circumstances and those I needed to visit – the ideal lay pastor in the old Methodist traditions. I loved him. His support of my ministry was something I greatly valued. It never wavered.

He died suddenly of a heart attack in his garden, I think, on the 31st January 1960 aged 72 years. I took his funeral. On the Thursday before he died, he told me that he had preached on Ephesians 6:14 on the previous Sunday, ‘Awake; them that sleepest, and arise for the dead and Christ shall shine upon thee!’ He told me he had got the text from a funeral service a week or two ago. It was my text for my sermon at his funeral. His wife had died in May/June the previous year and I had buried her too.

Gerard Jones was one of the most eloquent men I have met. For many, many years he led an adult Sunday class in the church. I attended it whenever I could. He gave his ‘lessons’ without at a note. They were fluent



The wall of Trinity Methodist Church is on the right



The interior of Trinity as I knew & loved it.

expositions of the Bible, lyrical and learned and devotional. He knew his Bible and loved it. I was amazed at his ability and rejoiced in his spirituality and oratory. They said he should have been a minister. I never understood why he had not become a preacher – or a minister. His vestry prayers were just as eloquent; they were a benediction prayed facing the wall in a Jewish fashion.

At this point I cannot resist an anecdote or possibly two or three about a saintly old man, **Mr Loosemore**. He used to sit by the organ during services and always went to the toilet in the hymn before the sermon. Frequently he would say a loud “amen” to anything in prayers or sermons that moved him. On one or two occasions he did this following me saying things that I was about to disown or refute. I soon learnt to be circumspect. An incident in a weeknight prayer meeting of a small group of people in the vestry was my undoing. People prayed as they felt led. On this particular evening Mr Loosemore prayed fervently. As his prayer evolved I had the sense that it was coming from a progressively higher level. Eventually when it appeared to me leaning forward with my eyes closed, that it was coming from the ceiling I opened my eyes to see what was happening. To my amazement and consternation because he was unsteady on his feet at the best of times, I saw that he was standing on his chair facing the wall and looking up to the ceiling. Clearly as he prayed he had stood up and then climbed up to his present position. I had not been deluded! Embarrassed and fearful of him falling and uncertain of what to do, I got the giggles. Thankfully, as I struggled to contain myself and decide what to do his praying came to an end with a loud amen and he safely resumed his seat!

Albert Morris was a younger man working in a brick making factory. We became close friends but we never used each other’s Christian names – that seems strange in the very different informal culture of today. His wife was extraordinarily kind, but not as religious as he was. She loved children and befriended Molly



and delighted in having the family to meals and looking after the children from time to time. They had an enormous vegetable garden which Albert kept and produced lovely vegetables which they shared generously. Once day he said he wanted to show me something. As we walked to see it he became increasingly pensive. Eventually we entered a quite large field. He stood, surveyed it and said with much emotion, "I own this. As long as I live and am able to dig no member of my family and friends will ever starve again. You are the only person who knows this." It was clear I was not to break his confidence and I never did. Whether or not his family knew I never asked, I was deeply moved. In that moment he revealed so much of his past of which I had previously been unaware. He did not need to go into detail. Clearly he had been out of work in his native Pembrokeshire and they had starved. Once he had got work he laboured night and day to provide for the present and the future as best he could. My admiration, respect and love for him soared. (Writing this has been a deeply emotional experience. I cannot tell the story in public without becoming emotional.)²⁶

²⁷**The Misses Bertha and Maria Isaac** were two gracious genteel ladies of independent means who lived in Kidwelly and were members at Trinity. They were devout and lovely Christians, elderly when I knew them. Indeed I conducted Bertha's funeral in 1960. They contributed much to the spirituality of the church in a quiet way. Their very presence made me feel better. They always took a great interest in my wellbeing and that of my family.

Then there was **Ronnie John**, a bachelor in his 30s or 40s I suppose. He was profoundly deaf and dumb and always carried a pad and pen, which he used to communicate enthusiastically. Ronnie had a mischievous and infective sense of humour. We developed a good and, for me, rewarding relationship and he got on well with my father. Ronnie loved to travel in my car with me. One time when my father was with me he travelled to Burry Port with us in the back seat of my 1936 Morris Eight. He had hysterics when I went over a large pothole and he bounced from his seat (no belts in

²⁶ Notable amongst the things that have kept me away from those notes for sixteen days are: a preaching engagement, visits, changing my computer, another episode in the Fruitful Field Saga. Eventually the deep drive to get back to them overcame the inertia and the difficulties of re-entry. Having spent several hours reorganizing the papers and adding to previous entries, I feel ready to start when it is almost time to get ready to go out to dinner with the Leakes! Before turning to some memorable incidents in the story of my association with this deeply spiritual group of people who were knitted together in a loving congregation, I need to reminisce about a few more people.

those days) and banged his head on the roof. Sadly, he and his stepfather died from gassing in December 1966.

Rosalie James (Isaac's daughter) and **June Chubb** became very close friends and have remained so down through the years although we have seen much more of Rosalie than June and corresponded with her extensively. As I noted earlier, they became colleagues in youth work (1.20). Also they used to baby sit for us and came on holidays with us at least a couple of times. June had a brilliant mind. Her IQ was, I understood, in the genius bracket; she was a graduate teacher in French and possibly English at Carmarthen Girls' Grammar School. She was a devout Methodist, Sunday School teacher and local preacher. She had been an evacuee from London who became deeply devoted to her foster parents and alienated from her family, especially her mother. This was exacerbated when she opted to stay in Wales with her foster parents at the end of the war rather than returning 'home'. Sadly she had a nervous breakdown towards the end of my time in Wales – or was it shortly afterwards? She did recover and was reconciled with her family but throughout her life she has struggled with mental health problems. Eventually she gave up teaching and preaching and left Methodism because she found her spiritual home in the Roman Catholic Church. Tragically she never realised her enormous potential as an educationalist and preacher. But her Christmas letter this year is from a happy and contented Christian lady.

Rosalie James is one of the finest and most natural Christian ladies that I have known. June confirmed in her Christmas letter that she is still alive; on my reckoning she is 96; she is bedfast now and suffering signs of dementia. When I last saw her with Molly in 2011²⁸ she knew us but her short term memory was impaired. Nonetheless the beauty and joy of her Christianity shone from her beaming face. "George Lovell, The Rev. George Lovell of Carmarthen," she said over and over again with great affection. One of my sadnesses is that for some years now I have not been able to visit her nor to be in conversation with her. The last time I/we spent time with her was in 2002(?), more of that later. During my ministry in Kidwelly she was a stalwart and a key worker and organist of Trinity and a close personal family friend. She ran the local post office and did some clerical/bookkeeping work for Tom Gravell at the garage. At some cost to herself including the suppression of her career and a call and yearning to be a Wesley deaconess, she stayed at home first to look after her mother and father (they died in 1959 and 1960 respectively) and then an aged aunt who lived nearby. She died in

28 We were on holiday in Aberporth. John drove Molly and me over to the nursing home Hafan-y-Coed in Llanelli where Rosalie was living.

1965/6. Then and then only did Rosalie turn her attention to considering the possibility of becoming a Wesley deaconess: at 49 years of age it seemed a remote possibility. She came to spend a week or so with us in Sydenham towards the end of my ministry there to explore the possibility of pursuing such a vocation. My memory is that I wrote a long letter about her situation and call to the warden, Geoffrey Litherland, but I find no evidence of this in my papers. It may well be that I helped Rosalie to compose a letter. Extant correspondence indicates this possibility. However, in August 1966 Geoffrey Litherland was in correspondence with me about the possibility (see following pages for this correspondence). Litherland's response was movingly impressive in its desire to find God's will for Rosalie and the Church even if it involved going beyond any precedent and therefore into the unknown. Imaginatively, to enable her, the Order and the Church to test out her suitability and call and the feasibility of her candidating, he suggested she spent a term at the College in Ilkley as a visiting student. I was so proud of being a Methodist and in the same ministry as a man with such pastoral and spiritual sensitivity and acumen. The long and short of it all, Rosalie became a deaconess soon after she was ordained, she was diagnosed with breast cancer. We were all in deep despair. It all seemed so tragic. But she recovered and had a distinguished ministry, not least in the East End of London Mission. During this period we met up with her frequently, either in her flat in the Mission or in our manse.

Rosalie came to our rescue after the Tower Bomb. She spent a week or two with Molly looking after her in a cottage in Cornwall whilst she was having treatment from an unusual doctor there who helped her enormously.

She retired in Llanelli where she continued to have an outstanding ministry in the circuit through pastoral work, preaching and playing the piano and organ in various places including Kidwelly, until she became too infirm. Undoubtedly she helped many women's meetings and contributed significantly to Trinity working its way through a very low period in its history and getting back on its feet to what I understand is now a flourishing church. God bless her. She blessed Molly, me and the family.

Philip Evans, a sixteen year old boy, the youngest member of Trinity, was electrocuted minutes before the end of his shift on Wednesday 29th September 1959 during, I think, his first week at work as an apprentice. Early that evening I had a telephone call, I believe from June Chubb telling me of the awful tragedy. Immediately, I went to the home, Cartref, to find the house full of people and his mother and father, Thomas John and Naomi, fully dressed in bed in deep shock. T.J. was stunned to silence; Naomi cried out over and again, "Mr Lovell tell me it isn't true..." Time

READERS HAVE THEIR SAY

XX Aid News
No 18 July 1972

The Pastors and the Tracts

From J. E. Gray,
Malaysia:

FIVE POINTS

Sir—This letter will be rather 'bitty' but I hope the points raised will be considered of use.

First, the use of the word 'we' in connection with tractors (Christian Aid News page 7, No: 16, February, 1972). What of the "Merry Tiller"? This has been used successfully for rice paddy cultivation. Or, if Derek Brown or anyone else is so sure they have a winner, why not try the industrialists of the developing nations? If the idea is so good, and so simple, there must be several who could build it, and export elsewhere. Much better than them rushing to compete in building expensive Western-orientated products.

Secondly, the use of the word 'we' in connection with social reform, in Miss Halliwell's letter (page 2). Who does she mean? If the nation, how will she bring it about. If Christians, how does she account for the fact that many of them work in advertising, watch TV, read newspapers, gamble, use hire purchase, and acquiesce in Trade Union malpractice? Individual piety is not enough, but it is a good start, and until Christians are themselves ready for the worthwhile reforms, Miss Halliwell's

From Miss Marilyn Smith,
Somerset:

Sir—Having read correspondence and editorial reply concerning a pastor's refusal to distribute tracts with more physical aid I feel I must write and ask if the Editor's attitude is official Christian Aid policy. I have contributed to Christian Aid rather than Oxfam because I assumed it intended to help the Third World's spiritual as well as physical needs. I should have thought the obvious lack of happiness in our affluent society makes it abundantly clear that physical aid is very far from sufficient. I do not see that handing out a tract is in any sense compulsion (they don't have to read it). At least it is made clear from the outset (a) in whose name the help is being given (b) that we have more than rice to give if they wish.

If Christian Aid does not in fact provide any spiritual food until it is perhaps too late for some souls then I must withdraw my contributions and transfer them elsewhere. I fail to see how people can be expected to ask for what they either have never heard of or have never missed.

EDITOR: The Editor does not have an "attitude". Christian Aid policy is to give help where it is needed.

From Miss J. Chubb,
Llanelli, Carmarthen:

Sir, Thank you for the February issue of "Christian Aid News". I was very struck by the article on the first page, "What a turn up for the Cathedral", and grieved in particular to read about the American Society that was willing to give aid only on condition the refugee pastors distributed Biblical tracts.

"There was a man who was out one day
When he saw another man bleed
by the way
He went to him and pitied his plight
He gave him first aid, his hotel bill he paid
And we feel that what he did was right."

"Now you look carefully at that tale,
Does it say the Samaritan quoted a verse
Or threatened the poor man with something worse?
Having helped him, did he next throw at his hapless head a text."

"We, too, who love the One in the Book
Would like these brothers to take a new look.
At the tale as told by the Lord;
And ask, is it in your fashion he tells us to show compassion in his word?"

An example of Jones' creative writing.

after time I replied, "I'd give anything to be able to tell you that." I empathized, consoled, comforted and shared their grief with them and prayed with them. But there was little relief from their pain and mine. I conducted the funeral services – at the house, in the chapel, in Capel Sul Cemetery – four days later on a Sunday afternoon. It was men only at the services in the Chapel and the cemetery. Someone estimated 2,000 of them. As I sat in the hearse they walked in front and I could not see the beginning of the column and there were others behind all dressed in grey or black. They filled the chapel to the extent I could hardly find a place to stand to conduct the service. And they crowded around outside. They sang, oh they sang, inside and outside. "Love divine..." Over and again they took up the hymn. I was so moved by the singing and the sight of T.J. in the centre in a state of collapse supported by men on all sides, that I could scarce speak, but I did and was carried away by the emotion. (I have wept as I have written.) Naomi never got over it; I think T.J. did to a much

greater degree. They came back to chapel, T.J. sooner than Naomi. She never stood in services again; she sat as a protest to an unloving God whom she never forgave. We talked and corresponded endlessly about it. I visited regularly.

A very strange thing happened. Molly and I were on holiday in West Wales and we were driving through Kidwelly. I felt I must visit T.J. and Naomi – I still called them Mr and Mrs Evans and they called me Mr Lovell even though we had become so close pastorally and personally. So we stopped and I went to the door of Cartref. T.J. answered. He was taken aback completely – shocked but somehow not surprised. He took me (I am not sure whether Molly joined me or not) to the bedroom where Naomi was in the very room and bed that I had found them on that fateful night. “Oh, Mr Lovell, I knew you would come. I have been expecting you all day.” She clung to my hand. We talked and prayed. She died shortly afterwards. The visit was providential, entirely unplanned on my part or premeditated, mysteriously directed by a loving God, I believe.

I still have Philip’s copy of *Great Souls at Prayer* which they gave to me in his memory.

In the morning of the 27th I took an ordinary service at Carmarthen, then the funeral and post haste from there to take the Harvest Festival Service at Victoria Road in Llanelly. I remember as I was driving along trying to cope with the emotional switch I had to somehow make from the one service to the next. I think I called on the Evans’ on my way home and experienced another emotional switch.

²⁹Then there was the **flood on the 2nd October 1960** on a Sunday night during the evening service, which was taken by an auxiliary preacher. During the last hymn he noticed water was seeping through the two entry doors. Incredulously, realizing what was happening, the tidal river which ran by the chapel was flooding and soon the bridge would be impassable and he needed to get over it to get home, he vacated the pulpit without a word got his things from the vestry, got in his car and went home! The people thought he had gone to the toilet or been taken ill. Then they saw the water, but still could not believe he had left without even a word of warning. Soon they had to stand on their seats. The bridge was impassable. Eventually they were helped to get out and home. A massive clean-up operation was carried out by the members who were thanked by a celebratory meal for which I wrote the doggerel opposite on 9th Jan 1947.

Centenary Celebrations

In November (5th-7th) 1966, some four years after I had left Wales and a few months into my Parchmore Ministry, I was enormously privileged to conduct a 'public meeting', three services and a 'great-rally' to celebrate Trinity's centenary (see poster on file). Dr Edwards had conducted the re-opening of the Church three days earlier. What a celebration! Sadly, I went alone; Molly stayed to look after the children.³⁰ I cannot remember much about it. A short time ago I came across some notes from which I spoke but I cannot find them now. They seemed grossly inadequate and left me with the feeling that I didn't serve the people very well; nothing like what they deserved. I wasn't invited back again! One thing I can remember is feeling I had arrived: the one-time local minister who had 'made' it in London returning. How awful.

However, Molly and I did return in July 2002 for a holiday in West Wales. The minister at the time was URC (Carmarthen had become a joint Methodist / URC Church), Adelaide Wheelan-Cocks, who graciously invited us to tea with a few people who had known us. It was nostalgic to re-visit the house after so many years. We stayed on the outskirts of Kidwelly for two or three days so we could visit old haunts. Also, she arranged for me to preach at Kidwelly. We wished we hadn't. It was on my birthday and the 42nd anniversary of my ordination. It was a devastating experience. The church had been completely gutted by a fire some time before. There was nothing, simply nothing, of the interior left. It was a plastered box with a few plastic chairs and simple modern communion furniture. The congregation was very small in number, just a few who remembered us. My service was inappropriate – 'Peace amongst the religious' (S 326) about the inter-faith situation. Rosalie played the piano and we had lunch with her afterwards and then we sought solace in Saundersfoot where we had spent so many happy times – but that had changed almost beyond all recognition. Kidwelly seemed on its last legs. Thank God it wasn't. Apparently it is now a thriving cause.

Whilst I was on this visit I heard a most intriguing story. Some time before the fire a stranger attended the evening service. Afterwards he asked permission to play the organ which he did beautifully; he entranced them with music of which they did not know the organ was capable. Then he asked them if they knew that they had a very rare organ, only one more existed somewhere in Europe. It was, he said very valuable and advised

30 A note I have come across suggests Molly and I actually went and stayed with Rosalie. Presumably Dorothy looked after our children.

them to insure it for, I think, the figure was £80,000. Their insurance was nowhere near that figure. They took his advice. Some time later the church caught fire during the night, and as I have said, the interior was gutted. Investigations established that the fire was started deliberately and that the arsonist had lit it under the organ! Renovations were covered by the insurance money even though the insurance company refused to pay out in full because of the suspicious nature of the events. But, oh, they could have done without that fire as far as I was concerned. Nevertheless, whilst the fabric I knew and loved which was invested with so many precious memoirs, the saints of Kidwelly were safe in Gods care and keeping.

Writing this led me to think how enormously privileged I have been to be part of this fine, holy, Christian community – and so many more – be the extension that is inherent in the Methodist connexion and the kingdom of God.

Farewell, my beloved Kidwelly.

Pontardulais³¹

Pontardulais, a church with some one hundred members, was quite different from nay of the other churches in the circuit. It had a working class congregation: all but one of the members were of the same class and culture and lived in very similar kinds of houses; the exception was a lady who was married to the manager of, I think, the labor exchange and lived in a ‘big’ house. Evening congregation numbered a hundred, a full chapel. The men worked in the steel works on a socially disruptive ‘continental’ shift work system. The members of the Church were staunchly and defiantly independent. Once I had gained their trust they let me into their carefully guarded congregational secret, they had built up and maintained a £100 reserve fund through a penny a week scheme. It was to maintain their freedom should anything occur to threaten it. No one else in the circuit knew of it!

The men were strong trade unionists, almost militantly so and this affected/infused the ethos of the Church especially through the Trustees – a body of about twelve men, no women! They wanted to run and to see their meetings conducted like trade union meetings. One man, a retired steel mill worker who had been a shop steward, gave me some problems when I chaired, as I normally did, their meetings. He was a very assertive, strong willed man, rather loud, man who was respected by those who had been his work mates; he lacked empathy and was not attuned to the finer

"The Second of October".

Down Ferry Road the floods did pour,
On that fateful Sunday night.
And Trinity knew not of her plight
As her hymns of praise did soar.

But the water came and covered their feet,
And they had need to stand on their seat.
To stem the water was some feat,
All hands were given to avoid defeat.

Some Trinity folk waded up to their thigh
And Gallant men carried maidens high.
Whilst the wall of the bridge was breached
For that the other side might be reached.

Even the collection was forgotten
In the chaos that was begotten,
As water and mud and debris and all
The Chapel did cover from wall unto wall.

The light of Sunday morn
Did reveal terrible devastation.
But with hearts undaunted
Was ~~then~~ begun the ~~work~~ restoration.

From Chapel & church & tower
Friends & neighbours rallied round
With buckets & shovels they cleared the ground
And with hoses they washed ~~all~~ ^{everything} down.

To friends good and true
All our thanks are due.
So a feast of good things the ladies did make
To say, Thankyou, for all our sake.

aspects of Christian spirituality. He lived by rule books. Whenever tricky issues arose he wanted to know what *CPD*³² said and more often than not I could not give him chapter or verse! I happened to mention this to the superintendent, Harold Evans, who asked me if I had an old copy of *CPD* and, if so, suggested I give, I think he was called Mr. Battle (an appropriate name) a copy. I did. Our relationship was transformed. Quickly he knew it off by heart and would often say, “As you and I know, Chairman, *CPD*’s ruling is ... in Section ...”. We got on like a house on fire. One of the better pieces of advice Harold gave me!

By and large I got on well with the people. My ministry, both my preaching and pastoral ministry, was well received except for problems with Mrs F. However, before I turn to that, there are two anecdotes about the first service I took at Pontardulais. Following the benediction the stewards took over and turned the service into a welcome meeting. They had not given me notice of this. It went well and took a more intimate and humorous turn when Miss Ruth Battle, a relative of Mr. Battle and equally blunt and forthright, spoke; she was I suppose in her late sixties or early seventies. ‘We don’t know anything about you’, she said, “we don’t know where you come from, whether you are married or not – I don’t want to know for myself but some might be interested – and if you’re married whether you have children”. I was pleased to answer in full! A sequel capped it in the form of an unintended entendre. As I was shaking hands with the congregation as they left, a very beautiful young lady approached me and in a lovely Welsh voice said, “You are going to marry me in two weeks time”. Those around us were amused as I was after my initial embarrassment. It was a lovely wedding!

Returning to Mrs. F; during my pastoral visiting I felt I was well received and welcomed into the homes of all I met. Invariably they offered me some refreshment and some indicated I would be welcome to a meal when I spent days in Pontardulais for meetings, services, Sunday school, visiting etc. Consequently, I was somewhat shocked by what followed when I was spending a Sunday in Pontardulais and being entertained by Mrs F to lunch. Her husband was working. After the first course she lectured me at length: my practice of spending days in Pontardulais was appreciated by some but was becoming increasingly embarrassing and resented by others; they felt they had to entertain me and that was demanding; however she was willing to have me and would save the situation... this went on for so long that I had to leave for the Sunday School without a sweet or coffee! I

32 *The Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church*, the Church’s rule book.

told her that I was quite disturbed and confused not least because I felt that people had received me into their homes willingly and very hospitably and generously. Further, as there was evidence that the practice of extended visits was paying off in many ways, I said I had no intention of abandoning it. So, I would take up the offer of a friend of my godmother who lived in a neighbouring village to give me hospitality and when she was not available go to a hotel.

Confused and somewhat distressed I kept this incident to myself, apart that is from talking it over with Molly. Very shortly afterwards Mr. Gareth Price, the organist, took me aside and said that people were delighted by my policy of extended visits to Pontardulais, enjoyed having me in their homes (“He is homely, easy to entertain, good company and doesn’t mind sitting in the kitchen”) and some of them would like to have me for a meal. “They like to talk to you. So”, he said, “I have thought about this and if you are willing when I get the plan I will make arrangements for your hospitality. It will be easier for me to do it than you and it will mean you get around and no one is disappointed. I was dumbfounded, deeply moved. How did he come to this – did he guess something, or hear something? I didn’t ask and so to this day I do not know how this providential development occurred. I saw the hand of God in it all. It worked marvellously. I never had another meal at the their home. She was never on the lists Gareth gave me; his house was, even though his wife belonged to a Welsh chapel.

The other incident occurred later. Frequently, I would receive a long letter from Mrs F two days after I had been in Pontardulais for a service or meeting. Typically it would say that she had a burning concern about the pastoral need of someone, she had wanted to tell me about this after the service or meeting “but you are so popular it is not possible for me to get a word with you” so I have to write. There was no way I could contact her or anyone else apart from a visit because no one was on the telephone. So, I was faced with difficult decisions: to miss a pastoral crisis would be very upsetting; finding the time and the money to visit was problematic – it cost 5/- for petrol and often we just didn’t have that. The last time this happened I got a letter saying that a lady was acutely ill and that the Lord had told Mrs F during her quiet time to get in touch with me to go immediately. It put me on the spot especially as I had the lady on my mind. My father was staying with me and offered to go with me for the outing and pay for the petrol. So we went on a lovely summer’s day. (I can see myself filling up with petrol on the Pontardulais Road as I write). First I went to see the lady who was in trouble and grateful for the visit and wanted to see me ‘but it could well have waited until next time you were in Pontardulais’.

From there I went to see Mrs F. She was in the garden as I approached and said, 'Oh, you have come then?'. I told her about the outcome of the visit and then without premeditation I said, 'By the way I too had a word with the Lord this morning and he said in future he would contact me directly to avoid any delay and misunderstanding'. The letters ceased and she became a background figure in my ministry, whether benign or otherwise I know not.

Notwithstanding these difficulties³³ or was it through tackling them?) any ministry was interesting, satisfying and, I believe effective. My background working class childhood, engineering career and my National Service all of which was so much nearer time wise than it is now – helped the people to relate to me and for me to relate to them. I got on well with the local church in Wales priest and preached at civic Remembrance Day services. But I failed to establish a relationship with the Welsh Methodists just as I did in Carmarthen: they were oriented to Welsh speaking Non-Conformist Churches rather than English ones; Welsh not English was their religious/spiritual language. From the beginning I tried to minister beyond the active membership. There were initial challenges to this. Mr. John Freeman, Mrs. Freeman's father-in-law, an elderly gentleman did just that on my first visit to him which was when he was in hospital. I can see him now sitting up in bed and telling me in no uncertain terms that my ministry was to those who paid me, not to outsiders. He had heard, he said, that I was visiting and helping others and that it must stop. To his credit he withdrew his criticism after I had explained how important it was for the church to go out into the community and that this was an important part of its ministry and mission but not at the expense of caring for its own members. We became friends.

My records show that I returned to take services at their Harvest Festival in October 1965 – a Saturday evening rally when I spoke about church and community, two services on Sunday when I preached about 'spiritual food' and 'material harvests from spiritual seeds' and a Monday evening meeting on the 'mission of the church'. Tantalizingly and unbelievably I have only the dimmest recollection of this visit; in fact I had entirely forgotten about it. A letter still on file shows that I stayed with Gareth Price and his family, but I lost a cufflink and, to my utter surprise and joy, that they – church and circuit – were thrilled by my visit and the meeting and the services. That was, however my last visit; sadly I gradually lost contact.

³³ I seem to have a propensity in writing these notes to dwell on some of the difficulties. I hold back from trying to check this out and analyse it.

Burry Port

Burry Port was my fourth church, small in size and in membership. An unusual mixture of saints and sinners – I have never thought of it like that before. Leslie Griffiths has written about it eloquently and prolifically in his monthly articles in the *Methodist Recorder* and in his autobiography, *A View from the Edge*. They were a closely knit group of working class people, mostly working class women as leaders with one exception Mrs. Jenkins, a retired school teacher married to a retired bank manager was. (His brother was a retired sea captain possibly it was that which gave him an interest in boats. He made John a small yacht – we renovated it and gave it to Rita and John as a wedding present!) Several of these women were saints – as was the wife of one of the members, Mr. Evan Taylor who was a Baptist. I love these people and received untold kindness from them. I got on very well with all the people apart from one – Mrs G. Initially, I did get on with her and enjoyed many a pancake tea in her house. Then suddenly she took umbrage and cut me off completely. It was over the Sunday School. Changes I introduced were entirely unacceptable to her, she felt she was losing control, I was taking over. She became quite vicious in her reprisals – tried to arrange private meetings of the leaders to nullify decisions taken at official meetings for which she deliberately absented herself and re-structured the work, spoke vitriolically of me and my ministry and tried to undermine all that I tried to do. She refused to meet me; didn't answer the door when I called until, that is, I deliberately visited on a different day. She answered the door, was shocked to see me and said, 'You are not supposed to be here today' and shut the door. To my great regret and sadness I left with her unreconciled and apparently unredeemable but strangely the Sunday school flourished, perhaps as a consequence). As far as I know, the only person she turned against me was her husband (he even though I had helped him through months of serious illness and her sister. However, I was able to help the sister and her husband through a very difficult patch at the end of which she said that it wasn't true what her sister has said about me, which was a small comfort.

The church was the most unlikely place to attract **Leslie Griffiths** but it did. It was small unpretentious crudely furnished lovingly kept on an island on a large abandoned railway siding in a derelict port. I was enormously privileged to bring him into membership (without ensuring that he was baptized which had to be done hurriedly when the omission was discovered just before his ordination!). I will not try to tell his story because he has done that much more vividly, accurately and eloquently than I ever could. He has been and still is one of the most outstanding ministers of his

time, towering above us all in his achievements. Our continuing friendship and collegueship has been one of the greatest joys of my ministry: he prepared for this second tour of Haiti at an Avec course; he was a member of the team I led to build by the relationships between MCUD and three West African churches; he became an associated staff member of Avec; he conducted Molly's funeral services; and before that he was responsible for the initiative that led to Archbishop Rowan Williams awarding me a Lambeth DD. I thank God for him over and again.

Soon after writing this I came across letters from Mrs. G which I had forgotten all about – Freudian? They are letters of resignation in which she says the reason for this is the way in which I spoke to her at a meeting and called her to order. Clearly the offence I caused was deep and searing to her but I never felt that I had said anything that warranted such a totally negative response which baulked all my attempts to get reconciliation. This sad incident still has the power to disturb and upset me. I was rendered impotent to rectify things. Thank God it did not adversely affect Leslie and his Christian development. Catherine would say, what a few others have said to me, that Mrs. F couldn't cope with me. This is probably the case, but I find it difficult to understand and/or accept. It has happened several times with other people, a comparatively small but significant number thank goodness. The effects have invariably created some difficulties but, off hand, I cannot recall any with such a dramatic outcome. Possibly I ought to try to reflect further on this.

³⁴The following extract is from a letter on file from Leslie Griffiths dated 31st May 1962. I had quite forgotten about it; I came across it by chance this morning fifty one years later. Re-reading it moved me deeply and humbled me. It puts everything into a different perspective and makes ministry so fulfilling. What an enormous undeserved privilege to be used by God to influence such a man who came to have such a ministry. I plan to write more fully about our relationship in Section 11.

“Soon you go to do God's work elsewhere. You have ‘preached righteousness’ to the ‘great congregations’ at home and your influence will be felt for very many years. Your life work will bear its impress upon my (poor) efforts for as long as I live – for never mind how many great men I shall meet, you must be to me someone sent by God to open my eyes. For giving me sight – and as a disciple of Jesus Christ Himself, this is a fitting gift for you to have – thank you very much indeed.

Best wishes to Mrs. Lovell and love to the children.

Yours through faith
Les Griffiths”

This is something of my story of Burry Port but that church’s story is much more than that. Over recent years the whole area has been developed and is now a very different town and place from the one I remember (see the photographs in the file sent to me four years ago by Leslie Griffiths). Burry Port is no longer a run down deprived area; it is an attractive, prosperous and a very attractive place in which to live. The Church has taken on a new lease of life and ministry. The ram shackled old building that served as a Sunday school was taken down and a fine purpose built building was erected, ‘Canolfan Leslie Griffiths Centre’ which he opened in 2009. It is a fitting tribute to Leslie and to those who brought him to faith and to this faithfulness to his roots.

An Abiding Regret

One of the things I regret is that I did not keep careful notes of my observations during this period. Had I known then what I now know about participative research and conducting community studies, I might have tried to, but I didn’t know and I was stretched to my limits anyway. If I had done so I could have made a comparative socio-religious study of four different and contrasting churches and their effective diverse community contexts. One of the factors which I would have been keen to explore would have been the effects of English and Welsh languages upon family, social and religious life. For instance, I was surprised to find a range of patterns in the home such as: mother spoke Welsh, father English but understood some Welsh; mother spoke in Welsh to son who replied in English; to daughter in Welsh who replied in Welsh, to second son in English who replied in Welsh. The pattern varied only in the presence, say, of someone who only spoke English and they wanted to include in the conversation. Other households had a different but equally complex pattern. An opportunity lost but it later underlined for me the importance of church profiling and studying the nature and functioning of communities, secular and religious.

Ten Days in Hospital was written during my ministry in this section of the Circuit. Leslie Griffiths and I never tire of telling our stories about how he sat at my desk and proof read the manuscript for grammatical errors – especially split infinitives! This booklet was important: it reflects my commitment to pastoral ministry and providing material to further and extend it; it grew out of my experience and was a contribution to meeting an unmet need; it is an example of my desire to publish; it was the forerunner of books designed to promote praxis.

Afterthoughts

³⁵Time and energy fail me to tell all the stories that come to mind, one after another they come to mind as my reflections penetrate deeper into my past and such is my short term memory that I soon become unsure what I have written about and what I have only remembered! One or two of them will stay in my mind if I do not get something on paper.

Miss Maude Fell, a lady in her early sixties I guess, came into our lives during my ministry in Carmarthen. She and her elderly mother came to live in a remote village near Brechfa from Wembley. What a contrast! She was a real Londoner; I think she had been a telephonist. I have forgotten why they came – possibly to be near to a relative. She had no transport so she was dependent upon public transport and that amounted to a few buses a week. Some 15 miles from Carmarthen it was a difficult place to get to. She often came in on market days and brought her collection to the Manse – Molly would give her a cup of tea. She was a tall thin lady, a devout Methodist. Not being able to get to services distressed her. She organized a ‘Sunday School’ in her home. I think she got to one of the centenary services. I took her home; David Jones of Richmond Terrace went with me because I was not keen to go into that rough country with its narrow lanes alone. Why am I telling this story? I am not sure. Her Christian zeal and lovely personality greatly impressed me. In retrospect I feel guilty that we did not do more to get her to church occasionally. It must have been a hard life for her looking after her mother in primitive conditions (only gas at first). Also, I felt sad that she predeceased her mother and consequently did not have time for herself. As I write, I can see her in my mind’s eye as I saw her from my study window all those years ago, walking briskly up Myrddin Crescent beaming in anticipation of a few moments of fellowship. God rest her soul. A saint of God; (see letters in Carmarthen file).

Another incident occurred through a preaching appointment in Cwmgors, a small cluster of 26 members, about 26/28 miles from Carmarthen. Its one service was at 6pm. On the occasion in question it was a communion service. Three or four girls in their early teens were on the front row. As I was serving communion to people kneeling at the rail, I became conscious of some giggling from them. Looking up I saw they were putting on lipstick and powdering their faces greatly amused. This incongruous, disrespectful, mildly blasphemous behaviour really upset me. I had not met this before. Possibly I overreacted, but I felt sickened and disgusted. It was a lovely bright summer’s evening. Shortly after leaving the

chapel in my Morris Eight, 1936 car, the road on a left curve stretch passed by a very high wall on my the left which cast a deep shadow. Somewhat preoccupied with the event, I took the bend wide, the shadow causing me to misjudge my position, and collided sideways with a car coming in the opposite direction. The bodywork of my car was badly damaged; I do not recall what happened to the other car. No one was hurt but I was quite shaken but able to limp to home on a wing and a prayer. The event was most disturbing because I simply could not afford the repairs – I cannot remember what insurance I had and whether it covered the costs. Gravell's garage came to the rescue. T.J. Evans, foreman and Phillip's father, found another car body, lifted the one on my car off and put the other on my chassis!

All seemed to be well until I started to drive home – the car snaked along, the king pins were seriously worn consequently the steering was slack! I was despondent but we eventually got it right. It was this incident that led someone to quote the line of a hymn with the same number as the car, 'Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it'. I certainly did!

Reflections on the impact of this first phase of my active ministry upon me

Overall I felt at the time and still feel that it had been a good start, in some ways it was an ideal initial appointment despite what I felt about exercising an urban ministry and my first reactions when I knew where I was to be stationed I am only aware of positive effects upon me and my formation, which I will attempt to list.

- It affirmed my calling to circuit ministry and confirmed my vocation as a Methodist minister: my experience demonstrated beyond any reasonable doubt that I could do it effectively, was in fact, good at it and that I enjoyed it, finding it deeply fulfilling and satisfying.
- The widespread enthusiastic acceptance and endorsement of Molly and me and of my ministry gave me a basic confidence of and an assurance in my status as a minister which has never left me.
- It gave me an amazingly wide and rich experience of ministering to a wide range of people, in different churches and in a variety of social and community settings and to facing challengingly difficult pastoral problems.
- It confirmed me in the importance and underpinning my ministry and spiritual and theological development of serious reading and study and established me in the routine practice of it, not least

through my probationer studies.

- It developed my ecumenical stance and renewed my interest in world religious and their growing importance.
- It laid the foundations of my pastoral ministry and my pastoral praxis.
- It proved that I had a zest for the work and personal resources and stamina to sustain a vigorous ministry and a heavy and demanding workload.
- It confirmed me in the call I had experienced in 1957 to an urban ministry in cities and industrial towns.
- It effected an important and necessary transition from theological and ministerial student to probationer minister to minister; from a student whose life was governed and directed by a given study agenda and a structured college life and by personal discipline to a minister responsible for ordering, structuring, disciplining and determining the content and emphasis of his ministry within the broad parameters of church life, i.e. from being other to inner directed.
- It introduced me to the art of combining creatively a proactive approach to ministry with one which was attuned and responsive to human and pastoral needs as they emerged with all the existential sensitivity and engagement which that required.
- It stimulated me to pursue Christian education and the initiatives being taken in the Connexion to develop it.

All in all it enabled me to find who and what I was as a Christian Methodist minister, my ministerial persona. I find myself thinking of the transition that I made as being from preacher to one who has pastoral responsibility for churches and their members, this, of course includes preaching and pastoral care. The concept of the 'cure of souls' comes to mind. That is an enormous responsibility. I have copied across how this was spelt out in my ordination service. It is with trembling that I have just re-read it as I do every year on my anniversary. God knows I have tried to do this possibly not as assiduously and simple mindedly as I ought and he also know how little success I have had and in how much I have failed. God forgive me.

Notwithstanding, I did move from looking out for and after myself to looking out and caring for others in 'my charge' – and well beyond. Another aspect of my formation was that I aspired to be and have continued to be engaged in my preaching, pastoral and practical ministry reflectively, academically and pragmatically as for, that is, as I am able.

There are two things with which I find myself struggling here. First I am finding it difficult to find the right words in the last sentence or two of the previous paragraph and I don't feel I have succeeded. Second, I am in danger of attributing characteristics to me at the end of this phase of my ministry to which I aspired but which I did not acquire partially or fully until the next two stages. It was then that my ways of working with people individually and collectively in committees, groups and churches both formally and informally changed radically when I committed myself to working with rather than for people. Throughout my time in the Llanelli and Carmarthen Circuit I was a traditional Methodist minister, howbeit forward looking and somewhat adventurous in pastoral work and in training teachers in Sunday Schools and local preachers, young and enthusiastic. Good foundations had been laid for all that was to follow but I was not to know that at the time.

Leaving Wales

Deciding to leave the Llanelli and Carmarthen Circuit was not too difficult. During my final year it was a matter of reconsidering the decision taken two years earlier to stay for four years. At that time the local people wanted me to stay indefinitely and still did. In so many ways it was tempting: we were happy in the Circuit and our churches and we loved the coast and the people wanted us. I remember a conversation with Norman (Heaps) when we were considering our options. We were walking on the beach discussing the pros and cons. He stopped and turned to me as he was wont to when he was about to make an important point and said, "George, it is very important to be needed and wanted". It is indeed. But I/we were convinced we should leave but to where and what?

There was a very pressing invitation from a church on the Gower Peninsula (or was it Mumbles?) The church was very active and expanding vigorously. At the heart of this fellowship there was a group of young academics who lectured in Swansea University. A minister I greatly admired James (Jim) Mostyn was coming to the end of an outstanding ministry. He was a scholar preacher pastor: a lovely erudite man, a N.T. scholar with a deep and attractive spirituality. He was very keen that I should follow him. We met up with him and his wife years later when we were on holiday in Grange Over Sands; we saw them in the church and went to their home for coffee and very interesting evenings. I would have loved to follow him. It would have been a very happy and lovely place to minister. I agonized over it. I remember driving up and down a beach road with Molly in a state of agitated indecision. The question was, 'should I/we stay in Wales?' We

felt that if we accepted this appointment we may well have stayed for the remainder or a large part of our ministry in Wales. That didn't seem right. The urban call was strong. The decision not to accept that appointment was also a decision to leave Wales and to seek a city/urban/ industrial town appointment. And that we did.

Wilfrid Hill, our superintendent, came to our aid. Knowing my feelings and agreeing that I should leave Wales he wrote to the Chairman of the London S.E. District, The Rev F. Ronald Ducker (Chairman 1957-69). They had been army chaplains together during the 1939-45 war. Mr. Ducker, who became a father-in-God to me, put the Circuit stewards of the Sydenham and Forest Hill Circuit in touch with me regarding a vacancy to minister in Sydenham and Anerley. That led directly and without any complications to an invitation to serve in a city circuit to two city churches. And that takes me to the next phase of my ministry.

for whom He laid down His life, and for the children of God who are in the midst of this world, that they may be saved through Christ for ever.

Wherefore consider with yourselves the end of your ministry; and see that you never cease your labour, your prayer and diligence, until you have done all that lieth in you, according to your bounden duty, to bring all such as are committed to your charge unto that true conversion of heart and life through personal trust in Christ alone, to which the Holy Spirit beareth witness, and to that knowledge of God, and perfectness of love in Christ, whereby you may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. Howbeit, you cannot have a mind and will thereto of yourselves, for that will and ability is given of God alone; therefore you ought, and have need, to pray earnestly for His Holy Spirit.

We have good hope that you have weighed and pondered these things through the years of your preparation for this Ministry, and that you have clearly determined, by God's grace, to give yourselves wholly to this office, whereunto it hath pleased God to call you; so that, as much as lieth in you, you will apply yourselves wholly to this one thing, and draw all

your cares and studies this way; and that you will continually pray to God the Father, by the mediation of our only Saviour Jesus Christ, for the heavenly assistance of the Holy Spirit, to the end that you may sanctify the lives of you and yours, fashioning them after the rule and doctrine of Christ, so that you may be wholesome and godly examples for the people to follow, and that, by daily weighing and reading of the Scriptures, you may wax riper and stronger in the Ministry of the Word.

And now, that this present congregation of Christ here assembled may also understand your minds and wills in these things, and that this your promise may the more move you to your duties, you shall answer plainly to these things, which we, in the name of God and of His Church, shall demand of you touching the same.

Do you trust that you are inwardly moved by the Holy Spirit to take upon you this office and ministration, to serve God for the promoting of His glory, for the preaching of His Gospel, and for the edifying of His people?

I do so trust.

II SYDENHAM AND FOREST HILL CIRCUIT (1962 – 66)

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Two periods in the Circuit: 1962 – 66 and 1972 – 98

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Overall Structure of This Section

By way of preparation for writing this section, in the middle of January I started to sort through and order the extensive background material associated with it. As I did so I found myself becoming completely preoccupied by various insights and ideas. I felt I simply had to write them up whilst they were exciting and gripping me. In one sense I had little choice but to do this because I could not continue until I had quietened my mind by getting something on paper about them. Consequently, over a period of two or three weeks I found myself writing some demanding fifteen pages about one insight or idea after another in the sequence in which they were induced by the material. Today, 9th February, I realized that the order of titles and structure were confusing: they did not present an orderly, readily understood narrative and, as a consequence, they were inhibiting me from proceeding in a logical sequence. So I restructured the material even though the result was that the presentation is a bit messy! Consequently, some of the text was not written in the order in which it is now presented.

Following the introductory paragraphs, this section now has two main parts:

1. Insights induced by organizing the background material;
2. Critical aspects of my ministry.

These two parts are, in fact, quite different perspectives on my ministry in the Sydenham and Forest Hill circuit: the first is about the impact upon me of various developments and movements and the way in which they shaped me; the second is about actualities of my ministry. Failing to see how to put them together in one sequence, I have, by default, had to leave them as complimentary perspectives which are just what they are. The order in which they should appear exercised my mind: they can be read meaningfully in the order in which they are presented or in the reverse order; the pros and cons of the alternative sequences in which they could be presented were so evenly balanced that I chose the given order because that was the way in which the material emerged quite naturally.

Two Periods in the Circuit: 1962-66 and 1972-98³⁶

I/we spent two periods in the Circuit. The first was from 1962-66 when I was a Circuit Minister living in Sydenham. The second, a much

longer period, 1972-98 i.e. 26 years, was when I was variously a sector minister and then when the nomenclature changed a minister in other appointments. During this period we lived first in Forest Hill and then in Beckenham. Throughout our primary place of worship was Forest Hill Methodist Church and I was employed on Project 70-75 and Avec until my official retirement. It was the availability of housing that took us to Forest Hill. Here I concentrate on my four years as a circuit minister in Sydenham and Forest Hill. In Section 2, I describe the nature of my relationship to and ministry in the Circuit from 1972-98.

Background Material

Amongst the background material there was: letters and papers in the background files; pieces I wrote for the monthly journal of Wesley Hall, Sydenham, *The Link* from 1962-66, and various pieces in books. When I came to tidy up the church letters I discovered that in addition to the copies of *The Link* there were some Anerley Church newsletters (not as comprehensive as those for Wesley Hall) and some Circuit Youth Newsletters, *Saints-N-Sinners*. Further, I discovered that they present a wealth of information about the lives of the churches and their activities and issues of critical importance to them. Simply listing the contents could be quite informative, annotated notes of them even more so. Challenging and tempting as it is to undertake this, not least because it would sketch out contemporary pictures of the churches and how people were thinking at the time, I have decided to continue trying to describe my perspective on them from my retirement some fifty years later rather than to try to resurrect the historical one. At some later date it could be interesting to compare them, but I doubt I will undertake this fascinating task!

PART ONE: Insights Induced by Organizing the Background Material³⁷

The insights discussed in this Part are grouped under five headings

Radical Changes in my Approach to Working with People

Radical and far reaching changes, unanticipated and certainly unpremeditated by me, occurred in my approach to and style of ministry and working with people occurred during this phase of my ministry. My

vocational vision and intention was to pursue and develop an effective London based preaching ministry after the ‘central hall/mission’ model. Whereas, in fact, my ministry focused heavily on youth and community work which gradually moved towards a non-directive approach to working *with* rather than *for* people without, that is, neglecting my preaching ministry. Undoubtedly, these changes were kick-started by conversations with Terry Walton about Circuit and District Youth work at the summer schools in July/August 1962 who I met there for the first time. (I think those schools were at Truro. I have a vivid memory of him talking to me on a very hot, lovely afternoon by the outside swimming pool torn between the conversations looking after the children and wanting to swim!) Terry, certainly had designs upon and plans for me and my ministry. But this anticipates a story still to be told in these Notes.

Engagement in Ministry and Ministry as Engagement³⁸

During the two days that I spent sorting out and browsing over letters and papers from my four years ministry in the Sydenham and Forest Hill Circuit, it came to me with increasing intensity and excitement, that this was for me and many others a time of deep multifaceted *engagement*. This section is an exploration from *my perspective* of the nature of that engagement in which I was involved almost fifty years ago.

Aspects of engagement

My engagement had the following main aspects.

The first aspect of my engagement was existential, interactive, comprehensive, holistic and purposeful

It was *existential* because I was variously engaged with people of all ages and different cultures about the realities of church work in which we were engaged; it was *interactive* because we engaged with each other interpersonally; it was *comprehensive* because it involved our engagement with ourselves, each other, our church life, physical environment and our social context (I described this as a ‘tri-hedral of relationships’ between self, others, our physical environment and God in *Consultancy Ministry and Mission*, pp 262 – 264); it was *holistic* because it was subjective and objective, personal,

38 (19th – 24th of February 2013. This is a redraft of the version dated 28th of January which is now in my ‘Personal Notes and Journalling’.)

interpersonal, social and spiritual; it was *purposeful* through my motivation and that of the core workers, the importance we attached to the subject matter and our determination to act as constructively as we possibly and to avoid executive meetings being ‘talking shops’ and to do all we could to make affective, leisure, sentiment, and social groups creative and fulfilling as well as enjoyable. Being *existential* it was variously spontaneous, carefully planned, messy, structured, impromptu – exactly as life is.

(Interestingly, “according to Buber, Sartre, Heidegger, Marcel, and others, a situation is ‘existential when one is ‘wholly engaged’ and their favourite words are ‘abandonment’, ‘totalness’, commitment.”” T Tudor Rhys, in an article ‘Existentialism and the Preacher’ in the *Expository Times*, Volume 63:5, February 1952.)

It variously occurred in:

- small and large, formal and informal, affective, sentient, task and leisure groups, publicly and privately;
- business and working meetings with individuals and groups of all sizes;
- pastoral meetings with one or two people;
- services of worship and public conferences and meetings.

The subject matter included:

- religious and educational, social and developmental activities and projects on things we, individually and collectively, felt to be of vital importance;
- our aspirations, vocations, relationships, personal problems, and spiritual concerns.

Methodist-wise, this engagement took place locally in the churches in my section and their communities, and in the Circuit, regionally in my District and nationally in the Connexion. There was a considerable amount of creative interaction between my engagements in these areas but the local was the locus and centre of gravity. Alongside this there was local ecumenical and social involvement.

These forms of interpersonal engagement were supplemented through articles and notes I wrote and correspondence.

A second aspect of my engagement was with six contemporary movements and developments.

These were movements and developments in:

- theological thought;
- Christian and secular education;
- youth and community work;
- new forms of city and urban ministry;
- Christian responsibility in social services and welfare;
- Christian responsibility for nuclear disarmament, international understanding cooperation and peace.

For the main part I engaged with the principal figures in the first five of these movements and developments through their books and papers. In some cases this was supplemented through meeting them, hearing them lecture and attending training courses quite the reverse of the first aspect of engagement which was predominantly through people supplemented by written material. My engagement with the sixth and its impact upon my work and ministry was different but significant and therefore needs to be acknowledged here and described below. What follows relates to the first five areas.

In each of these five areas there was a considerable ferment of exciting new thinking, some of it controversial. (Details of this academic and cerebral engagement are given below in order to avoid obfuscating the discussion of the different aspects of engagement.) Primarily I was attracted to and studied these movements and developments because I believed they were highly relevant to my work and had the potential to develop me as a minister and my vocational church work. These movements were variously about:

- The *what* of church work i.e. the nature and scope of it, what Christians should be doing in churches and communities with those associated with the church and those who were not.
- The *why* of church, social and community work and critical questions about proselytizing, evangelizing and mission.
- *How* to do the work i.e. about approaches, methods, skills required and praxis.

Interactive engagement with these movements and development created an external context to my ministry: the wider academic, sociological and theological climate in which I lived during this period of my ministry and from which I drew much of my inspiration.

Eventually they introduced me to new theological and theoretical thought which gave me a conceptual framework for engaging in and through local churches in developmental forms of Christian education, church and secular youth and community work and social care and welfare. Also, they introduced me to new skills which I required to do this work and ways of acquiring them. Conceptually and practically, these movements enabled me to take the first halting steps which eventually led me to a radically new praxis of Christian ministry in churches, religious organizations and secular communities. Much of this, however, was in the future.

During my ministry in the Sydenham and Forest Hill Circuit I was in transition, gradually feeling my way forward *from* the traditional way of thinking and going about my work which most of the local people understood and found acceptable *to* one which was challengingly different, confusing, disturbing and to many not appealing because it took them out of the comfort zone of traditional church work. Parts of my traditional conceptual framework were being dismantled and a revised one was being constructed. I was at an early stage in the process of revising my purposes and developing new skills. I was in a cluttered praxis rebuilding site using old methods of leadership to get the new ways of working adapted! Little wonder some local people found it difficult to engage positively with all of this.

A third aspect of my engagement was with the first and the second aspects.

I was, in fact working *to* and *between* my existential engagement with people and the mental, emotional and spiritual engagement with movements of thought. My focus was on putting what I was beginning to learn into practice and getting the local people to work with me on my ideas for development, rather than to work together on our ideas for development. To the best of my ability, I explained them, preached about them and discussed them: in no way did I keep them to myself or treat them as a hidden agenda. My desire was that the core workers in particular and the people in general should be involved with me in the dialectical processes between our working situation and what I was learning about and from these ideas and concepts. To this extent, my motivation was to be inclusive not exclusive. My attempts were met with limited success. Nonetheless it was a seriously faulted approach because it was exclusively on *my* ideas for development and not inclusively on *theirs and mine*, worked at critically and till they became *ours*. I had yet to learn the importance and creative value of working in such a comprehensive and inclusive manner and to acquire the skills to do so.

Moreover, as explained above, I was doing this without having properly conceptualized what I was about and acquiring the necessary skills. I was trying to change working situations and peoples' ways of doing things whilst I was undergoing the changes myself: a recipe for confusion and conflict. That led to the next aspect of my engagement.

A fourth aspect of my engagement was with the disaffection with and conflict over the changes I was trying to introduce.

It was natural, right and responsible for people in the churches to be critically cautious: but the confrontational and conflictual form of resistance, some of which was expressed in displaced aggression, that emerged was neither desirable nor productive. It devoured our energies unproductively. I regret my responsibility for it.

All four aspects of my engagement were engagements with and through the engagement of others.

Somewhat simplistically—some may say naïvely—I have been concentrating on my engagement without adequate reference to the engagement of others with whom I was engaged. Clearly, there is truth in that, but the only way in which I felt I could begin to reflect analytically upon the systemically complex patterns of interpersonal human engagement was through teasing out discrete *aspects* of it. Throughout, in reality, I was engaging with the engagement of others except, that is, in respect of my engagement with various movements and developments (aspect two). Even that form of engagement included vicarious engagement with people as I read their books. Similarly, in private planning for engagements people, individuals, groups and various encounters and events were very much in my mind and they influenced my thinking and subsequent action. All forms of engagement with and about the human situation are the resultant of multiple existential engagements, in the present and in the past. However, I do not think that that of itself invalidates the insights gained from analysing and reflecting upon aspects of human engagement from one person's perspective, providing, that is, that proper account is taken of the fact that they are integral parts of complex systems of interaction – as indeed I have done. Plotting out the complexity is extraordinarily difficult if not impossible. Consequently, we resort to describing it from the perspective of first one and then another person. However, the incredible thing is that we develop extraordinary skill in negotiating the complexity in practice: somehow or another deep in our unconscious we can conceptualize the complexity sufficiently well to act purposefully and creatively in relation to it even when analytically we find it difficult to get our conscious minds around the complexity.

What I neglected to do, however, was to engage with the people adequately on *their* ideas of and *their* perspectives on the *what, why and how* of the work in which we were involved, which later became part of my standard practice. Doing this enables critical aspects of the idiosyncratic pattern of each participant's engagement to be shared, considered sympathetically but critically in relation to that of others and taken into account.

The spirituality of the engagement

After getting these ideas down on paper I realised that I was so focused on the human engagement that I had neglected to set them in the context of my belief and experience that all Christian interpersonal relationships are profoundly important spiritual encounters not only between people but also mystically and wonderfully with Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Indeed, I firmly believe with Dietrich Bonhoeffer, that Christ is the mediator to and between people, just as he is the mediator between people and God. Such spiritual dimensions are an indissoluble aspect of human engagement. Feeling remiss, I made token references to this aspect which I have edited out because it was a trite attempt to make the piece theologically respectable. But then I realized that my neglect mirrors the reality of my experience of human engagement. The truth of the matter is, that when I was (and am) relating to and engaging with people, I am not normally conscious of the spiritual nature of the engagement – although in tricky encounters with people I find myself praying quite ardently before during and afterwards! Consequently it is right to leave what I have written just as it is because it expresses an aspect of the reality of human engagement as I experience (d) it.

Unexpectedly, I found myself reflecting on Jesus' parable of the sheep and goats (See Matthew 25:31 – 46). To my surprise I began to see my experience of engagement and sense of remiss in a different light. Jesus tells the 'sheep', the 'righteous', that they have the Father's blessing and instructs them to take possession of the Kingdom because when he was hungry, they gave him food; when thirsty, drink; when a stranger, they took him into their home; when naked, they clothed him; and when he was ill they came to his help; when imprisoned, they visited him. The righteous were nonplussed because they simply didn't have any recollection of serving Jesus in these caring and loving ways. This evoked his memorable and much quoted explanation: 'Inasmuch as you did it unto one of these my brethren, even the least, you did it unto me'. Jesus does not rebuke them for their unawareness of the spiritual nature of their charity and good works. On the contrary he actually praises and rewards them for what they did when

they did not realize the spiritual significance of what they were doing. In fact, by default, he is saying that it is all right for us to focus on the human with kindness without spiritualizing our actions overtly; that is exactly what Christian engagement is about; engage with others as befits their situation and the spiritual aspects of what we are doing will look after themselves if we are in a living relationship with Christ; whether we are conscious of Jesus Christ or not, he is so completely identified with and involved in the human situation predicament that it is as though what we are doing for the people, we do for and to Jesus.

All this says to me that my sense of remiss in what I have written is out of place. Christ releases of us to give ourselves to human engagement without a second thought, as it were, to the spiritual dimensions. Of course, in some human engagement I am very conscious of God and of his presence and discuss spiritual implications and issues as a natural part of the human engagement.

Continuity with previous forms of engagement

Writing about engagement in this period led me to feel that I was devaluing that which I had experienced during my Carmarthen Ministry and made me feel guilty of being disloyal to the people amongst whom I lived and with whom I work. Several things emerge from reflecting on this: I completely disown that my engagement was inferior during my Llanelly and Carmarthen Ministry; the nature of my interpersonal and situational engagement during that time was not significantly different in its reality, nature and value even if it was in form and extent; engagement during the Sydenham and Forest Hill period was, in fact, a natural progressive extension of that during my Llanelly and Carmarthen one; there simply was not a radical change in it; it was all of a piece; the new insights into its significance and the thrill of disclosure just happen as I researched Sydenham and Forest and Forest Hill period even though it is a feature of the whole of my Ministry.

Conclusion

These forms of engagement buzzed with vigour and excitement. Thinking, conversing, discussing and arguing was of the essence of the engagement. Some of it was an enriching meeting of minds, hearts and souls. Inevitably some of it was divisive and that led to engagement with conflict but overall it was rewarding and creative.

For me the concept of engagement is quite a new revealing and exciting

perspective: first on this phase of my ministry and then on the whole of it. Reflecting on my time in Sydney and Forest Hill previously, I have been inclined to centre on the problems that I experienced and to see it is something of a transitional period from conventional circuit ministry to that based on my commitment to the nondirective approach to church and community development. Reviewing it now, some fifty years later, I see that it took me deeper into existential situational and interpersonal engagement with people in and through the work of the church as well as their personal and interpersonal lives. Such engagement is of the essence of life and ministry; its elixir. I looked this word up to ensure that it represents what I wish to convey. It does, more fully than I realized! It refers to changing things to gold, prolonging life indefinitely and adding flavour. The kind of engagement I am talking about has the potential to do all these things in relation to human life and relationships. I was privileged to experience it in a new depths and extended dimensions during that phase of my ministry and providentially for the remainder of it; now I experience it in retirement in a somewhat modified and frustrating form (I will return to this at the end of this piece.)

This section points to the incredible gift of God of *engagement* that humbles me: I do not deserve it but I would not have missed it for all the world; I consider myself greatly blessed and enormously privileged to have been involved in such rich and multivariate forms of internal and external engagement in thought and action for over a half-century – and more than that. Moreover, the analytical reflection in which I have been engaged in writing this section has in itself been a creative experience of engagement in the present with the past which, incredibly, has affected changes in me and my perspective on my previous existential spiritual engagement with people.

My overall conclusion is that for me the quality of life, ministry and vocational satisfaction and fulfilment are directly related to the quality of my holistic existential and spiritual engagement with myself, others, my physical and social environment and God.

Postscript: Implications for engagement in retirement

All this illuminated my present experiences of engagement in retirement. By and large, personal, pastoral and consultancy experiences continue to be wholesome satisfying existential engagements. Unfortunately, some forms of engagement can be disturbingly frustrating. This occurs, for example, when I am mentally and emotionally fully engaged in issues and situations

but not in executive engagement with the action I wish to see occur or with those who are responsible for it and carrying it out. In short, when I am unable to influence the action and feel and know that I am impotent because mental engagement is not complemented by satisfying creative action. When this occurs, I experience tension because the mental and emotional engagement does not/cannot issue in nor be resolved by action. Engaging with the resulting unresolved and in many cases irresolvable tension is very painful; finding ways to live with it – through, for instance, vicarious release – is extraordinarily difficult and problematic. (Trying to cope with my reactions and responses to the ‘Fruitful Field’ debate recently is all too vivid an example of this.) Nonetheless, learning how to live with it with equanimity is necessary but not easy. It all contrasts so painfully with long periods of all round engagement in church and community development work and the inborn assumption that I should and can continue to be so involved! But even that had its frustrations!

Details of the movements and developments that influenced me, 1962 – 66

Theological thought

The following books are indicative of the theological thought that influenced me:

- The Secular City* by Harvey Cox (1965)
- Honest to God* by John AT Robinson (1963) see 9.7.167 – 68a
- The Honest To God Debate* by John AT Robinson (1963)
- On Being the Church In The World* by John AT Robinson (1960)
- The New Reformation?* By John AT Robinson (1965)
- Layman’s Church* by John AT Robinson (1963)

Christian and secular education

I have already described my commitment to and involvement in experiential education earlier. I drew very heavily upon the work of the following authors and their books:

- John Dewey, *Experience and Education*, 1938/1968
- Douglas Hubery, *The Experiential Approach to Christian Education*, 1960
- The Emancipation of Youth*, 1963
- The Christian in the Modern World: A Symposium of Christian Thought*, 1964
- Teaching Christian Faith*, 1965
- Christian Education in the Bible*, 1967
- The Teaching Methods of Jesus*, 1970

Ronald Goldman,

Religious Thinking from Childhood to Adolescence, 1964

Readiness for Religion: A Basis for Developmental Religious Education, 1965

The Newsom Report, *Half Our Future*, 1963

John Barrow May's illuminating research published as *Education And The Urban Child*, 1965

Youth and community work

The Rev Dr Fred Milson, at that time Principal of Westhill College of Education, Selly Oak, Birmingham, was pioneering and promoting through lectures, courses, articles and books new ideas about leadership and group, community and youth work. I was greatly helped at this time by the following publications of his:

Social Group Method and Christian Education, 1960s

Living and Loving, 1963

Group Methods for Christian Leaders: A Study of Group Dynamics, 1965

Role-Playing As a Youth Club Activity, 1965

Examples of new forms of city and urban ministry

Whilst in Carmarthen I became enthusiastic about the outstanding ministry, liturgical and social, of the Rev Canon George Potter, an Anglo-catholic priest in Peckham Southeast London through reading two of his books:

Father Potter of Peckham: a south London saga (1955)

More Father Potter of Peckham (1958)

I was inspired by the work of Bruce Kenrick first in East Harlem (described in an exciting book, *Come Out the Wilderness*, 1962) and later in Notting Hill.

An inspirational Team Ministry was set up in 1961 by the Methodist Conference following the race riots in Notting Hill, North London. I had followed this development with great interest not least because I was in Conference for my ordination and heard Donald Soper make an impassioned speech about the need for a new kind of ministry to be established in that area. As a result, three ministers were commissioned to form a team ministry in Notting Hill: Geoffrey Ainger; Norwyn Denny; David Mason. Later they described their experience in: *News from Notting Hill: the Formation of a Group Ministry* (1967)

And then there was the pioneering work of the Rev Canon EW Southcott in his parish at Halton, Leeds which he described in his book: *The Parish Comes Alive*, 1956, sixth impressions 1966. He went on to become the Provost of Southwark.

Christian responsibility in social services and welfare

I was most interested in and influenced by various investigations into Christian responsibility in social services and welfare and the developments followed them. Two reports which I studied illustrate the kind of research and thinking that was taking place and influencing me:

Responsibility In The Welfare State? A Study Of Relationships Between The Social Services in a City Suburb; a report of the Birmingham social responsibility project, 1961

Maidstone, A Closer Look: A Review of Social Services in A Prosperous County Town; commissioned and published by the Maidstone and district Council of churches, 1965

There was, of course, a great and long tradition of Christians becoming engaged in altruistic social care and welfare particularly for children and unmarried mothers. Voluntary organizations were formed in the 19th century and institutions were built. There was however significant differences in the aspects of the movements to which I refer that particularly interested me: they emphasized the involvement of local churches or groups of them becoming directly involved in local provision in their areas; they were professionalizing what they were doing through undertaking or commissioning research or drawing upon the research done by others; voluntary workers drew upon professional expertise to ensure that the work they undertook as volunteers was informed by good practice.

Christian responsibility for nuclear disarmament, international understanding, cooperation and peace

This movement impacted me profoundly and influenced my thinking, commitments and preaching but it did not influence my work in the same way that the other five developments and movements did nor did I engage in it in the same thorough going way as I did with them. It was mainly through Dorothy Household, who was actively involved in the movement generally and through a Local Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) Group, that I came to engage with the issues in ways that I had previously. I came to know and greatly respect two members of the local group, Rex Andrews and Marc Goldstein with whom I had the most profitable discussions about a range of subjects. But I never joined the group nor attended their meetings.

Later, I became particularly interested in, and supportive of the initiatives taken by this Group to establish ‘A Chair of University Studies in Education for International Understanding, Cooperation and Peace’. After his painful premature death from spinal cancer, they dedicated this to Mark Goldstein, one of the prime movers of the project. (See papers on file.) I believe this influenced or led directly to the setting up of the Quaker Peace Studies Trust (Rex Andrews was a Quaker) which funds the first Chair of Peace Studies at the University of Bradford and finances research and teaching in peace studies and continues to support the work of the Bradford Division of Peace Studies by the provision of grants and bursaries. From that time onwards I have taken a more diligent interest in the issues of world peace and been greatly influenced by the work and writings of Hans Kung on this subject.

A Reflection on ‘Engagement in Ministry’

³⁹This was written after writing version one of the previous section but has some relevance to the second version.

This is one of the sections of the Notes that I have put on the computer and edited. At an early stage in writing NFR I decided not to have them typed because I felt I would not be able to resist the temptation of editing them as I would a manuscript for publication. That much was justified. This section on ‘engagement’ proves it conclusively. I am resisting the temptation to revise it further to be more representative of the varied nature of my engagement which I now realize could be subdivided between that which was secular in the sense that it was about mundane and human affairs of considerable importance but which would not be considered religious or spiritual—community and youth work for example, caring and welfare schemes and particularly with that undertaken in egalitarian partnerships with people of different religious persuasions and none. Generally speaking religious and spiritual aspects were not discussed. It was this aspect of work to which the parable of the sheep and the goats has some relevance and not that which was overly religious or spiritual, and there was much of that. So another stage of editing would be to tease out the various forms of engagement – secular with implied or inherent spiritual values and overtly religious engagement and the overt and covert spirituality which was appropriate. In fact, I recall, I did that at an early stage in my involvement in church and community development, first in Parchmore and then in Project 70-75 when I distinguished between ‘church work’, ‘church-community work’ and ‘community work’. (See *Churches and*

Communities pp 61-62, my PhD thesis *The Parchmore Partnership* pp 16-21)

But I think that is more than I wish to undertake here and need to do.

I feel I should return to the kind of writing that characterizes these notes. What happens to them later is another matter.

Praxis of Ministry Extended

⁴⁰Throughout my time in the Sydenham and Forest Hill Circuit my preaching, teaching and pastoral ministries continued much as I practised them in my previous Circuit. As I pursued these traditional aspects of ministry I became increasingly involved in and committed to developmental mission initiatives in all four areas of ministry described earlier. These initiatives which took me into new areas of work which became significant features of my ministry. They were shaped and formed by:

- what I was learning from a cluster of new and quite radical approaches to, ideas about and experiments in the praxis of Christian ministry, religious and secular education, youth and community work and social welfare which were being promoted and pioneered in church and society in various ways;
- my attempts to promote these ideas in and through my ministry and work;
- my attempts to acquire the skills required and my somewhat amateurish ventures in practicing them.

Several things led me to adopt these approaches, concepts and insights: they seemed highly relevant to the kind of broader based ministry I felt called to pursue; they fitted my preferred ways of working with people; I could see they would equip me and the church for mission in secular communities; I ‘fell’ for them. So it was their attractive power that drew me into making the transition not a carefully preplanned programme of change.

At the time I did not realize the enormous significance and radical nature of the reorientation that was taking place in my approach to ministry and mission although I did know I was changing. Up to this point, the beginning of my London ministry that is, I had been schooled in and was committed to the traditional praxis of ministry as practised at that time in the Methodist Church in the UK. I was open to the developments

occurring in that tradition as well as the accumulated wisdom associated with it. Now, by drawing upon other disciplines such as those of education and the personal, social and behavioural sciences, sometimes directly and at others through intermediaries, I was reshaping and extending and refining my praxis of ministry. Gradually, I began to see these other subjects as ‘allied’ disciplines and to accept them as such and to value them not only for insights and understandings relevant to me and my ministry but also for their methodologies and especially those related to experimentation and research.⁴¹ In all this I remained committed to and centred upon being a Methodist minister: that was/is my calling, my vocation, my profession and my discipline; I was bent on developing my praxis of ministry whether in church, youth, community or educational work, I was, thank God, not seduced into switching disciplines or thinking I had become fully competent in them.

From 1962-66 and well beyond I was instinctively and practically rather than conceptually working my way into and through this transition. At that stage I had not, and possibly could not have – articulated the theory of my praxis in the way that I have just done. I simply had not reached that level of theoretical sophistication; nonetheless I am convinced that this interpretation is reasonably faithful to the messy nature of the transition in which I was involved. This is the story of that transition – or at least critical aspects of it!

PART TWO: Critical Aspects of my Ministry

This part is about the actualities of my ministry during the time that I was stationed in the Sydenham and Forest Hill Circuit.

Ministry in Four Interlocking and Interrelated Areas

For most of this four year period I was actively engaged in substantial ministries in my section, Wesley Hall and Anerley; the Circuit; the District; the Connexion. All Methodist ministers are connexional ministers preaching throughout the circuit in which they are appointed and attending District meetings; some also attend connexional ones. I pursued an all-round ministry in my section and preached in the circuit churches. Additionally I was heavily involved in all four areas in youth and community and Christian

41 The changes that I was experiencing are reminiscent of a comparable with those I experienced when I moved from the traditional engineering of Lancashire to the experimental and research work nominative in the Royal Aircraft Establishment.

educational work. The work I did of this kind in each area benefitted from that I did in the others: they interlocked, overlapped, interrelated and fed each other. Gratifyingly, this meant that the nature of my ministry was holistic rather than sectionalized: it had a wholeness and unity arising from the subject matter, content and purposes. How all this occurred and what it meant in practice will emerge as I describe in turn each of the four areas – with reference as appropriate to the others.

Invitation to Minister in the Circuit⁴²

In line with the standard practice at the time, it was the Circuit Stewards, Mr E.D. Mills and Mr George Brittan, who initiated the correspondence and discussions in March 1961 which led to the Invitation Committee and the Quarterly Meeting of the Sydenham and Forest Hill Circuit inviting me

12.2.13

11th May, 1961.

Dear Mr. Mills,

After the most careful consideration and sincere prayer I have come to the conclusion that, if your quarterly Meeting extended a unanimous invitation to me to minister in your circuit, with special responsibility for Wesley Hall and Anerley, I would be very pleased to accept it. May I say that the principal consideration in arriving at this decision, both in prayer and thought, has been whether the situation is the one in which God would have me serve. I attach great importance to this as I have been very happy in Carmarthen, even though there have been many difficulties, because I have felt that this is the place where God would have me be at this time.

The work presents both challenge and opportunity. Were I invited, I would do all in my power under God to honour the call, to meet the challenge and to make use of the opportunities presented.

There are just one or two points I would like to clear up. As we discussed, I would need a garage because whilst a car is not essential it would be of some considerable advantage both in the work and in my own private life.

It would be a help if we knew just what furniture there is in the Manse as we have a considerable amount of our own and it will be necessary to decide whether it will all go in or not. Also, if I remember rightly there is no primary source of light or ventilation in the kitchenette. I wonder if it would be possible to do something to improve this matter?

I will send a copy of this letter to Mr. Britton.

With every good wish,

Yours sincerely,

to join the staff in September 1962 with special responsibility for Wesley Hall and Anerley Churches. The invitation, dated June 9th 1961, was for a minimum period of three years with the ‘hope you will perhaps like us well enough to stay much longer’. (The correspondence is on file). Like all appointments it was subject to the approval of the Methodist Conference. This meant that I knew some fifteen months in advance where my next appointment would be – providing of course that Conference did not have other ideas! Knowing so far in advance could be a mixed blessing; it could distract attention from the present to the future appointment. In fact it didn’t have that effect, quite the opposite; free from concerns about the future I settled down to get on with the work of a very busy year in Wales.

Every aspect of the process was conducted in a forthright, warm, dignified and courteous but business-like manner. I considered myself very fortunate. A critical part of the process was a visit to London on the 21st/22nd of April 1961 to meet the Circuit Stewards and the Society Stewards of Wesley Hall and Anerley Churches. Unfortunately, Molly was unable to accompany me. In fact she was unable to visit until July 1961 – but more of that later.

⁴³The invitation correspondence speaks for itself. My first visit to the Circuit was on the 21st/22nd April 1961. I travelled on the 7.30am from Carmarthen arriving at Paddington at 1pm (4½ hours!) where Mr. George Brittan met me. As we walked down the platform he stopped and said that the way in which they conducted the invitation processes was to explore possibilities with one man at a time. Should that not result in an invitation or an acceptance, they went on to consider the next man. They did not negotiate with more than one man (they were all men in those days) at a time. He said that he wanted me to know that from the beginning so that I knew where I stood and what was going on behind the scenes, as it were. As he said this he looked me straight in the eye. I was moved and warmed to him. This incident typified all my subsequent dealings with him – open and honourable. It was reminiscent of the incident with my [Uncle Bob](#) when I first visited him in Penygroes; strangely they were of a very similar build.

From Paddington we went to Mr Edward Mills’ office – he was a distinguished architect with his own practice. He took us to lunch in a restaurant in Soho! I was in a world I had not previously experienced; it seemed somewhat incongruous. From there we went to the inner city realities of Sydenham and Penge. I stayed the night in the home of Mr and Mrs George Brittan, 49 Reddens Road. I could not have imagined that some fourteen years later we would move into the same road at No. 7

and live there for twenty two years. They had a lovely garden, full of roses. By the time that we moved there the road had changed beyond recognition because the massive trees had been removed – their roots had blocked the drains. It was Molly, not I, who first remembered that I had stayed in the Road in 1961 – she had a remarkable memory for such detail.

The visit went well. From my point of view it was just the kind of appointment that I had felt called to in 1957 and which I felt had been thwarted by my initial stationing to Carmarthen. And I proved to be acceptable to the Circuit. I described the situation, the discussions and most importantly, the house to Molly who agreed I should accept the appointment were it offered. So I wrote to Mr Mills, the copy of letter below.

But it was not until July that there was an opportunity for Molly to visit the circuit with me. Her mother and father who were holidaying with us agreed to look after the children for one or two nights. We went by car leaving during the afternoon of the 20th and breaking our journey at Pewsey where we stayed the night with the Burchills on their farm, Avebrick Farm. They had farmed In Llangunnor; he was a local preacher. Molly and I never forgot our stay: it was the hardest bed in which we ever slept; it was like sleeping on boards! Molly was deeply upset by the experience: the urban density depressed her and the house appalled her. The kitchen, situated in a short corridor between the breakfast room and a dividing wall, had an ancient cooker with a dial that could not be read except by a torch and a large flat stone sink.

The children would not be able to play in the road and there was hardly any garden at the front and a small one at the back and no garage. It was badly decorated in ancient green paint; it was dismal and disheartening. And we were committed. The contrast to Carmarthen could hardly have been greater. As I write I feel deeply for Molly – how I wish she were here now so that I could say just how I feel and how much I owe to her for seeing it through. I feel quite distressed. Poor Molly. She did not and would not, possibly could not speak to me for the first hundred miles or so of our return journey. Then, as far as I can remember it was to upbraid me and to say that she would not stay any longer than the three years to which we had committed ourselves. In the event we stayed four in that Circuit and, in all, thirty six years in the area! What would have happened, I wonder, if Molly had visited the Circuit – and the house! – before we made the decision to accept? It was a hard time for Molly and as a consequence for me. But as always, she was loyal and worked her way through it with me and stood by me.

Reflecting on this, somewhat reluctantly because of the moral and spiritual discomfiture it induces in me, I realize how much our expectations had changed and the standards of living that we had come to see as our right. After staying in the Sydenham house, Molly's father said to me one day, 'when I think of some of the houses we lived in, I don't know why our Molly is complaining!' During our Aldershot days that house would have seemed a highly desirable residence. Certainly it was seen as such by many of the members of the Wesley Hall Church. Early in my pastoral work many people said to me, 'How are you settling in to the house? You are very fortunate to have such a lovely house!' Compared with their circumstances we certainly were. Such comments disturbed me greatly: they made me feel embarrassed, uncomfortable, guilty and ungrateful; they showed me just how privileged I was – to some extent at their expense. They activated the pain of privilege written so deeply in Christian ethics and spirituality, pain I have experienced throughout my ministry and still do. This disquiet is exacerbated by the fact that I have done so little to renounce and redress the obscene imbalance in privileges which exists throughout society. Undoubtedly awareness of and raw exposure to the moral and spiritual scandal of the existence and experience of underprivileged and unprivileged and its awful effects and consequences, can prompt redeeming attitudes and action. Ministry in deprived areas can be a reaffirming and redeeming influence to those who are 'privileged'. 'Blessed are the poor' in the economy of salvation and of the Kingdom.

Returning to the saga of the visit to London for one more anecdote. On the Friday morning I drove from Pewsey to Sydenham and when we had finished our business I drove back to Carmarthen in my Austin A40 on the A40 – no motorways. How an earth did I do it? As I was approaching Llandovery (or was it Brecon?) the cat's eyes seemed to be going up and down the telegraph poles so I knew it was time to stop. By this time it was the early hours of the morning, possibly 2am. To our amazement and joy we found a café open – by this time we were talking to each other! When we entered we were dumbfounded. It was full. All kinds of people; music going; alive with conversation and banter; some people entered after us in night attire and dressing gowns and slippers! We had never seen anything like it. This was no ordinary café that we had stumbled on – at least not by night. To me it seemed to be a refuge for disturbed insomniacs needing comfort and counselling and mutual support. And they were getting it, not least from the proprietors. Intrigued and mesmerized we sat there for far longer than we needed simply drinking in the atmosphere and trying to understand the wonderful phenomenon. About three or four o'clock we entered the house as quietly as possible and climbed into bed emotionally

and physically exhausted. There was a year to come to terms with the realities we had encountered! We needed it!

Entry into the Circuit

Whilst still in Carmarthen we received many warm letters of welcome from different organizations and churches saying how much they were looking forward to our arrival and our ministry amongst them. (Letters are still on file). Terry Walton who I had met at a Summer School in 1961 or 62 had blazed the way for me to work with young people. Expectations were high. Terry had told people, I believe, that I was good at youth work. Starting with such a reputation was unnerving – so much to live up to! (I think I have written about conversations with Terry at the Summer School but I cannot locate it).

I had heard that Wesley Hall leaders, or at least some of them, could be very difficult: they liked to be very much in control and could be overbearing. So at the Circuit welcome meeting I told the story (apocryphal?) of a Primitive Methodist minister addressing such a meeting said that he had come to be their servant in the N.T sense which meant he was to be their slave, *doulos*. This was well received. Then he said that, whilst he was going to be their slave/servant, by a N.T. theological paradox they would not be his master; his master is Christ. I made the point that I would be their slave but we would be theologically lost and the work would be invalid if they became my master or I became theirs. Ours must be a theologically sound pastoral and working relationship. I often wonder whether I was unwise.

Dorothy Household was so impressed by what I said that she decided there and then to transfer her membership to Wesley Hall (from I think St James or was it Central) and seek to work with me. And so, a great partnership was, unbeknown to me, born.

Characteristics of the Circuit⁴⁴

In 1962 the Circuit had seven churches: Upper Norwood, the Circuit church; Central, Forest Hill; St James, Wesley Hall, Sydenham; Anerley; Honor Oak Park; Downham. Upper Norwood was in the Wesleyan tradition; Central had been a leading Primitive Methodist Church in London; St James' of which I was very fond, had been a leading Bible Christian Church; Wesley Hall was an ex-mission centre church; Anerley

44 9.11.2.13

was much in the Wesleyan tradition; Downham was a housing estate overspill area from S. London originally sponsored by Bermondsey Mission made famous by Scott Lidgett. All were in S.E. London but their immediate social and community contexts varied considerably: Upper Norwood was in a prosperous suburban area; St James, Central and Honor Oak Park were in urban areas; Wesley Hall and Anerley were in urban and deprived areas; Downham in a vast housing estate.

The Circuit had several members of staff: The Revs Walter Goss (a scholarly dignified man, very precise and meticulous, Records Secretary to the Methodist Conference); Ronald Dyer (urbane and scholarly); Mr Robert Falloon (lay pastor who was eventually ordained; a sincere man without pretensions who, in contrast to the others had not a college or university education); Sister Linda Castle (a senior member of the Wesley Deaconess Order). Then there was me! Walter Goss was the superintendent with pastoral charge of Upper Norwood who became a father in God to me; Ronald Dyer had pastoral charge of Central and Honor Oak Park. He was a very popular minister and became, along with his wife lifelong friends. Robert Falloon had pastoral responsibility for Downham and St James'. Linda Castle was the full-time youth worker at Upper Norwood and highly thought of. We became very close colleagues in Circuit youth work and lifelong friends. I had pastoral charge of Wesley Hall and Anerley and, as I discovered when in post, had been earmarked for Circuit youth work when my invitation was being considered – a role I happily accepted! In all, a full-time staff of five of which I was by far the youngest.

It was a typical South London Circuit in a densely populated conurbation, so completely different from Llanelly and Carmarthen and any other area in which I lived. I found it claustrophobic as did Molly. I felt trapped and had to make an enormous effort to drive the many miles through one built up area seamlessly jointed to another to get to open country – and that was only after several weeks of feeling I could not escape the urban density. We never thought at the time that we would live in the area for 36 years! Incredible that we grew to like it and call it home!

The Circuit had one less church and three more members of staff than my previous one but the volume of work, the multiplicity of demands and the opportunities for mission unbelievably and infinitely greater. Ministering in this circuit was so different from doing so in Llanelly and Carmarthen.

My Section

As agreed when I was invited to join the Circuit, my section comprised two churches, Wesley Hall and Anerley. Geographically they were close, about 1¾ mile by road. Roughly speaking the communities in which they were set were divided by the Penge East to Kent House railway line. On the ground the boundaries between them were indistinguishable; one street of houses seemingly followed another. The two communities were simply integral parts of the vast densely populated S.E. London conurbation. Nonetheless, culturally, ecclesiastically and historically the churches differed significantly and there were subtle but significant differences in the sociology and feel of the communities in which they were set. These will become apparent in the description and discussion of the churches which follows.

Having only two churches for which I was responsible, situated in close proximity in a physically compact Circuit, meant that my ministry was much more focused and concentrated than it had been in Wales. Most of the members lived in an area of two square miles around the churches and where I lived.

For the main part, both in my section and in the Circuit, I had a very good pastoral and personal relationship with people of all ages: I was readily and gladly accepted. Also, in my section I was accepted by and enjoyed very good working relationships with young people and young adults and some adults. But this was not so with some of the older and more senior adults and key leaders in Wesley Hall. In Wesley Hall I had to work very hard for acceptance and experienced extended painful opposition to ideas and convictions that I had and initiatives that I took to promote development in youth and community work. This resulted in unpleasant and counter-productive conflict. Whilst I had been warned that Wesley Hall people could be difficult, the nature and severity of it took me by surprise and brought me up with a start: it was in sharp contrast to the acceptance and adulation which I had enjoyed in Wales and to which I had become accustomed. Anerley was quite different; my working relationships were quite good. There was hesitant opposition from a comparatively small number of adults but it was expressed graciously and lovingly in contradistinction to the acrimonious exchanges in Wesley Hall.

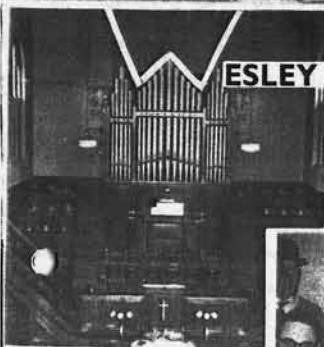
Consequently, the 'engagement' referred to in Part One, the changes in my approach to working with people and my praxis of ministry and my responsiveness to contemporary movements and developments, came at a considerable cost to me and to others. But it was a profound learning experience.

Undoubtedly, it was the difficulties I experienced in Wesley Hall that



From The Link, No 7 Nov 1963.

View from Sydeham Road.



ESLEY HALL IN PICTURES

Scenes from some of
our activities.

The Youth Club Social



Weekend - Bexhill



Kitchen Company at the Bazaar



influenced my/our decision to leave the Circuit after four years there.

Wesley Hall Methodist Church ⁴⁵

It is my earnest desire to give as honest an account of my ministry in Wesley Hall (and of course the remainder of the Circuit) as I possibly can, to deepen my understanding of what happened and why, to face up to residual negative feelings and even at this late stage of my life to learn as much as I can from doing so. But I am painfully aware that it is not going to be able to do all that. The realizations of that combined with the array of things that could be considered and the passage of time with the fading of memory have inhibited me from getting down to writing. What I plan to do is to tackle the task by writing about and reflecting upon my ministry in this church from several perspectives which will enable me to work over things and reflect on them and to draw out what I am learning but first a brief description of the Church.

Features, Attributes and the People

Wesley Hall is situated on the Sydenham Road at a junction with Kent House Road. Sydenham Road was subject to very heavy traffic at rush hour but was always busy and could be dangerous, one of the BB boys was killed attempting to cross; the bend in the road was deceptive. The front of the building is pictured below. Built in 1906 it was one of the many Central Halls built in city and large town centres in the early part of the 20th Century. They were the brain child of Joseph Rank who contributed large sums of money towards their construction and development. Their story is well told by Brian Frost in *Pioneers of Social Passion*⁴⁶ in chapter under the telling clever title, 'As Unchurchlike as Possible'. Certainly that was true of Wesley Hall: an ungainly, cheaply constructed and difficult to maintain building. The interior was equally unattractive and can be seen in the photograph below: it had a platform at the front dominated by a massive excellent organ. Below the platform stood the communion table and rail - and row after row of utilitarian tip-up cinema seats of a cheap variety. In all, it was what it was, a mission church hall, typified by a large sign which had been there for many years, possibly from the time it was built, 'The Church of the Happy Welcome' which was removed for reasons unknown to me just before I arrived! Local people referred to it affectionately as 'T' 'All'. Undoubtedly, it had served the people of Lower Sydenham extremely

⁴⁵ 16-17.1.13

⁴⁶ See Chapter 8 in this book *Pioneers of Social Passion: London's Cosmopolitan Methodism* (Epworth, 2006).

In left, Janice
Third from left,
John!



ove: Fancy Dress
line up.

THE GARDEN FETE

Everything and
everyone seemed to
work together for
and on this happy
occasion ... Team-
work, organisation
and planning pay
great dividends.

Right: The Boys'
Brigade step out
smartly to the
merry music -
watched by future
recruits.



Hills and
the sea -
with a few
clouds



THE
BOYS' BRIGADE
CAMP

HASTINGS

Good digestions
waiting on
appetite.



Breaking Camp

well throughout the fifty six years of its history up to 1962 – and to some extent it still did but it was in decline. The glory days of Robertson Ballard’s great ministry when the Hall was packed for popular peoples’ services on Sunday evenings were long gone but the memories remained. Robertson Ballard was still very much alive in retirement in Beckenham and spoke at a mid-week meeting during my ministry. However, my purpose is not to tell its history but to describe and discuss my ministry.

At the beginning of my ministry the morning and evening services were reasonably well attended as was the Sunday School which met in the afternoon. When I counted the membership from my visiting books I was surprised to find it numbered around 250 – some of these may have been adherents. (Unfortunately I do not have statistics about the membership of the church or any of the organizations nor, strangely, do I have any copies of ‘Plans’). It had a good women’s fellowship, a mid-week fellowship, very active and strong units of the Boys’ and Girls’ Brigade Movement. This work had highly committed leaders and officers, some of whom are still active fifty years later: they and their core members were fiercely independent – that was how I described them in a piece I wrote for the Centenary in 2006. (See Appendage II). Some would say unreasonably stubborn. At all and any costs they were determined to maintain and secure the Hall and their independence to organize it as they saw fit and proper: they were far from easy to negotiate with, wary of and defensive towards initiatives for change especially if they came from outside - or the clergy! They and the membership were variously: very intelligent and gifted, unrefined South Londoners, loving and caring, hard and even cruel, deeply spiritual sophisticated Christians, religiously and faith - uneducated and underdeveloped. (Struggling to find words to describe the whole spiritual spectrum of religions/spiritual development amongst the membership and the congregation, James Fowler’s Stages of Faith came to mind, see chart in Appendage III and the simplified version by M. Scott Peck. The spiritually sophisticated would be in stages 4-6, ‘individuating and reflective’, ‘conjunctive faith’, ‘universalizing faith’ or in Peck’s terms ‘skeptical-individual’ and ‘mystical-communal’. Whereas those I referred to as uneducated and underdeveloped were ‘synthetic-conventional’ or ‘formal-institutional’. On further reflection it might be more helpful to think of the range of ‘moral development’, as outlined by Lawrence Kohlberg, see Appendage IV. In Wesley Hall they ranged from Levels 1 to 3. I had not thought of using these concepts before to understand the religious/spiritual/moral dynamics of Wesley Hall or for that matter any of the other churches in which I ministered. Retrospectively, at this distance it would be very difficult to do such an analysis on the membership as a whole; it

might be possible to do in relation to key figures. Doubtfully it would throw some light on why it was so difficult to work with the people and upon their intransigence and the conflict – and possibly more importantly the way in which they engaged in conflict. I doubt whether I can pursue this much further now.

My immediate predecessor, the Rev Raymond V Smith, left things in good order and was helpful and courteous during the transitional period.



THE JUNIOR CHURCH
AT
SHOREHAM, KENT.
June

Young hopefuls make
a day of it.....



..... while the
WOMEN'S MEETING
find a town without
a seesaw.
Worthing - July.

A Tragedy for a Family and a Bad Start for Me⁴⁷

During the evening of my first or second Saturday in the Circuit I received a telephone call from Mr David Burgess, I think, a member of St James', to say that Mrs X, an adherent at Wesley Hall, had just been killed in a car accident at the cross roads nearby St James'. With her husband (not a member) and her teenage son P (a young Christian and member) she was on her way to play badminton at St James'. The son and father had been injured, badly but not critically, had been taken to Lewisham Hospital. My Father was staying with us and offered to accompany me: I had not met the family and finding my way to Lewisham was daunting as I had not got used to travelling around in the densely populated area heavy with traffic. The nurse was greatly relieved to see me because she had not been able to face up to telling P that his mother was dead nor the husband. Would I do it? It was far from easy but I did tell them and comforted them as best I could and, I think, I had to ring the elder son. Both sons had been in the Wesley Hall BB company. During the next week or so I visited them frequently and offered all the pastoral support I could especially to P. When it came to discussing the funeral arrangements, I said that I would fully understand if they would prefer the previous minister to conduct the services. They would and asked me to write to him, which I did (I'm not sure if I rang him actually). He said that he would not be able to (they had moved to Cardiff). He said that he would write to them. I told the family that Mr S. would not be able to do so and would be writing to them. They asked me to conduct the services – even though we had only know each other a short time very good relationships had evolved especially between P and me. Suddenly all that ended and I was told by Wesley Hall people that the family were feeling quite hurt by me and did not trust me. I went to see them to discover what had gone wrong. They told me that they had had a very nice letter of sympathy from Mr Smith but that it did not mention my contacting him nor was there any mention of an invitation to conduct the funeral services and him not being able to accept it. They said that they did not believe I had been in touch with him because I did not want him to take the services, I wanted to do so and get the fees (was it ten shillings then? Certainly a small sum). I was shocked and deeply upset. Eventually I convinced them that I did contact him and gave them his address and telephone number suggesting they contact him directly. Whether they did or not, I never knew. Throughout I had maintained a relationship with P. His older brother had been aggressive towards me, possibly using me as a scapegoat for his distress at his mother's death. Gradually relationships were restored with the family

and I did take the funeral services. But enormous damage had been done to my relationships with the congregation at a very formative period for them – first impressions are not easily changed. The family had let it be known that I was not to be trusted and that had flown fast on the grapevines. The incident badly affected my ministry for some time.

[An insight into the conflict and aggression is to be found in a letter from Eric and Margaret Verrier dated October 1963 and on file.]

Working Relationships and a Power Struggle

As I wrote about this incident, I became aware that I am in danger of allowing this and problems with working relationships to distort what I think, feel and write about Wesley Hall. I had some extremely good personal, pastoral and working relationships. For two sisters, Mrs Gould and Miss Ethel Breakspeare, I came with a glowing and affectionate recommendation from their brother, The Rev Harry Breakspeare, an Army chaplain who had been an enormously good friend for 15 years during our Aldershot days. They were indefatigable workers in Wesley Hall. Mrs Gould was the leader of the women's fellowship. She was married to a very successful and wealthy engineer with his own business. Both sisters were loyal members. But they were not born and bred Wesley Hall people – they were well-to-do newcomers. Mrs Gould's daughter became a dentist and worked enthusiastically in and for the Sunday School. Then there was Mrs Mercer (see 9.7.88, 176) and Dorothy Household. The Spatchers were enormously supportive – Gertie cleaned for us, she had been resident housekeeper to the Ballards throughout their ministry; Frank did a lot of decorating for us. Then there were the Randalls, especially Elsie who became a close friend to Molly; Phil Taylor who maintained my car; the Crawfords who were more sophisticated and not native, and others. This list has little significant to others but making it is helping me to get things into a better perspective.

A central figure in the difficulties I experienced was Mr B, a man in his fifties, I suppose, when I knew him; a somewhat slippery character. He was a society steward, Leaders' meeting secretary and a local preacher. I suspect he was very much under the control of his wife.

It was not long before I discovered that in the minutes of the Leaders' Meeting he only recorded decisions with which he agreed: they were handwritten and read for record and approval at the next meeting; the current practice of circulating them was not in vogue then. Also, I sensed that he was deviously undermining my authority and thwarting my initiatives and that he did not like me any more than I liked him. He was in fact trying

to control things surreptitiously behind the scenes and on the grapevines – or so I felt. Much of this it was impossible to prove or substantiate with concrete evidence. Eventually, I felt I had to confront and challenge him face to face which I did in the vestry, quite a big room with a central table in which we had some meetings. I remember we were both standing on different sides of the table when I confronted him. I cannot remember how I started but two aspects of what ensued are very clear in my mind. In one way or another I said that our working relationship was not working well: I felt he was opposing and undermining what I was trying to do, more off stage than on. Repeatedly, he said that I was imagining it, that I was over sensitive and disturbed and possibly ought to see someone about it. Frustrated by his evasion and incensed by the device he was using to make me feel I was deluded and neurotic I said that I did not believe it was just in my mind and I thought it was so serious that if he would not talk to me straightly about what was going on, I would arrange a meeting with the Superintendent and if that did not get anywhere with the Chairman of the District. Eventually he talked to me in an adult and open fashion but with a brokenness that upset me. He told me that he had always wanted to be a minister but never had been able to do so. Failing in that ambition, he sought, he said, to gain influence and control in the Church and the Circuit as a layman. And he achieved that during Mr Smith's ministry. He felt that he and not the minister was really in control in the Hall, at least over the church rather than the BB side of its work. Then he said, I came along with new ideas, strong and effective leadership and people were starting to follow me rather than him. So he felt he was losing his control. I felt very sorry for him. I said that I did not see ministry in terms of who is in charge, in control and who is getting their own way. It was an ordained/lay partnership in the work of God. I told him that I felt deeply for him in his frustration at not being able to pursue an ordained vocation for it was of course possible to fulfil as he was a lay vocation in ministry. We prayed together. A deeper understanding had been found. Although we never became soul friends we did work together amicably, and with mutual understanding.

It is now a few hours since I wrote these notes on my relationship with Mr B and there are things which I must write. On reflection I found myself ruminating about my contribution to the difficulties we experienced with each other – to say that indicates a desirable shift in perspective relating to responsibility. The incidents were pre my nondirective days! I was offering strong leadership for directional change, far reaching changes for the leaders of Wesley Hall in relation to youth work and education. I 'knew' where we should be going, where I wanted to go – God forgive me for any arrogance in that – and I used all my powers of persuasion, howbeit within

the constitutional and democratic process, to get there and to take as many people as possible. The leaders had every right – and responsibility – to question my ideas and to argue for theirs. But they were at a disadvantage – my status and I could argue my case more cogently than they could critique it or argue their own. Not surprisingly they resorted to any form of defence and attack they knew. To complicate things further for them and for me, I was advocating theories of practice relating to open youth work and Christian education that were new to them and at variance to theories upon which they based their work and had done so for some considerable time to considerable degree of success. Further I was setting all this in a theology that was new to them – and to me – in discussion, though my teaching and practice (badly) and in my preaching. What an avalanche of change for them and for me. Being on new ground myself, wanting to be faithful to all the background movements and developments that were influencing me (see Part One) but not properly inducted into them and confident, I was probably defensive and over reactive.

Surprisingly, and to my shame, I have not thought nor written about this period in this way previously. Subconsciously I think I had set out to justify myself, show what a hard time I had at the hands of people I found disagreeable and unrefined. This realization shifted my perspective; it was an enormous corrective to it through which I begin more clearly the complexity of the all-round dynamics and how narrow, biased, narrow and one sided my perspective has been all these years.

[⁴⁸Writing about the Trustees' Meeting reminds me of an incident which I cannot resist noting, not least because of it typifies some of the exchanges. Mr Goss was in the chair at a Trustees' meeting, which was discussing whether or not to buy the freehold of the house. Mr Brittan was present to advise the Trustees. After a complicated exchange he brilliantly summarized how he saw the situation which was essentially to purchase the freehold or sell the house. One of the Trustees moved the motion, "Flog it, mate". Mr Goss reached towards me and said, "What does he mean George?". The motion was put and lost!

Notwithstanding all I have said, this there was a hard and cynical approach in the attitudes of some of the key members epitomized by a conversation which took place on a lovely summer's evening as I was walking towards home up the Sydenham Road with three or four of these people. The conversation turned to anecdotes about the Rev Horace Smith – my predecessor but one. A saintly gentle man by all accounts, quiet and

unassuming. (Some of his sermons are recorded in the book by Kathleen Mercer compiled for me). One of the men said to the others, “We knew just how to upset the old boy, didn’t we and to keep him up three or four nights”. This was greeted with much amusement and laughter. Such cruelty had greatly stressed Rev Smith, who died prematurely soon after he had left of a heart attack. They knew that.

But there is more. Whilst I was reflecting and sorting out some papers I came across a letter from January 1965 which I had completely forgotten. It is a most gracious letter following a Trustees’ meeting which must have been fractious – they often were – regretting that I was not thanked for complicated negotiations I had successfully undertaken with government bodies for youth work grants for Wesley Hall and thanking me for my ‘active concern over the finances of the church’. My reply acknowledges his graciousness and thanks him for intervening in an impasse caused by personal clashes which ‘considerably helped to restore a proper perspective and to move the meeting to what in my opinion was the right conclusion. Thank you for your help and support’. Clearly by then we were engaging in a good working relationship and treating each other with mutual respect. Again I had completely forgotten that to my shame. (The letters are on file).

Several things are emerging for me from all this. I lament:

- my failure at the time and since to position myself more impartially so that I could see the whole picture and the dynamics more objectively and less emotionally;
- my partisanship;
- my propensity to remember the bad and forget the good things and to allow my overall and unclear perspective to be determined more by the negative than the positive as things happen and even afterwards in reflection;
- my inability to stand in their shoes and realize the impact of new ideas which implied that they had been doing so much badly or wrongly and being challenged to do things differently in ways in which they were not trained and felt de-skilled;
- the ways in which distorted and one-sided stories of events became fixed and the more they are rehearsed them more immutable they become.
-

All this points to the enormous difficulty: of avoiding doing these things; of getting good perspectives in the actualities of the working place and even in reflection. Also, it undermines the vital importance of reflective writing – and doing it at a much earlier stage so that the benefits of it may be felt.

May God forgive me for the years when I have maligned some of the Wesley Hall people and made myself seem a righteous martyr?

As will become clear, I did realize that as time went on I had not the skills required to do this work and promote radical developmental change and sought help which I found through T R Batten and the nondirective approach. One thing which strikes me is that what I have been writing about here is a shift in perspective from seeing things from one point in a complex human system to a position in which the system can be seen more clearly in its machinations. And that change of itself has the potential to enhance, refine and redeem a worker's performance. Workers who adopt a nondirective approach are better equipped to make such perspective changes.

How I wish I could turn the clocks of time back and discuss all of this with Mr B and others!

Demanding but Fulfilling Pastoral Work ⁴⁹

A considerable amount of my time and energy went into a very large and varied amount of pastoral work. In addition to what I would describe as normal pastoral work there is that which was extraordinarily difficult. One such group consisted of people living in squalor; mainly elderly women living alone, some of whom had become eccentric or in the early stages of dementia. Invariably there was one or two such ongoing cases. I could not have undertaken this work without the support and help of Mrs Elsie Randall, who had been a nurse. She was incredible. As though it was normative she would clean up people and their mess in rooms and houses in which I could stay only for a short time because of the stench. I remember one lady, a Sunday School teacher of Wesley Hall for some many years who had not left her bed for a week or more and a somewhat deranged lady who placed slices of bread all round the rooms., down the sides of the corridors and stairs ... Providing pastoral first aid was one aspect of this work, getting Social Services' help was another.

Another group consisted of people with acute mental problems or severe addictions. One of these had all kinds of delusions including those with a religious connotation. For example, she would ring me at all times of day and night in a highly emotional and deranged state about, for instance, her conviction that her husband was about to kill her or poison her. A regular call was at about 11pm which after a long harangue, much of which was

incomprehensible and in the realms of fantasy would end with a tirade of abuse against me and slamming the phone down. Not a prelude to a restful night!

The agonizing problem was to know when the situation required me to visit her or to call for help. I helped her to get psychiatric help and care from the social services – but on one occasion in an interview with the social services team she overturned their table/desk on them in a violent outburst. Also we got her daughter into a prestigious Methodist Boarding School where she became a brilliant scholar until her mother withdrew her. When normal, as she was both in and out of hospital, she was a lovely person. (Some correspondence on file).

Then there was a young couple with a child, professional middle class people, affluent and sophisticated. How they came to be associated with Wesley Hall, I know not. He was an alcoholic whose addiction was gradually destroying him and his family. We had endless discussion when I attempted to persuade him to get help from AA. Late one night there was much noise at our front door when I went to see what was happening he was there in a drunken stupor saying that he wanted me to see what it was like when he was in this state. I did not know what happened to him, he left as he arrived, suddenly and unexpectedly.

Generally speaking these cases were intermittently active but I was involved in one another of them frequently.

I feel quite exhausted writing these short pieces which is reminiscent of the ways in which they drained my energy when encountering them and trying to respond responsibly and creatively.

⁵⁰Another long pastoral relationship was with Mrs Kathleen Mercer and her family. Laurie Mercer, Mrs Mercer's only daughter was very gifted. She wrote some good poetry and very good letters. (See those she wrote to me whilst at University.) Sadly she lost a very deep faith whilst at University. I had a close pastoral relationship with her. Eventually I lost touch but was deeply moved to receive a letter from her related to Molly's death. To my frustration it did not have any contact details and so far I have been unable to trace her address. I would love to get in touch with her again.

At some point in my Wesley Hall ministry I started making pastoral visits to Goodliffe House, 28 Sydenham Hill – a road once known as 'millionaire mile' on account of the mansions of extremely wealthy business people

which were the main residences during the 19th Century and the beginning of the 20th Century. Goodliffe House was one of the main social welfare projects of the West London Mission, The Rev Dr (later Lord) Donald Soper was superintendent at the time. It was a house for elderly, most of them retired but some still working. Far from being an old people's home, it was somewhat genteel, occupied by middle class people. Sister May Dalton, a retired Wesley Deaconess, came to live there after thirty or forty years ministering in the East London Methodist Missions. I got to know her very well; she was an extremely fine and gracious Christian lady. She died in 1973 at the age of 87 years and I conducted her funeral service. So she was well into her 70s when first I knew her. Another retired deaconess lived in the House, Sister Edith Trotter; somewhere I have a small book she wrote. However, it was not until 1964 that a more formal relationship evolved. A Mr Biggs became the Warden along with his wife who was an ex-deaconess who had resigned to marry. When I knew them they had a small daughter. I became quite deeply involved with them pastorally. This led to them asking me to conduct monthly services in the House for the residents. That I did (notes of my addresses are in one of my sermon registers). Services were well attended and received. Various pastoral relationships developed and I became honorary chaplain in all but name to the residents. Also, at the end of my ministry, I was able to raise with Lord Soper (as he was by then) some deep concerns and feelings of insecurity amongst some of the residents because of the lack of continuing care in the House when they could not any longer look after themselves (correspondence on file).

An extraordinary, challenging but ultimately rewarding pastoral relationship evolved with one of the residents, Ms S, who was a Jewess. She came to all the services and wrote to me (some of the correspondence is on file). During one of my addresses I told the story of: incidents in Wales. On one occasion I was visiting a Mr and Mrs Aust, members of the Carmarthen Church. (Mr Aust was a professional photographer who had or once had his own business. He took photos of the family and me). As I entered the lounge during one of my visits, a cat streaked out of the room to the safety of some other part of the house. They explained that it was a stray they had acquired which must have been very badly treated and as a consequence was fearful and insecure. Some few months later I paid another call on an extremely cold day and was shown into the same lounge which had a lovely open coal fire before which was spread-eagled a well-fed sleeping cat. When I reminded them about my previous visit they said, "Same cat. Surprising what a bit of TLC will do". (To my relief that cat did not move – I dislike cats and cannot abide them jumping up at me; they have ruined many a pastoral visit). After telling the story I made the

point that if human care can achieve such a transformation, we cannot put any limits on the effects upon human beings of their receiving God's loving care. This deeply offended Mrs S; she asked to see me; I arranged for her to come to the house. Over the telephone she had poured scorn on what I had said about the healing and transforming powers of human and divine love as being naïve and simplistic in the realities and cruelties of this world. When she arrived I showed her into our lounge (my study was in an upstairs room and not good for interviews). She did not sit as I did and indicate she might, she walked round and round the room in an agitated state looking behind the long window curtains that were closed and behind every chair. Taken aback, I waited for an explanation. It came. 'You can't be too careful', she said, 'there are spies everywhere and they put devices in hidden places'. Eventually, assured there was nothing there and confirming that our conversation would be confidential, she sat down and told me that she had lived in Vienna in the 1930's and from her apartment had witnessed the most horrific crimes against the Jews which had left her insecure, fearful, neurotic and ever vigilant. She was very worried about her son who had been mentally ill and who was recovering and trying to build a life for himself and find work. I helped her to work through these fears. The son recovered, married an Italian and eventually went to live in Italy. We continued to meet and correspond until 1975 when she went to live with her son and his wife in Italy. By then she was quite a different person, happy and secure. I do not think I heard from her again, I can only presume that she died in Italy. (Correspondence on file).

To be allowed to engage in such a wide range of pastoral care and work is an enormous privilege and responsibility, but so fulfilling. Without any doubt this pastoral work, which inevitably members of the Church would come to know about – not through me because I treated it confidentially but through the people themselves – had a healing and facilitative effective on all my other working relationships and helped towards creating a caring environment. Over and again I have experienced profound and moving changes in the ways in which people with whom I have been in significant pastoral relationships, for example in a crisis or bereavement, become more supportive in meetings and protective of me in conflict even when their natural sympathies may not be with the stance I am taking. It can be embarrassing. I have been at pains to discourage it or disown it as courteously as possible; certainly I have not traded on it.

⁵¹A phone call one day (I think it was in 1964) led to a most unusual pastoral engagement that proved to be deeply satisfying and rewarding. "Did

the Methodist Church accept divorced people into membership?" Having answered in the affirmative he asked if I could see him. 'Certainly, I said. When would you like to come?' "At three minutes to six tomorrow evening" came the reply. This most precise and extraordinary statement really made me wonder what I had let myself in for – was he crank? Mentally unwell? His first question had already got me thinking that he would be asking me to marry two people one of whom was divorced. A new and clever way to get a sympathetic response? No amount of speculative thinking would get me anywhere near what was to happen. He arrived promptly at the time he had said. A man in his early fifties smartly dressed on his way home from an office job in the City, very polite and quietly well spoken. Introductions, over, he was a Mr Sharman, he immediately asked me if he was right in believing that the Methodist Church believed in justification by faith? Taken aback, now I really did wonder what was to come and what kind of a man had turned up out of the blue. I had made a careful study of this doctrine and was entirely committed to it. An essay I had written on it two/or three years earlier had been highly commended for its originality and relevance! Most of my members would not have known what it meant and certainly would not have questioned me about it! Having assured him that it was one of our cardinal doctrines to which I was committed, he told me his story. For some years he had been searching for faith and a spiritual home. To this end he had attended services in most of the principal denominations. Recently he had attended a Roman Catholic mass. At the very point in the mass when the priest performed the Elevation of the Host, it came to him in a blinding flash what he had learnt in his youth as a choir boy in Samuel Wesley's church in Epworth, Lincs, about the doctrine of justification by faith. That was the kind of faith he was seeking, needed and wanted. His story, told simply and humbly quietly with deep sincerity, was compelling in its spirituality, and utterly convincing. I was deeply moved by his story and the enlightenment occurring in John and Charles Wesley's home church. He wanted to become a member of the Methodist Church and that took us both to his first question, he was a remarried divorcee. Over the next few months I had the great privilege of visiting their home to prepare both Mr Sharman and his wife for membership. They immediately started to attend Wesley Hall where I received them into membership. They became faithful members; he became a very efficient Trust secretary. When I returned to live in the Circuit I met up with him again. They were faithful to the end of their lives.

Developments⁵²

Several significant developments took place during my ministry.

Sunday School

Discussions had been under way before I became the minister of Wesley Hall about having the Sunday School in the morning and not in the afternoon but those for and those against could not come to an agreement about the change so they had been put on hold. One of the main arguments against this move was that teachers would not be able to attend their preferred service of worship which was in the morning. I was asked to re-open the discussions and eventually it was agreed to make the change, to seek new staff and to attempt to update and develop the education programme. The Sunday School Council asked me to approach Dorothy Household who was known to members of the staff even though she had only just transferred her membership. I asked her to act as superintendent until someone else could be found. For some reason I thought it would be better to have a man in the office. She accepted the invitation but never let me forget she objected to my sexist patronage and bias. Quite soon it became clear that we could not find anyone who would do the job better; she was superb.

The work was given a great boost when the Crawshaw family suddenly appeared, Bill and Brenda and their children, Diane and Richard. Bill, who has a senior engineering post with Cable & Wireless; he had enormous amounts of energy and drive. He threw himself into the Sunday School work in a most imaginative way; Dorothy and Bill got on like a house on fire. Their children joined the Sunday School.

They turned out to be Lancashire people, Brenda came from Rawtenstall, Loveclough where Molly came from and knew some of the same people. We became very friendly with them. Bill was eventually posted to Doha, Brenda accompanied him and the children went into boarding schools; Richard to Shebbear and Diane to Edgehill.

For several years they stayed with us overnight on their way to and from the Gulf. The Sunday School flourished.

Boys' Brigade

Wesley Hall had a strong Boys' Brigade company run by an able and dedicated group of officers. It had a distinguished history. (I cannot

52 25-27.2.13

remember whether it had a Girls' Brigade company or not. Certainly it had an outstanding history of GB companies and several of the ladies in the Church had been officers and some were still active in the Brigade regionally). The BB met once or twice a week, had a band which led parades and a weekly bible class which met on Sunday mornings before church.

This was not my preferred mode of youth work; I had considerable misgivings and reserves about the military model upon which it was based and the didactic approach to the Bible class. Whilst I did not express these reservations they must have deduced and sensed them from things I said about other aspects of youth work and the ways in which I worked with people. Nonetheless I took a real interest in their work which within their frames of reference was done thoroughly with considerable expertise in a professional way with great discipline and self sacrifice. They were deeply committed to the work and it was effective. I attended as many of their meetings and events as possible and went to camp with them. I got on well with the boys and reasonably well with the officers at a personal level. But they were a little guarded in their conversations with me about their work in the Boys' Brigade. Understandably they were very concerned when I started to promote open youth work in the Hall and in the Circuit. They were concerned that it would have a detrimental effect upon their Boys' Brigade recruitment and sessions.

Parade Services and Family Worship

Parade services were an established pattern of the worship in Wesley Hall. For the most part they were monthly but from time the company attended Brigade parade services which were held in various churches of different denominations and occasionally at Wesley Hall. These attracted large numbers of officers of all ranks and boys, they completely filled the Hall, gallery included. Ordinary parade services were well organized ceremonial events: the company led by their band paraded to the church and after the service did a circuit around local roads and streets. Altogether they put up a good show which was much admired.

In a later section which I have already written, there is discussion about Family and Community Worship and parade services. One of the points made is that family worship evolved with the syllabus for experimental education in the 1960's. It was seen as a way of integrating students and staff of morning Sunday schools (which gradually became known as junior churches) into the liturgical life of adult congregations. Services were designed to build up the family life of the church and to enable children,

young people and adults to get acquainted and to remain in touch and to make it easier and more likely that children and young people would graduate from junior church to active membership of the congregation rather than leaving Sunday school in the ways in which they left day schools. So, with the move to morning Sunday School we were keen to establish family worship. I cannot remember any opposition from the Boys' Brigade staff. My remembrance is that initially we had parade and family services on different Sundays but eventually they came together. An interesting development occurred if my memory serves me right, when Boys' Brigade and Sunday School staffs met with me to plan the year's programme of family worship. Themes and titles were decided and published.

Candlelight Carol Services

My suggestion that we should introduce candlelight carol services was implemented with alacrity and great enthusiasm. Several of the people made an excellent job of illuminating and decorating the Hall. For many years they placed planks from front to back down the centre of the rows resting on the backs of the seats. The result was most attractive and impressive. The services were extremely well attended and became very popular.

The Wednesday Fellowship

The Wednesday Fellowship had a long history of good meetings but it was losing its popularity and appeal. Drawing on my experience in Wales, I encouraged the development of the programme. From 1963 onwards we produced syllabuses on a quarterly basis and got some outstanding speakers on a range of subjects (cards are on file for some of the quarters). The Rev Dr A.W. Blaxall,⁵³ who had a distinguished ministry in South Africa, being a critic of apartheid, came to speak. Another person who addressed the Fellowship was the minister of the Bonhoeffer Church in Forest Hill, Pastor Maechler who had been a student of Dietrich Bonhoeffer in the 1930s. (Bonhoeffer was a pastor in Forest Hill before the 1939-45 war. One of the Baptist ministers remembered him well. He said that he was a very scholarly quiet man who shared in the ministers' fraternal. The Baptist Minister—I cannot recall his name—said that they respected him greatly but had no inkling of his status in the Confessing Church nor that he would

53 Dr B was a dignified patriarchal figure. Molly and I used to see him walking quite regularly with his wife in the local park, Mayow Park. Taken into custody because of his opposition to apartheid he had to leave his beloved South Africa. His book about his life, *Suspended Sentence*, was published in 1965.

become so distinguished and that his scholarship, life and death would make an enormous impact on post-war Christendom. In 1972 we went to live in a house next-but-one to the Bonhoeffer Church!) I think I contributed some of the short services of talks/lectures that I had given in any previous Circuit.

Open Youth Work

During my ministry in Carmarthen my attempts to establish a youth club were not successful; my attempts in Wesley Hall were a little more successful—so much so that we secured much needed funding from Central and local government bodies which I believe was for all the youth work in which we were engaged. As noted earlier, there was some opposition to this work from the Boys' Brigade because they felt it would adversely affect their work. That was an understandable concern. In the event it complimented their work especially with the older boys and did not undermine it. Mr. Crawford led the club and I think Dorothy Household helped.

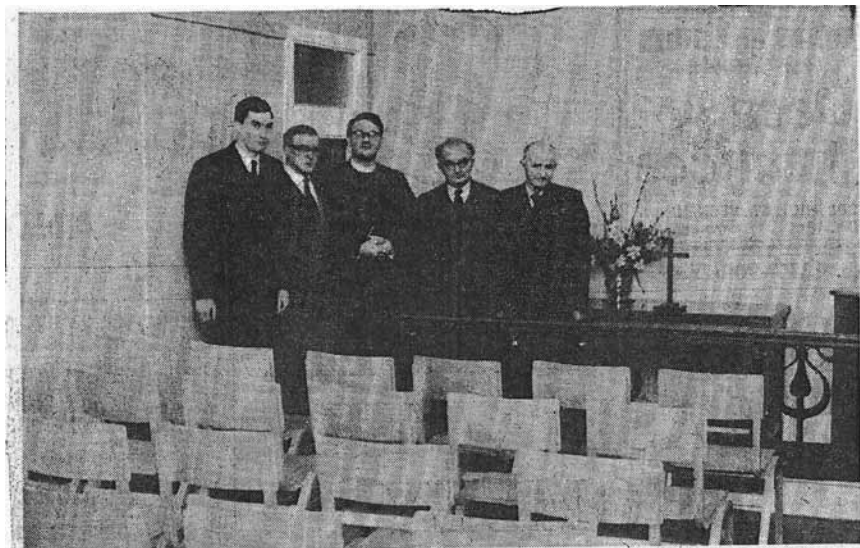
DEDICATION OF NEW CHAPEL

DURING the past months, members of the Wesley Hall Methodist Church, Sydenham, have spent much of their free time converting part of the church into a chapel where their smaller services can be held.

A new floor has been put down, the walls papered in light oak and money raised for new furnishings and fittings.

Now the work is finished, and on Sunday, after the evening service, the minister, the Rev. George Lovell, performed a brief ceremony of dedication.

At the express wish of the Society and leaders, continued the minister, the chapel had been named after Mr. Alfred J. H. Bartlett, who was the first man to be married in the new church nearly 60 years ago. Mr. and Mrs. Bartlett, who live in Brossby-grove, Sydenham, were among the congregation at the dedication.



Five of the men who did most towards the conversion of part of Wesley Hall, Sydenham, into a new small chapel, pose for a picture in the new chapel just before it was dedicated on Sunday. They are (left to right) Mr. M. Colley, Mr. F. Spatcher, the Rev. G. Lovell (minister), Mr. H. Perkin and Mr. A. J. H. Bartlett.—(K.T. Photo No. VT/8269.)

Young Adult Group

Another of the things I initiated was a social group for young adults. This provided opportunities for young adults who were involved in the life and work of Wesley Hall in one way or another and their spouses (several of whom were not engaged in the life and work of Wesley Hall apart, that is, through their partners) to meet informally. It was open to anyone and was self-programming. This was successful because it met felt needs, indeed which are why it was formed. It was still running when I rejoined the Circuit. Two of the people became very involved in the Church, I think as a consequence of this group which has grown older together!

Side Chapel

During 1965, at the initiative of a few members and with the backing of the Trustees and Leaders, a side chapel was built under the balcony at the back of the Hall. The work was undertaken voluntarily by a few of the men in the Church. It was opened and dedicated in February 1968 and proved to be very useful indeed for small gatherings as it gave a sense of togetherness and intimacy – not possible in the large Hall. (See below for a report in the local press). I note I conducted a wedding in this Chapel the following month.

Ecumenical Relationships

I cannot now remember how it came about, but I became actively in initiating and developing ecumenical relationships in Sydenham or more precisely lower Sydenham. A clergy fellowship was inaugurated. Very close to Wesley Hall, on the opposite side of Sydenham Road at the junction with Trewsbury Road, there was an Anglican Church. It was ‘very high church’ with an Anglo Catholic priest, Father Leslie Katin, a very fine Christian. Over the years there had been no contact between the churches; indeed Wesley Hall people were very suspicious of and anti that church. I got on very well with Father Katin and eventually we decided to try to make arrangements for him to preach in ‘my’ church and for me to preach in ‘his’.

Eventually, Wesley Hall leaders agreed but not without some reservations and apprehensions. So it happened. The morning after Father Katin had preached in Wesley Hall, one of the members of Wesley Hall who had been most sceptical about the arrangement and anti the high church, a rough diamond, came to the manse. He had not been there during my time previously. With tears in his eyes, he said to me, in utter amazement, ‘that

Anerley Methodist Church

Introductory Overview ¹

Anerley Methodist Church, one of the two churches for which I had pastoral care, was situated strategically in a densely populated run-down area in an area of considerable deprivation due for redevelopment. It had a membership of c175. On one side, the Crystal Palace Park forms the boundary of the area which it serves; otherwise its catchment area merges into the urban conurbation. The church stands some three quarters of a mile from the Park and is divided from it by a railway line. Anerley and Penge are on the bottom of the hill on which the Park is situated, at the top is the more prosperous areas of the Crystal Palace and Upper Norwood which are more suburban. It was at the top of the hill and the park that the Crystal Place was erected when it was relocated after the Great Exhibition. An intriguing book, *The Phoenix Suburb: A South London Social History* by Alan R Warwick (The Blue Boar Press, 1972) tells the fascinating history of the area – early home of ballooning and air flights, the Croydon Canal climbed there type 26 locks; the atmospheric railway ran by; it was a spa and a centre of high political activity. I borrowed the title for a piece I wrote for the 125th Church Anniversary in 1990 and adapted to Anerley Church, “The Phoenix Church” because it had risen from a destructive fire in 1979. (See Appendix V)

After the church had been very badly damaged during the early part of the war a small group of people led, I believe, by the Misses Alice and Ellen Kelsey kept the church alive. Services were held in the large scout hut². After the war the church was re-established in the premises I found when I arrived. The church life was vigorous – people of all ages were actively associated with it. There were some very able professional people in the congregation: several teachers, Miss Alice Kelsey had been a headmistress but was then retired, Ray Bannister became a headteacher; there were two or three local preachers; Reg Tredinnick was a distinguished prison social worker; several were in businesses in London. Impressive work with young people had been done/was being done by a group of men and women of whom had come back from the war determined to make the world a better place. There was a very broad social mix of people in the church and others closely associated with it who respected and liked one another, got on with each other (generally!), cared for one another. I tried to express something of the character of the church, the feel of it and the atmosphere/ethos, in

¹ 1.3.13

² Actually, I think it was an ex-army hut.

Appendix V. It was one of those churches that one sensed had something special, something of the essence of Christianity. In trying to describe it I used words such as integrity, spiritual wholeness, humanity, compassion, love, holiness with the common touch. But it was not without its conflicts and difficulties and personal clashes.

It was involved in a wide range of work – Sunday School, class meetings, women’s fellowship, Girls Life Brigade, Cubs and Scouts, youth work in addition to Sunday Worship: morning and evening services. An Approved School for Boys was situated nearby for much of my ministry and for a period “paraded” a group of boys to morning services.

The culture of Anerley and Penge was overall thoroughgoing working class South London as it had been for a long time. But it was just beginning to change. Caribbean immigrants were moving into the poorer parts. In fact I conducted my first black wedding in the old church. It was a cultural shock. The bride wore elbow length white gloves. When it came to the exchange of rings first one and then another of several large women acting as matrons of honour, spun the bride round in a struggle to be the one who took off the glove! After I had given my address and was about to go on to the next part of the service, to my amazement one of the bridal party said, “Wait a minute Minister, I have something to say!” And say it he did – and so did two or three more. I warmed to the participation and thereafter expected it.

The church and its youth and community work programme

Anerley’s well established youth and community work and the developments that took place from 1962-66 were outstanding if not spectacular. Church life, work and worship was distinctly and of a very special quality but there was nothing spectacular about the quiet deep spirituality and its winsome Christian character. Consequently there is much to say in these notes about the youth and community work (not least because of its impact upon me, my future and my vocational path) and comparatively little to say about the church work. This concerns me because I fear it can lead to a distorted picture and impression of the overall reality that I experienced and the nature of my ministry.

Church life was all of a piece; worship was of a high quality the members were most loving, caring and pastoral heart; my pastoral work was extensive; the Sunday school was going well. We developed a pattern of effective family worship; a greatly valued women’s fellowship met weekly;

class meetings were in being; the Girls Life Brigade was small in number but well-run; the youth work was seen as a valued part of the church work.

Anerley Methodist Church, was in fact, a superb and robust social and spiritual base for the youth and community and a source of substantial Christian support to the workers: it was open, inclusive and cohesive; in many ways, it was a family church; the quality foits fellowship combined with its spiritual depth made it attractive to all kinds of people of varying faiths and none; it was comfortable and secure in its sense of identity, indeed proud of it. At the same time, it was a very human group of people with their doubts, quarrels, misgivings, qualms and fears: and this shadow side made it attractive.

The members regarded youth and community work as a proper expression of their human concern for the well-being and development of others of their Christian mission rather than as a means of proselytising. People in the church took a great interest in and prayed for this work. Consequently, the youth programme was integral: it was not something separated off with a life of its own independent of the church.

From my personal perspective, I can honestly say, after careful thought that no one aspect of my ministry dominated: my involvement in and contributions to the youth programme was not in any way at the cost of my preaching and pastoral ministry and my overall responsibility for church life, administration and organisation.

Church Work ³

Somewhat discursively I have said quite a bit about church work but I need to supplement it slightly.

Preaching at Anerley was satisfying. A considerable number of people engaged with me and what I said, particularly some of the young adults, Mr Tredinnick, the Thompsons, Ray Bannister – listing them is pretty pointless. There was significant discussion about Christianity, its social implication, theology, issues of the day. It was stimulating. Some of the young adults had considerable misgivings about aspects of Christianity and this was troubling some of the adult members (see Mr Tredinnick's long letter to which I refer below). The Bishop of Woolwich had caused quite a stir with his book *Honest to God*, see earlier discussions about this.

The pastoral work I did was somewhat different from that in Wesley

Hall. A considerable amount of it was with elderly, housebound and sick people but none of them lived in the squalor I encountered in Wesley Hall. There was a theological content to much of the pastoral work in which I was engaged, especially with young people. Then there was much that was about personal relationships that had gone wrong – within and beyond the church fellowship. That was demanding as was that with some who were neurotic, over-anxious, obsessive and attention seeking. A pastoral relationship with Roy Webb and his wife Florrie, was quite difficult (Ray became the youth worker). They had three children, the youngest of which was mentally handicapped and required an enormous amount of care. Florrie was determined to bring the child up at home; Ray thought he might have to go into care not least because of the effect upon the family of the disproportionate amount of attention he required. I went to see specialists with them. Much later their differences over the child led sadly to their divorce.

There were some exceptional characters in the congregation. Some I have mentioned. Mr V was a bachelor living just opposite the church. A hairdresser by trade and devoted member of the church and an indefatigable worker: Sunday School, teacher, voluntary janitor. Morning after morning all the year round he was at the church at 5am, cleaning, polishing the wooden floor of the church and school room (he used a ‘swinging bee’ of the kind we used in the army) and attending to a temperamental boiler. From there he went to work. Mr V was tall, lanky with a lovely character. He had had little formal education but he was well read and most articulate. He was in his 60’s, I suppose, when I knew him. In a moment of deep confidence he told me that he was illegitimate and he had found that difficult to live with; he felt unworthy and ashamed. Mr Harold Banks, another elderly bachelor who had looked after his mother until she died (as had Mr Vale) was another Anerley character. He walked with difficulty. A trustee who always arrived late, he never stopped talking, mercifully quiet from the moment he arrived, through the meeting and afterwards would follow me to my car and get his head through the window if he could. Mr Goss, who chaired the Trustees’ meetings said, “The secret is, George, to treat it as background noise.” Harold was a winsome intelligent man, notwithstanding. Mr Dan Florence, a local preacher, was a real cockney who was proud of being a tee-total Methodist preacher, who worked in a brewery and was a union shop steward!

Reg Tredinnick, “Tred”, was an extraordinary saintly man, already mentioned. Over the years we had some deep conversations. We agreed and differed and agreed to differ; we respected each other and liked each

other. After I had moved to Parchmore I received an extraordinary closely typed eleven page letter from him which he started whilst recovering from a heart attack on 24th May and completed on 7th July 1966. It is on file. I treasure it and was deeply moved by it. Tantalisingly, I do not have a copy of my reply, which I know would have been carefully written responding to his points. It shows the depth of his spiritual and theological engagement with the church, its folk, me and my ministry. I feel greatly privileged and unworthy that anyone should take me so seriously and especially that “Tred” should. It reveals much of the otherwise hidden and silent inter-personal interaction of one person with another in church life – one strand in the extensive mishmash of large numbers of such interpersonal engagements that silently suffuse all our interpersonal interactions like a socio-spiritual subconscious, they are the networks, or part of them, of congregational, church and community life.

Penge Economics ⁴

Once again, I was in on the beginnings of economical developments, a contemporary movement in Britain. A large fraternal was formed: several Anglican priests and Salvation officers, a Baptist minister and me, a Methodist ⁵. No Catholics, which was generally the case at the time; Vatican II was still to work out its implications locally. My experience of ecumenical relationships was quite different from all my previous experience and personally painful but a profound learning experience. Theologically and biblically there was a sharp and deep division between the members – a chasm that proved uncrossable: the majority were energetically conservative evangelical, some aggressively so and fundamentalists; a minority of two, the Baptist ministers and I, were not of this persuasion and were considered to be liberal and not born again Christians. The majority gave us a hard time in discussions. Insights with the biblical position held by some of the members and their churches emerge from responses to a booklet we examined, *The Unity We Seek* by John F Davies. A statement prepared by one of the members of the Fraternal, The Rev J Filby, for his Parochial Church Council and accepted by them was highly critical of the booklet on several points. Central to his criticism was that it was disloyal to the scriptures: “The Bible is absolutely clear that there is only one way of salvation – by faith in the substitutionary, atoning death of Christ on the cross for our sins, ...”. He was dismissive of the unity movement claiming that all Evangelical Christians are already One in Christ Jesus.” I made a reasoned response

⁴ 5.3.13

⁵ Some papers I have now come across would indicate that there was a congregational minister and a London City missionary working locally, a layman.

but was unable to get into an open discussion about the issues with him on the Fraternal. (Papers about this including my reference are on file.⁶)

Naughtily, I suppose, one of the responses I made to the accusation that I did not take the scriptures seriously enough was, when invited to lead a Fraternal Bible Study session was to do so on the Greek text of the agreed passage. (I was able to do that then but I can no longer do so.) The only other person who was comfortable with this was the other person they, the majority, considered a biblical renegade, the Baptist Minister. I don't think the gesture achieved anything of a positive nature. Tragically, the Baptist Minister, a man I should think of my age, lost his wife to cancer. The way in which he responded to this was an object lesson in true spirituality. (See notes on file)

An insightful incident occurred through the exchange of pulpits which was an innovation in the area. After much discussions in the Fraternal, we agreed that we would dress for these services as we would normally do in our own churches. So, I wore a cassock and possibly gown and hood. I was planned to preach in the Penge Citadel, a thriving church situated on the street where a market met. Before the service we were under the direction of the Corps "Sergeant Major" – so reminiscent of my army days. After prayers, the Sergeant Major marshalled us and literally marched us into the hall. Involuntarily, in shock, I took a step back, the compact hall had a large gallery which came well forward, it was full as was the ground floor with salvationists in uniform apart for two or three people; say 200 uniformed people at worship all dressed in black; I had not experienced that since my Aldershot and army days and then the colour was khaki. As I was trying to adjust myself to this strange, to me, phenomenon a woman's loud voice rang out in a broad South London accent, "Cor, look what he's wearing!" Touche! By far the most unchristian thing happened at the opening of the New Youth and Community Centre of the Anerley Methodist Church. Over the years I had kept the Fraternal informed of the developments. All the members received a personal invitation to the opening in May 1968. I was led to believe they would be there. Places were allocated. Without apology or explanation to my surprise and embarrassment none of the evangelicals came: I had little doubt they conspired to boycott the event. That hurt not least because I felt it was meant to.

One of the things I learnt was that these evangelicals and fundamentalist

6 Also on file is a Report made on Davies' booklet by the Congregational Group. Penge Congregational Church was man to the mouse and to the best of my recollection was not in the Penge Fraternal. Their approach was quite different.

Christians fell into two groups; the hard, uncompromising and cruel and the tolerant, caring and kind. This realisation came to me mostly clearly through meetings with Filby's (the priest who wrote the report discussed above) successor at St John's. He was evangelical and biblically very conservative, an ex-missionary in Rwanda where he had seen much inhumanity, but he was warm, accepting, loving and kind. An incident comes to mind when we were discussing things standing in his study, Christian love and concern radiated from him, I could sense and feel it. The presence or absence of love and the degree of it when present changes every aspect of interpersonal, intergroup inter-denomination and inter-faith relationships for better or worse. Where there is love, differences lose much of their divisive power, the dynamics of human, religious or spiritual intercourse become more positive and creative. Unity, in purpose, intention and action, becomes possible without uniformity, cultural, religious or doctrinal. This has universal implications. It is a phenomenon experienced in and through terrorism. The importance of Jesus' command that we love one another even as He has loved us, is without measure.

I end this section with an ecumenical anecdote. A long established temperance organisation—The National British Women's Total Abstinence Union—had a local branch which held regular meetings. They were an eclectic inter-denominational group. They invited me to speak at a meeting in March 1963 which I accepted. At the beginning of my address I said that the problems with alcohol was that so many people found drinking it very pleasurable. To illustrate this I told a story about Mr Will Beech, my Auntie Ruth had married him when he was quite an old man. He was a well-to-do pillar of the church – officer, trustee, local preacher, Sunday School superintendent for a very long period and a life-long total abstainer. When he was terminally ill my father and I were helping Auntie Ruth to nurse him. One evening when he was really ill the GP said to my father, "Give him some whisky". My father asked the doctor if he knew about Mr Beech and his life-long total abstinence and how he had preached endlessly about the importance of signing the pledge and being abstinent. "Give him some whisky," the doctor repeated. He did. Mr Beech said, "My word, Edgar, that were good. What were it?" Can I have some more?" Under his breath my father said to him, "You don't know what you've been missing all these years" or was it "Now you know what you've". At this point, or possibly in the middle of it, the secretary stood up in high dudgeon and said, "We asked you here to speak against drink not to recommend it." And inferred she didn't want me to continue. I tried to explain the point I was making to her but I don't think she got it, but somewhat pacified she allowed me to continue and to argue that to counter influence we need

to expose the realities of its attractiveness and its powers to entrap people addictively.

Youth and Community Work, 1962 – 64⁷

First, I present an overview of the youth and community work based on Anerley Methodist Church and then describe and discuss key aspects of it and my reflection fifty years earlier.

Overview

Reconsidering the youth and community work we did during this period I discerned a broad based developmental programmes and structure of which I had not previously been aware of with which we engaged assiduously; but, strange as it may seem and possibly contradictory, we did not have a premeditated overt overall plan to which we worked; we got on with one thing after another. There were two main aspects of what we did. One was to engage vigorously with the well-established ongoing youth work programme. The other was to lay realistic plans of the development and extension of the work in a purpose built youth and community centre, equipped and professionally staffed on the Anerley site which would house the existing work and provide opportunities for new youth and community activities and work. Importantly, these two main aspects were pursued in parallel, the second of these resulted in commissioning one of our own leaders as the full-time youth worker and opening the new centre in May 1966. Working with young people, therefore and building with them and the church for the future were strands of a process.

Similar developments were taking place at the Upper Norwood but with a total rebuild of church and centre (see notes on file).

All this work was made possible through government schemes which were promoting and grant aiding building and staffing youth and community centres in partnership with churches and voluntary organisations. Subsequently, an emphasis on community development emerged. (See chapters 6 & 8 of *The Church & Community Development*.)

Established Church Based Outreach Work

Ongoing work with young people was extensive and flourishing. No longer can I give a detailed description and even less statistics of membership. There was a Christian education programme, youth work with young

people inside and outside the church with the normal range of activities. Additionally, there were two extraordinary outreach programmes. One of these was an annual pantomime staged in the Town Hall to enthusiastic audiences. One of these, written by Roy Webb, who was to secure the first full-time youth leader, was a roaring success. A local newspaper report of it is presented below.

METHODIST PANTO WAS HUGE SUCCESS

IT is not often that one comes across a really original pantomime, one that is simple in story structure, yet owes so little to anything in the past that it becomes virtually a new work. It must have been with some pride, therefore, that Anerley Methodist Youth Club presented "Buzz, the Magic Man" at Anerley Town Hall on Thursday, Friday and Saturday; a show in which, after years of promise and polish, they "came good" at last, in no uncertain fashion.

There are three things children demand from a pantomime—a clear story of good and evil, action and laughs. They got them all in good proportion here.

The show was written by the extremely talented Roy Webb, who also played the name part.

It was everything that a pantomime should be—bright, gay, continuously entertaining, even exciting when it came to it. And there were no concessions to topical or local jokes which all added to the air of plausibility.

All credit to Mr. Webb's dialogue and to the leading players that for two and three-quarter hours, disbelief in the pantomime world of magic, dashing heroes and dames was completely suspended.

The characters have a natural appeal which makes one follow their fortunes with eager interest in a good straight drama.

Buzz himself, a little man, human, yet a servant of the fairy queen, fits no conventional pantomime character.

He darts around the stage as before his name, is scared stiff in the face of danger—yet somehow knows his magic powers, about which he is somewhat vague, will get him out of it—and embarrassed but endearing in his courtship of the tomboy daughter of the village inn-keeper.

All this Mr. Webb handled remarkably fluently. The pathos was never overdone. The comedy stemmed naturally

from the plot, and fitted him as closely as did the different sort of humour written for the soldiers, or the dame.

As pantomime scripts go, this was an extremely careful and well thought out example.

Mr. Webb's rather tearaway humour was kept on a fairly tight rein by producer Nick Tredinnick, so that, between performer and producer, the character was well-nigh perfect. A person, in fact, and not just a clown: we really care what happens to him.

Just as natural and likable was Josie Thornton as Ann, the tomboy. Buzz's first introduction to her is a right hook to the body, followed by a judo throw that lands him flat on his back.

Eventually, however, the falls for him. Again, a character one cares about.

Miss Thornton also deserves warm congratulations for the costumes, all of which she designed and made herself, and especially for the dazzling principal boy's costume for the final scene.

Not surprising under the circumstances that such past stalwarts as Janet Tredinnick—principal boy—and Roger Leeson, again the dame, were put almost in the shade, although both were perhaps better than ever.

Each showed good vocal control, both in their dialogue and songs, and used the stage well.

Janet Tredinnick, apart from her lack of height, makes an ideal principal boy, finding a

nice balance between feminine appeal and chirpy heroism. Roger Leeson's Mrs. Goosegog was never less than on the ball, and never more so than in the superbly comic duet with Mr. Goosegog (Brian Andrews).

Mention should also be made of Roger Ward and David Panther, as the pusillanimous royal guards. Both hammed it up with great aplomb, without ever straying outside the confines of their characters.

Julie Smith, although her singing was a little shaky, was a sweet princess, who hid just enough to do, and contrasted nicely with her principal boy.

The action, which includes the knockabout comedy, some of which was quite riotous, was never less than efficient.

Even the final sword-fight was quite good. Duns in local pantomime are usually very pallid affairs, but the way in which here Robin sent the villainous Yellowfist's sword twirling across the stage must have given the producer great satisfaction.

The faults were few and small. Some of the minor parts were inevitably too quiet—Andrew Tredinnick's king, as pale as his make-up—and some singers dropped their voices completely at the end of a song instead of ending on a respectable note.

And I did think King Yellowfist might have had yellow feet.

But these are small carp at what was a marvellous show. The children loved it. About 700 people were expected to have seen the four performances and one feels it could be bestowed to an even wider audience.

I am not normally given to "rave" reviews, but in nearly six years of local dramatic criticism, I can't recall ever having been so enthusiastic about anything.

D.Q.

CAST

Buzz, Roy Webb; Robin, Janet Tredinnick; Ann, Josie Thornton; Princess, Julie Smith; King Yellowfist, Colin Buchanan; Mrs. Goosegog, Roger Leeson; Mr. Goosegog, Brian Andrews; Podre, Roger Ward; Duns, David Panther; King of Jov, Andrew Tredinnick; Queen of Jov, Margaret Turner; Carl, Tony Attree; Frie, Peter Davies; chamberlain, John Tucker; Snowy, Valerie Threlkley; milkmaid, Susan Aylett; village girl, Hilary Day; Ellen, Rosecroft; school teacher, Stella Newport.



Not all were as well received as this was; one was described by the same reporter as, 'Methodist Panto Disappoints'. Presentation, acting and scenery were all of a high standard normally. Some of those involved were church members, others not. They worked well together and bonded into some lifelong friendships.

A quite different programme was the Monday Night Fellowship. It was structured as a service of worship would be with hymns, bible readings, prayers and a sermon-cum-address. Amazingly, it attracted (or was attendance a condition of membership of the open club?) thirty of forty young people, most of whom had no affiliation to or experience of church life and worship whatsoever. The structure was that of a Methodist service as was the content but the atmosphere was entirely different: it lacked reverence except for the odd moment. I led or spoke at these fellowship meetings often; I went apprehensively; how much of value I communicated I do not know but the gospel was preached and some valuable contacts made.

Quite frequently the leader, Mrs Heather Smith had to send people out

of the meeting for disturbing behaviour. On one occasion I remember following a girl out who had been extraordinarily disruptive. As I remember it, there was a patio outside the side hall where the fellowship met. It had a rail and looked down on the long lawn which stretched down to the road. We stood leaning over the rail, it was almost like being on the deck of a ship. For some time she railed (sorry to pun!) against the club, Mrs S, the Church, society... using the most obscene language and imagery and vulgar expletives. Suddenly she stopped, turned towards us, looked me in the eye for the first time and said in a broad South London accent with a few vulgar terms, “You’re a vicar aren’t you? Why didn’t you tell me to stop cursing?” I explained I was a minister and that I wanted to hear what she had to say and hopefully have a conversation about it. Then I asked her a question. “If I had told you to stop cursing would you have been able to express yourself or would you have continued talking to me?” “No,” she said and we had a conversation – not without her resorting to some obscenities, but we did talk to each other.

I thought it was an amazing achievement that the leaders and some of the church members, old and young, had bridged the enormous gulf that separated some of those young people from us and us from them and had made some impression and gained much respect. Even though I came from a working class background these young people represented a culture alien to me and with which I had had limited contact in the foundry, the army and my native Lancashire. I believed that it was a vital part of the church’s mission to do all it could to minister to such people.

A New Complex⁸

I do not know where the idea for a new centre came from. My hunch is that Terry Walton probably sowed the seed. He was a towering figure in church youth work in Upper Norwood and throughout London Methodism and the S. E. District particularly through MAYC. There is a reference in my file to a conference about it in Anerley in, I think, September 1962, i.e. at the beginning of my ministry of which I have no recollection! Whatever the origins might have been, from an early stage in my ministry the building of a youth centre was a development Anerley Church had accepted and endorsed, it was described with varying degrees of enthusiasm and excitement. I did not have to persuade people about it they were locked into the how of it, not should we?

Here I limit myself to highlighting significant aspects of the scheme.

Re-siting the large hut

A large extensively used hut, ex-army I believe, probably of the kind used as a barrack, was on the site on which the new centre was to be built. Not wishing to lose this valuable facility and to keep to the budget, the church decided to reposition it themselves through voluntary labour largely. An enormous undertaking into which youth club leaders and members threw themselves energetically as I did too. A new site was prepared which involved a lot of digging and removal of rubble and soil – all by hand, there were no “diggers”; the foundations were laid I think by contractors plus voluntary labour; the hut taken down and rebuilt on the new site. Some undertaking which saved the hut and money and bonded the people even more deeply to each other and to the project.

Stone Dedication

At a midweek service, a parade service, on 16th December 1964, two stones were dedicated by Miss Alice Kelsey: one from the old Anerley Methodist Church⁹ which was bombed during the war; and the other from the original Crystal Palace Building. Stones which were richly symbolic: rejected by war and fire; reclaimed in peace for Christ for rebuilding (prior to the dedication I had read I Corinthians 3:11 and I Peter 2:4-10); representative of church and the enormous progress celebrated by the Great Exhibition. Then we sang Samuel Johnson’s great hymn, “City of God how broad and far/outspread thy walls sublime ...”. Miss Kelsey, a retired headmistress, who had been one of the people who had kept the society together during the war when they worshipped in the “hut”. (See below. My notes of service on file.)

Home grown leadership: full-time, professional and voluntary trained

From the outset it was understood that competent leadership was essential for the success of the development scheme; buildings of themselves cannot promote development, how they are used is of cardinal importance. (Obvious as this may seem, ever and again since then I have worked with people who, proceeding on the belief that new churches and

9 A large impressive Wesleyan Church situated in front of the present church. Older members could remember carriages bringing affluent members to working services which were well attended. Servants had to go in the balcony but when they did come, “their” service was the one in the evening. (How timings have changed.) But that was when the neighbourhood was quite different.

premises would automatically, magically, promote change for the better, have paid insufficient attention to staffing. Indeed often they have resisted suggestions that they should do so seeing that as something to be considered when the buildings were up and available. The Government, aware of the importance of good leaders and the shortage of trained and qualified youth and community workers had initiated a one-year training scheme. Within the backing of the church, Roy Webb, went forward into this training during



A STONE from the old Anerley Methodist Church, which was bombed during the war, and another from the original Crystal Palace building were dedicated on Wednesday of last week at Anerley Methodist Church for the foundations of the church's new youth centre.

The stones were dedicated by Miss Alice Kelsey, a member of a well-known Anerley family and former headmistress in the area, who is pictured above.

The ceremony, which took

place in the church, was conducted by the Minister, the Rev. George Lovell, and attended by the Mayor and Mayoress, Ald. and Mrs. H. T. Parkin, youth officers, councillors, the London architect, Mr. Edward D. Mills, who is also the Methodist circuit steward for the area, and uniformed parades of the church scouts and Girls' Life Brigade.

Work on the centre, which is in the form of an extension to the present church buildings, began about two months ago.

Stone Dedication, 16th December 1964

1965-66 (see below). Roy was duly appointed the first full-time worker at Anerley and commissioned at a service of worship at Anerley on 8th May 1966 (the notes of the service I wrote and led are on file). Also several senior members of the youth club attended a part-time course run by the L.A. to train voluntary youth workers.

To train as a youth club leader



MR. ROY WEBB

FEW young wives would be overjoyed to hear that in just over a month's time her husband was giving up his job and leaving her and the children for a year, but Mrs. F. Webb's reaction was to say that it was "marvellous."

The reason is that her husband, 31-year-old Roy, of 61, Hirkwood-road, Beckenham, is going to Leicester on May 3 for a year-long course at the National College for Training Youth Leaders.

Mr. Webb, with the help of his wife, organises the youth club at Anerley Methodist Church and while he is on the course, Mrs. Webb will be running the club on her own.

Members of the Anerley Methodist Church are giving Mr. Webb full encouragement. The Rev. G. Lovell told the *Journal* this week that his venture was looked on with admiration by the Church and

said "the congregation are all proud of him."

Recently, Mr. Webb, who passed his examinations at school, was seen studying English in preparation for the course. Psychology, social study and health work are all included, and extra facilities are provided for sport and outdoor activities.

On returning from the leadership course at the end of March next year, Mr. Webb will be qualified to take part in youth activities on a national scale, but, what he hopes to do is come back to Anerley and find a new youth centre where new stands the small club hall.

He will then be able to organise club activities five nights a week and expand the range of subjects available to members. He will be the first full-time leader the club has had.

He and his wife lived in Peckham until three years ago and have had life-long associations with Anerley Methodist Church. They both progressed through the various departments of the Sunday school

and Mr. Webb was a member of the 16th Beckenham Scout unit as National Rover. Then 18 years ago he became assistant youth leader at the club.

Now he leaves his position as a stockbroker's clerk with no regrets.

On completing the course, Mrs. Webb said, her husband will continue with his studies with a view to taking up other social work when he is too old for youth club activities.

Mr. and Mrs. Webb's two sons, aged nine and four and their daughter, aged seven, will be well looked after by one of the assistant youth leaders while Mrs. Webb is away running the club throughout the next year.

What I need to say here is that we aspired to be professional in our approach to staffing the work of the centre: a full-time professional worker and professional trained voluntary amateurs. We knew that commitment, enthusiasm, being "good with young people, Christian and altruistic motivation – necessary as all these attributes are – they are no substitute for having the requisite skills and theoretical/theological bases which come through training, study and reflective experience and practice.)

The Management Committee¹⁰

Careful consideration was given by church leaders and trustees to the kind of management committee that would best serve the running of the new centre and the interest of the church and the local community. From the outset it was agreed that it could be a great advantage to have some members of the committee who would properly represent the interests of the community and be seen to do so by people not associated with the church. In turn this would enable them to represent the church and the centre to those in the neighbourhood. Such people would be go-betweens church and the secular society. And there were ideas about the kind of

people that would do just that. The sticking point in the discussion was on the balance between church and non-church committee members. Whilst the church leaders and trustees wanted secular representations, they were understandably fearful of “outsiders” taking over and secularising the approach of the committee and the work of the centre. To safeguard the church against such an eventuality they proposed that the written constitution of the committee should require that there should be more church than community members (of itself this would not necessarily defend their interest; there could perchance, be more community members than church members present at a meeting). As we discussed this and ways of safeguarding though the requirement being that the majority voting for something should be Christians, it became clear that thorough going measures to ensure their fears were not realised would be divisive and imply that non-church members were not trusted. Eventually it was agreed not to organise for a church majority but for an all-round representative responsible committee committed to the purposes the church had for the centre. Within that understanding a committee was formed which had representatives for the church, the centre and the local community. Amongst the latter were a Jewish local doctor, a GP, specialising in community and athletic medicine, the headmaster of the approved school, a local community policeman. And, of course, some of the church people were widely experienced – Roy Bannister, the head of a local school, Reg Tredinnick, a prison welfare officer. I cannot recall what the numerical balance was, but I do remember what an incredibly able committee was formed. An incident in one of the meetings that I chaired was an object lesson to us all. Some of the church members proposed a particular course of action – I can’t for the life of me remember what—on which they were quite keen. After some discussion, one or two of the non-church members said, “You can’t do that!” When the church people asked why not, the non-church people replied, “Because you are Christians and this is a church centre.” This rebuke and salutary lesson was well received and learned by the church, it was an important corrective to the earlier discussion: Christians in general and church people in particular have no monopoly on moral insights and what is good; people of other faiths and none can keep us on track; we need secular and other religious insights as well as those we have from our faith; openness and trust help us to access them.

Finances and the London Mission

Remodelling the church and building and equipping the centre cost c£16,000 of which the local church had to raise £3,000. Quite large sums of money at the time. Government and Methodist commissions and Rank

Trust grants covered most of it. Negotiating these involved much work on behalf of church officers and me. Two anecdotes stay with me.

Early in my ministry I had to go and see the Head of the London Mission, The Rev Dr Irvonwy Morgan who could be brusque, unpredictable, rude and difficult. He was somewhat autocratic and controlled large sums of money much of which was remuneration for war damage to churches. Primarily my appointment was about money for a new boiler for Wesley Hall. (Both churches were in the London Mission area). I had local permission to raise the question of financial help for Anerley's scheme. Successfully concluding the boiler business and gained a promise of a grant of £850 which delighted the W.H. Trustees, I tentatively asked him if I could raise the question of Anerley's project. Grumpily, he agreed. I told him about the work and the plans for the future. Brusquely and somewhat bad temperedly he ordered me, "Come over here" and took me to a very large wall map of Greater London. "Where's that?" he said. "Epsom," I replied. "You know about the Methodist Church there, do you?" "Yes, it is bursting at the seams and Leonard Barnett is having an incredible ministry there." (Leonard Barnett was a national figure through his work with young people.) "It is like that because wave after wave of people have moved out of the city centre and continues to do so. They could suffer from people moving further out. The best thing to do about places like Wesley Hall and Anerley is to let them die a quiet death." I was astounded and angry and incensed and offended that he had sworn several times. Throwing all caution to the wind I exploded "Dr Morgan, I am only a few years out of college where I was taught to give myself unreservedly to the work and mission of the church wherever I was placed and however difficult it might be. And I committed myself to that at my Ordination three years ago. You are telling me to go back on all that in a situation where some incredible work is going on and the possibilities are enormous even though realising them is going to be tough. I am not going to do that. I am committed to them and their plans for the future. Moreover, I am excited by the developments and experiments in urban mission, experimental education in youth and community work, government reports on social services and the place of that church. Things happening here and in New York. This is where we need to be even more than Epsom." Or, words to that effect. I really was on fire. "Sit down," he said. I waited for another lecture and to be put in my place. Nothing of the sort. In a very different voice, much more amicable, to my amazement he said, "I'll find £2,500." That was it. It was not until later that he had deliberately wound me up to test me out and to discover whether or not I was committed.

The second story is about an embarrassingly humorous incident. Ray Smith and I were showing two local government officials around the premises on an assessment visit relating to our application for grant aid towards the building project. At a juncture when we were trying to persuade them that Anerley had a very promising future we opened a door on a small store room to see right in front of us on a discarded sign pointing to Anerley Methodist Church pointing downwards! Wry smiles all round as we hastily closed the door!

Building

Mr Edward D Mills, one of the circuit stewards, was the architect as he was of Upper Norwood Church youth and community centre and many other new churches. The building work took about two years, 1964-66, and was well reputed locally and in the *Methodist Recorder*. (See some reports I found on file in Appendix VI.) There is little more that I feel I have to add to his bold statement except, that is, as the building work took over two years, much of my ministry at Anerley was on or off a building site and for a time we worshipped in the side room.

Dedication of the Remodelled Church and the New Youth & Community Centre

This was a most impressive and moving occasion which took place on 21st May 1966 in the presence of a very large gathering of people. Whilst there was still work to be done and some money to be raised to all intents and purposes the church and centre were up and resuming with a new full-time youth leader/worker – the first in the history of that church. The order of service and the report presented as Appendix VII gives some idea of the nature and scale of the occasion. For so many of us it was a vision translated into a practical reality.

Two disappointments I feel I must mention. First, the Rev Douglas S Hubery, was prevented by illness from attending and preaching the sermon. The Rev Donald Henry deputised for him and served us well. I was deeply disappointed that Douglas could not be there: he was such an important influence in the development of my ministry as I have already indicated and he would have had a prophetic word to say but it was not to be.

The other disappointment was a bitter one. To a man, the evangelical wing of the Fraternal boycotted the event; having indicated they would be present, places had been allocated for them. No apologies or explanations were given. I can only say it was an act of betrayal which we did not

disclose, indeed we disguised it as best we could.

Notwithstanding, it was an outstanding day in the life of Anerley Church and my ministry to which I thank the people and God.

I got so carried away that I forgot to include a note about the openers that I had so looked forward to writing. The leaders/trustees decided to go for ordinary people, unsung heroes not celebrities, to open that church. Saints of God who worked faithfully and tirelessly quietly behind the scenes at the countless mundane jobs that keep church life going smoothly. They were George Vale, Mrs Mantle and Miss Munday (appropriately named). I was delighted they did so. Equally I was delighted that they decided to ask a 14 year old boy, Ernie Garrard, who came from a poor un-church going home to open the centre. Ernie perfectly represented a community constituency we wished to serve.

Anerley Methodist Church

JASMINE GROVE, S.E.20

Minister:

THE REV. GEORGE LOVELL, *B.D.*

The Order

FOR THE

Service of Dedication

OF THE

Remodelled Church

AND

The New Youth and Community Centre

ON

SATURDAY, 21st MAY, 1966

AT

3.30 p.m.

in the presence of

The Deputy Mayor and Mayoress of

The London Borough of Bromley

(Alderman R. N. Allen and Mrs. B. J. Finnie)

and Representatives of other Churches and Organisations

THE RE-OPENING OF THE CHURCH

The Congregation being assembled within the Church, the Opener, Architect, Ministers and others shall gather at the main doors of the Church. The Superintendent of the Circuit (The Rev. Douglas A. Wollin, *M.A.*) shall knock three times upon the doors and say in a loud voice:

Open to me the gates of righteousness; I will go into them,
and I will praise the Lord.

The Architect (Edward D. Mills, Esq., *C.B.E., F.R.I.B.A., M.S.I.A.*) shall then say to the Opener:

In the name of God the Father, and on behalf of the Trustees, I invite you to open these doors for the Re-dedication Service of Anerley Methodist Church.

The Opener (Mr. George W. Vale, assisted by Mrs. W. Mantle and Miss M. Munday) shall then say:

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and on behalf of the Methodist Church, I open these doors in gratitude and faith, and ask that the church may be re-dedicated to the glory of God.

When the doors have been opened the Superintendent of the Circuit shall say:

Peace be to this house and to all who worship in it. In the name of the Holy Spirit, we will now enter this Church and give ourselves in humility and reverence to the worship and service of Almighty God.

O come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker. For he is our God; and we are the people of this pasture, and the sheep of His hand.

Up and Running

During the final three months of my ministry in the circuit it was with much joy and a sense of achievement that I experienced the centre up and running. A report in the Methodist Recorder of the dedication and of the centre in action gives a picture of what was going on at the end of 1966 (issue from 19th January 1967). This is an appropriate point at which to end this saga.



Leader of Anerley youth club, Roy Webb, teaches members the basic rules of the art of fencing.

Anerley Promotes All Interests

An invitation was given to the Methodist Recorder to attend the rededication of Anerley church in the Rydenham and Forest Hill circuit, and the opening of a Youth and Community Centre last May. As it was not possible to accept the invitation, John Hay recently visited the church in Jasmine Grove, on a youth night and was warmly welcomed by the minister, the Rev. H. Gordon Lenniton. Then in to the vestry with a long-standing member and society steward, Mr. A. H. Tredennick, to learn a little of the history of Anerley which has had its ups and downs as have most societies.

After starting in a private house its first church in Jasmine Grove was opened in 1803.

This building was used for worship for about twenty years, and then a larger church was built. Unfortunately this new building disappeared during the war, and the original building was rendered unsafe by bombing, so the society had to move into a local school for services, and then to a wooden hut until it could return to its restored original church in 1950.

As Anerley celebrated its centenary in 1960, it was decided to begin a second century with a bold plan of missionary work among the new type of residents in the area, and so, with the help of Kent County Council, the Rank Trust and other well-wishers, and the support and hard work of numerous other friends, the community centre was built.

Day-time activities of the centre include a Darts and Jean Club and a WF Group, but the main work lies in the field of youth. Mr. Roy Webb, who is the full-time youth leader, is a product of Anerley's long tradition of youth work. Speaking about the club programme he said it was not an "activity" club and only introduced members to activities, karate-do, fencing, etc. If a member showed a real interest in any particular activity, he would be directed to a place where it was taught more fully. Mr. Webb gives members what he calls a taster.

There is, all the same, quite a lot going on during the week, with the Disco, where records are played loud and long, which is run as a separate unit with four lads collecting side; pantomime rehearsals — members themselves were building lights and producing scenery for what was just a bare shell of a stage; Methodist Teen Club Night, an

evening run on the lines of the MAYC club (the first of the club activities are run as an open club, i.e. no pressure is brought to bear on members who do not attend church).

On Sunday evenings there is what is called Coffee-lar Night where members can meet their friends for a chat and refreshments and, maybe, a game of table tennis or snooker. The new venture is taking a little time to catch on as non-church going members usually go to the pictures or watch TV on Sunday evenings.

Roy Webb said that if he was asked to say what he was trying to achieve in his work at Anerley, his answer would be to set an example of the Christian way of life, and help members work out the problems in an informal atmosphere, with any help they might require readily available from his staff or himself.

Critical Aspects of the Unfolding Project

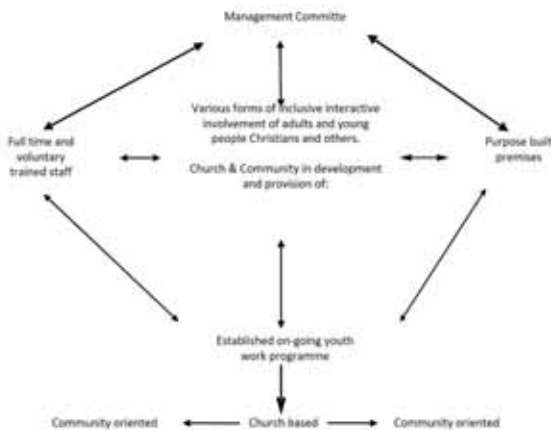
Looking back at this programme of youth and community work at Anerley after almost 50 years dedicated to church and community development, I am amazed at the way in which we went about it untrained as we were in this field. Concurrently we worked at:

- providing purpose built premises for the work;
- trained staff to do the work;
- a committee capable of managing it;
- developing established youth work.

The initiative and ultimate responsibility was with the church. But the working “we” was adult and young people, people in the church, in the clubs and other organisations, in the community and included Christians and non-Christians, church and non-church goers. Consequently, it was an inclusive broad based work force and involvement. It was not done exclusively by the church and adults for young people and that community but inclusively by the church and adults with young people and the community and representatives of it. Whilst it was not as thoroughgoing as this might suggest in all its messiness there were unmistakable elements present in the attitude, approach and action taken by the church by touch and feel rather than design. Undoubtedly it was both church based and community oriented.

As I said earlier, this design was not premeditated: it was not seen prospectively, it has been discerned retrospectively. How we came to pursue it is a mystery if not a miracle to me – by intuition? inspiration? divine

Critical aspects of the unfolding of the Youth and Community Project and Premises



guidance? down to earth common sense? other work and professional experience? I know not. However that might be, it was a soundly based design. What possibly was lacking was a better thought out theology for the work. We first thought it was a proper Christian response to human need.

I attempt to model the design below of the unfolding of this religious and secular project.

The Centenary, 1965

The centenary was celebrated in great style with a whole series of services, reunions and events. (See the account on the Internet and the papers on file.)

To catch something of my mood and possibly that of the church as we approached the centenary I can do no better than quote a letter that I wrote for a pamphlet about it which I do below. It is clear from this letter and that the developments were seen as a significant part of our planning of that second century of the life of Anerley Methodist Church by transforming it from a church to a church youth and community centre.

My Dear Friends.

This is a momentous year in the history of Anerley Methodist Church and I am greatly privileged to be your minister at this time. Ours is the double joy of celebrating a glorious centre of history and tradition and planning for the future. We have made careful preparations for both. This leaflet gives details of our centenary celebrations. We have been fortunate in obtaining the services of outstanding people to lead our centenary worship. Please come and share these celebrations with us.

For the future we have planned and schemed and prayed. It is our intention to build a youth and community centre during this year and to alter the internal structure of the church. This will cost £15,250; we need to raise some £3,000. Also we were going to appoint a full time youth leader. And so we are celebrating history by making history. Important as this is, the renovation of the material structure of God's house and the building of auxiliary premises must never be a substitute for, or a deflection from, the real work of God's church. This is to repair, rebuild and extend the spiritual structure of God's church in our contemporary society. All our effort is directed by this motive. So help us God, so help us friends.

Anniversaries always excite the emotions. On such occasions we look backwards and forwards from the pinnacle of the present. Our retrospect must not be over charged with emotion. Our vision of the future must be neither naively pessimistic nor sublimely optimistic. Ours is a call to realism

by the greatest Realist of all, Jesus Christ. In Him that present is ours, as is the link between what has been and what is to be.

The second century of our history will take us in to the third millennium of the Christian era – what a thrilling thought, what a great challenge. What an opportunity! In response let us give our time and money freely in the gigantic task which lies immediately before us.

God bless the second century of Anerley Methodist Church's history.

Yours very sincerely,
George Lovell.

Unease

Notwithstanding all that I have said in the previous sections about the development of this exciting project, the experience had left me with two disturbing feelings: I had not the skills for this work; the local people did not own it as deeply and profoundly as required to secure it against vagaries and changes in approach of future ministers. (These concerns applied equally to the work in Wesley Hall.) Paying serious attention to these concerns served me well in relation to my future ministry in Parchmore and beyond – as did, of course, the experience I had gained. It took me to Reg Batten and the non-directive approach. This met the first concern beyond my expectations and ameliorated the second.

The second concern grew out of my experience in Carmarthen where my successor did not build as he said he would on the house groups we had pioneered, in fact he grossly neglected. Sadly my fears were well-founded. Enormous care was taken to find someone to succeed me in Wesley Hall and Anerley experienced in and committed to youth and community work and to the developments in Wesley Hall and Anerley. There was general agreement that the Circuit Stewards had found such a person but it proved to be otherwise.

Circuit Ministry: Youth Work

Sister Linda Castle (Wesley Deaconess, full time youth worker at Upper Norwood) and I inaugurated a programme of youth work which brought together young people across the Circuit in various activities. Our partnership was rewarding and satisfying; we got on very well and became soul friends; we brought different gifts; skills and experience which were complementary; Linda was older than me; our philosophy about the work, our approaches to it and beliefs about it were in harmony. We had the full

backing of the ministerial staff especially the Superintendent, Rev Walter Goss, and the Circuit Youth Council. We gathered a team of people to work with us.

As I recall it there were three main aspects to the programme: MAYC national weekend; Circuit Youth Weekends; Circuit Youth meetings. MAYC weekends were supported by young people who attended in groups and entertained people overnight when the event was in London.

There were three circuit weekends; 1963, 64 & 65.¹¹ The 1963 Circuit Youth weekend was a non-residential event held at Wesley Hall Downham on a Saturday and Sunday in October and led by four Richmond College students. Like all the weekends, the programme included discussion, social entertainment, fellowship and worship. It attracted a large number of enthusiastic young people. Discussions were on serious subjects and the contributions were extremely good. The Rev Walter Goss attended a session on the Saturday afternoon. He was quite moved by what he heard and saw and pressed a 10/- note in my hand as a significant contribution to the costs. The 1964 and 65 weekends were at a Conference Centre, The Leys Guest House, at Leigh-on-Sea. The 1965 one was an 'ambition' and was led by Rev Tom Davies, a friend of mine from Richmond and South Wales. The 1966 one was about 'youth in community' and was led by a colleague in youth work, Mr. Bernard Handover, Youth training Officer for the Methodist Church in Bristol. They were all memorable events which drew people together from all the Churches in the Circuit. The other aspect of the programme was the Circuit Youth Meetings on Sunday evenings. These were great exciting and challenging events which attracted large numbers of young people, forty or fifty if not more. I chaired them. Normally we had a set topic which someone introduced and then it was opened up to debate in the large group – I do not recall us going into sub-groups. These debates were of a high standard, there were serious contributions expressed passionately – there was of course much humour. Subsequently, several young people told me that it was in these youth gatherings that they first learnt the art of public speaking. One was a very bright young man, John Green, who went on to participate in MAYC Congresses, and speaking in debates where thousands were present (see below).

This is a very sparse and inadequate account of deeply satisfying and fulfilling events which had several outcomes: some young people came to faith or were secured/established in it; they gained a wider and deeper

¹¹ There are ad hoc notes of these weekends on file.

understanding of the Methodist Church and Christianity; they met people they would not otherwise have done and several found wives and husbands; we got to know each other in ways we would not otherwise have done. Several married couples are still in touch – couples who would not have met without this youth work programme.

Circuit Ministry: Three Days of Christian Discovery, An Educative Project¹²

As experienced and remembered this was an absorbing, exciting and fulfilling project, certainly for me but I think for all involved. Soon after the event it was written up and reports of it published which means I do not have to describe it here. The one above was written by Dorothy Household and published in the *Methodist Recorder* (Dorothy was one of the Key leaders; the one on this page was by a local journalist and the fuller one in Appendix VIII I wrote. The latter was the basis of an article in an MYD Holiday Courses Booklet. (Also, there are some background papers on file).

This project was an imaginative exercise in experimental education and evangelization set in a prayerful context and a holiday atmosphere with outings and activities, secular and religious. Re-reading Dorothy's report I am very interested to see that I challenged the young people to become 'apprentices of Jesus Christ' (3rd para from the end) that fitted so well with the workshops used during the conference. I was moved that so many responded and that we gave them further instruction before allowing them to sign anything (penultimate page of my report).



Two other things that stay with me. Local helpers papered the floor of a sizeable room with unused newsprint and drew on it outline map of Palestine. Young people could walk from one Biblical place to another and place their models of towns in this exercise in Bible Geography, Jesus' stomping ground. The other thing is that we had three of the most

scorchingly hot days I have experienced in England!

Apparently, according to Dorothy's report we hoped to set out on a similar venture the following year – given the success of this one I feel sure we did but I have no recollection of any future courses.

METHODIST RECORDER

September 17, 1964

Page Eight Focus on Sunday School

Hurst Green Experiment

DO you think that Christian parents should compel their children to attend Sunday school? 'Do you say grace at meal-times?' 'Where should children learn to pray, at home or in church?'

Christians living in Hurst Green, a modern township set in the rural beauty of the Kent-Surrey border, had to be ready with their answers to these and many other questions when young people, equipped with tape-recorders, arrived on their doorsteps one sunny evening recently, writes Dorothy Houshold.

The "reporters" were boys and girls between eleven and fourteen years of age. Twenty-eight of them travelled by coach each morning from their homes in the Sydenham and Forest Hill reit to take part in a three-day "Inter-Holiday Conference" arranged and led by the Rev. George Lovell and Sister Linda Little, chairman and secretary of the circuit youth council. The Rev. Alan Broadbent, minister of the new church at Hurst Green, also shared in the leadership, and four youth workers from the London churches assisted as group-leaders.

'Interview' Research

The boys and girls had a purpose to discover for themselves, 'what it means to be a Christian Disciple in 1964'. Their methods of research were varied and interesting. As well as interviewing "ordinary" Christians, they visited some interesting specialised work – the garden of a settlement for lonely people; the principal of a school for children in need of speech therapy; and a newly-ill branch of the National Children's Home. After Bible study and discussion, they inscribed their findings into diaries, pictures, and friezes. For instance, the Christian home was clean and orderly, the garden was wide and open, and the door was wide open to welcome to the stranger. In this free and friendly atmosphere, it was easy and natural for the leaders to introduce to separate groups of boys and girls the Christian approach to sex, and to discuss problems with them.

Exploring Palestine

One day was spent exploring Biblical Palestine. On a giant map, which covered the entire floor of the church hall, the ancient cities took shape as cardboard boxes were transformed into houses, synagogues, the walls of Jericho, and the Temple itself. Fishing boats sailed on Galilee and Saul set out for Damascus. The story of the Good Samaritan was enacted on the actual road between Jerusalem and Jericho.

Just in case insufficient opportunity had been provided, for using any surplus energy, afternoons were spent hiking, competing in team games and athletics, visiting a neighbouring farm, and picnicking. These energetic pursuits gave the children extraordinarily good appetites, but these were

matched by the wonderful catering of the Hurst Green people.

Challenge To Apprenticeship

And so, on the third evening, the fun, the fellowship, the activity, and the exchange of ideas drew to a fitting close. The young people, with their leaders, gathered in the church for a service which included the hymns, prayers, and readings which they had themselves chosen.

In his talk, Mr. Lovell asked them to consider all that they had learned during their three days together, and he challenged them to become 'apprentices of Jesus Christ', so that, from Him, they might 'learn

how to live.' To enter upon this apprenticeship, and to stick at it, required courage and 'guts.' There was no false glamour: the hardness of the way was clearly presented.

Eleven young people remained at the end of the service and signed the Disciples' Roll, while four others took away decision cards to think and talk further about it. Their decision has been made known to those responsible for them in their home churches.

Hurst Green 1964 was an experiment. All those who were involved, whether young or older, will remember it as a vital Christian experience. We hope to set out on a similar adventure next summer.

Youngsters in a new church venture

A GROUP of boys and girls from Methodist Churches in the Sydenham and Forest Hill circuit—including Anerley and Wesley Hall, Sydenham—took part in an unusual and successful venture last week.

Under the leadership of circuit ministers and Church workers, they travelled daily to Hurst Green, Surrey, for three days to "discover something about Christianity for themselves" through personal interviews, which were tape-recorded, visits to a hospital and old people's home, a school for deaf children and Biblical research.

The youngsters were aged between 11 and 14, and a large number of them were from Anerley and Wesley Hall.

The Rev. George Lovell, minister of Anerley and Wesley Hall Churches, told the *Journal* this week that the venture had been worthwhile, and had been enthusiastically received by the youngsters.

During the venture the boys and girls were separated, and each group were given talks on sex and sex morality. Mr. Lovell said that for many of

them, it was the first time that they had ever been addressed on the subject.

One of the main purposes of the interviewing was for the youngsters to find out the life of an "average Christian" at home. They prepared a list of set questions, and their conversations were impromptu ones.

They were afterwards able to express the results of their conversations through drawings and the making of models.

In addition to Mr. Lovell, other leaders included Sister Linda Castle, the Rev. A. Broadbent, Hurst Green Methodist minister, Mrs. J. Wilkinson, Mr. G. Scarlett, Miss D. Household and Miss L. Mercer.

The event was organised by the Circuit Youth Council, who will shortly discuss the implications of the event.

While at Hurst Green, the children also took part in services and social activities



A group photograph taken during the three-day event at Hurst Green, in which 27 young people set out to discover something about practical Christianity for themselves. The event was organised by the Youth Council of the Sydenham and Forest Hill Methodist Circuit.

BECKENHAM JOURNAL. 4th September 1964.

District Ministry¹³

It must have been in my second year in the Circuit and District that I was appointed to District Youth Secretary. This was an enormous challenge because the District had an outstanding reputation throughout the Connexion for its work with children and young people much of which was pioneering. It had some extraordinary lay people who were well known national figures.¹⁴ Consequently, there was much going on right across the District: MAYC was thriving and had its own annual congress attended by 300 plus young people (see report on file); there was a prestigious music festival for all ages; a vast amount of Christian education through Sunday Schools and junior churches in every circuit.

Several secretaries were responsible for sub-sections of the overall programme. My responsibilities involved me in a lot of travel (London S.E. District was geographically large, evening meetings in Maidstone and Ashford would mean arriving home in the early hours of the morning); behind the scenes meetings and policy groups; reporting to Synod; District residential conferences for District secretaries with the Chairman; representing the District at functions and congresses; and of course, correspondence. Speaking at to large gatherings I found taxing and unnerving but I thrived on working with groups.

Earlier, I described the work I initiated with the other secretaries. Today, I suppose it would be described as a ‘think tank’.

But it was also a support group for the secretaries and wives who had separate sessions and a time for food, fun and fellowship. We did some serious reflective and analytical thinking about educational and youth work praxis and theology. I do not know where I got the idea from but it was a precursor of so much of my later ministry work. Certainly it helped us to grapple with so much new thinking about Christian education, religious development of children, group work, and open youth work.

An anecdote I cannot resist. One of the problems with which we grappled long and hard was over the introduction of modern youth music into the

¹³ 8.1.13

¹⁴ Names that come to me: Sheila Preddy (lovely, young, gifted head teacher from Dartford, she brought Marie Dove to see me who later came to Alwoodley to minister. Soon afterwards she died suddenly and tragically of a brain hemorrhage); Muriel Gentry, Beatrice Rabbage; Pauline Webb, her father was minister in Dartford at an earlier stage; Terry Walton, of course and Gordon??

official programme of the music festival, which had a classical and religious format. Those who had organized it for years held firmly to that kind of a model and felt very strongly that ‘pop music’ was degrading and offending and that its introduction would seriously compromise their standards. Terry Walton and I attended a meeting of the Festival Committee one evening in Maidstone. The meeting went on for hours. Eventually, minor concessions were made, but it was trying. As we got into my car, I remember saying, ‘I feel like getting drunk to drown the memory’, so frustrated I had become, Terry made me of his routine responses, ‘I’ll take you for a good meal George’. We went for something to eat. Part way through the meal Terry started to dig feverishly in first one pocket and another to find some money (the top outside pocket of his jacket was a place he kept notes). I have seen him go through this routine so often with the same result – no money! I had to pay! I write this with some nostalgia and affection. They were great days so full of energy, anticipation and excitement.

Connexional Ministry

Being a district youth secretary significantly extended my connexional ministry from participation in sub-committee and commissioned work on experimental education, scripture exams and summer schools to an executive constitutional place on the Connexional Youth Council where every aspect of national youth work was represented and variously discussed and legislated for. Obviously this extended my horizons and experience considerably. It gave me a national identity, howbeit a small one, and presence.

Conclusion and Learning

Four years in the Sydenham and Forest Hill Circuit gave me very different experience of ministry from anything that I had had previously. S.E. London was so different from Carmarthen, Kidwelly, Pontardulais, Burry Port and Aldershot and Farnborough. It also gave me invaluable experience of introducing changes in praxis and in handling the inertia and opposition induced and encountered.

My attempts in these directions had met with varying degrees of success and failure. Gradually I had to come to realize that a sense of vocation, working purposes, aspirations, visions of what needed essential as these are, of themselves they are insufficient to achieve the kind of changes I wished to see and the traditional skills and approaches I practised were inadequate. Using them with common sense had achieved much and I had avoided debilitating faction—in fact working relationships had improved

and mutual trust had been engendered. But I knew I had not the requisite skills to do the kind of work to which I was now fully committed. I needed and desperately wanted a new kind of praxis which I was beginning to glimmer – one which enabled me to work with people creatively for radical change and development – secular and spiritual, human and religious – build harmony and avoid dysfunctional (spurious was the word I used to use) conflict. Developments, that is, which were securely owned by the people as well as by me. The search was on for such a form of praxis because my experience in the circuit, the District and the Connexion confirmed in me that I had discovered the kind of work to which I was being called.

The Circuit wished me to stay on but Molly and I were convinced that it was time to move on and we simply did not wish to continue with Wesley Hall; it was an awful drag upon us which devoured energy and depressed us and we had Janice and John's futures to consider.

APPENDICES

- I. A wobble in confidence!
- II. My contribution to the centenary Handbook, 2006
- III. Chart of James Fowler's stages of faith
- IV. Lawrence Kohlberg's stages of moral development
- V. The Phoenix Church
- VI. Remodelling in the Anerley Church and building the new Youth and Community Centre, 1964 – 66
- VII. The dedication service
- VIII. Three days of discovery and adventure at Hurst Green, August 1964

Appendix I: A Wobble in Confidence!¹⁵

Yesterday was a mixed sort of day. Between 4.30 – 5.30 a.m. I wrote some insightful notes which came to me through sorting through a confused mass of papers from my Sydenham and Forest Hill Ministry. That was uplifting. I was looking forward to tidying up the rather rough notes (on ‘engagement’ and my ‘sexuality’). Dutton’s service was better than expected. His dress is better than it was but still unsatisfactory. He speaks well and has a presence but his preaching is superficial and elementary, lacks depth. Then I read the staff’s notes on how they spend their working time which was disappointing but not surprising.

After a long walk and a visit from Janice and Raymond, I got all the papers in a reasonable working order; I am almost ready to start writing about this period having got a structure for the section.

However, I awoke this morning feeling somewhat depressed, empty and with little enthusiasm or energy for the day/week. Then during my morning devotions I came across the following text in the section for today in the *Leeds District Prayer Diary*, 2012-13,

Forget what happened long ago! Don’t think about the past. I am creating something new. There it is. Do you see it? Isaiah 43:18-19

The RSV was a more attractive translation but still challenging.

Stop dwelling on past events and brooding over days gone by. I am about to do something new; this moment it will unfold. Can you not perceive it?

Still feeling low, this activated unresolved (irresolvable?) mostly dormant doubts about spending so much time on these NFR and same guilt feelings about whether I should have done other things, as Molly wished. Complete assurance in the rightness of my commitment to these notes eludes me and does not emerge from serious consideration of and discussions about what I am doing. What does emerge is sufficient assurance that I should continue and hold in check my doubts. Dwelling on the past, or more precisely recalling it to record essentials and to reflect critically on it and my perceptions of it, is in fact, it suddenly occurs to me, creating something new: a written record of those perceptions, the processes of recall and reflection and the accumulative effect upon me and my understanding of what I have been and what I now am and what I should aim to be in the future. Stage by stage I am becoming a new creation through the

former creations. In short this is one extended exercise in recreation and repositioning (see sermon 528).

All this reassures me, encourages me to combine and convince me that God is indeed creating even more for me that I do not perceive but occasionally glimmer in faith.

Towards the end of this devotional time I came across the following line as I continued to read through *Singing the Faith*:

‘God of my present, my past and future too’ (728 v3)

So on with NFR in faith and with residual doubts – possibly a spiritually healthy combination.

APPENDIX II: MY CONTRIBUTION TO THE CENTENARY HANDBOOK, 2006

George Lovell

From: "George Lovell" <user@5lidgett.fsnet.co.uk>
To: <afeath11@btconnect.com>
Sent: 08 September 2006 20:33
Subject: Wesley Hall Centenary

From The Revd Dr George Lovell

Dear Tony,

Thank you for your letter of the 17th August, which I received only the other day consequently I have not been able to meet your deadline. I appreciate being asked to contribute to the centenary booklet, which seems a good idea. Please find my contribution below. I hope it is suitable. (I would very much like to see a copy of the centenary booklet when it is published.)

It is unlikely that we will be able to join you for the Centenary celebrations. Sorry about that. Molly and I send our greetings and very best wishes for the event and the future.

Please acknowledge receipt of this email.

Yours sincerely,
George

My time as minister of Wesley Hall, 1962-66, contributed much to the shape of my subsequent ministry in church and community development work and for that I am thankful. Moving to Sydenham from Carmarthen in South Wales was a disturbing culture shock. It took time to come to terms with South London life. Wesley Hall was an effective but a demanding and hard tutor in what were exciting times. Revolutionary changes were occurring in Christian education, open youth work and religious thinking. *Honest to God* was published in 1963. I remember attending an exciting meeting at a church in Lewisham at which the author, Bishop John Robinson, spoke and answered questions. They were heady days. There was much straight talking as the Sunday School moved from afternoons to mornings, and an open youth club was formed. Wesley Hall people were, and probably still are, fiercely independent. A young adult group was formed. Candlelight Carol services were inaugurated. Involvement in community was explored. Unforgettable aspects of life at the Hall were the Boys' Brigade and the Girls' Brigade Companies – parades, bands playing in the lower hall, now the chapel, camps.... made outstanding contributions to successive generations of young people. (How I enjoyed the table tennis!) Then, from 1972-1998 whilst I was a "minister in other appointments" we lived in the Circuit and had other happy experiences of Wesley Hall through occasional preaching appointments, the Christmas fairs, the annual concerts and so much more. Congratulations to you all on 100 years of mission work in an urban setting, which is no mean achievement

Every good wish for the Celebrations. Blessings for the future. My hope and prayer is that as a church you will find your providential way in the next century and pursue your vocation as God's people in the Circuit.

George Lovell

Appendix III: James Fowler's Stages of Faith

	Stage	Description	Simplified version by M. Scott Peck	
Stage 1	Intuitive-Projective	This is the stage of preschool children in which fantasy and reality often get mixed together. However, during this stage, our most basic ideas about God are usually picked up from our parents and/or society.	I. Chaotic-Antisocial	People stuck at this stage are usually self-centered and often find themselves in trouble due to their unprincipled living. If they do end up converting to the next stage, it often occurs in a very dramatic way.
Stage 2	Mythic-Literal	When children become school-age, they start understanding the world in more logical ways. They generally accept the stories told to them by their faith community but tend to understand them in very literal ways. [A few people remain in this stage through adulthood.]		
Stage 3	Synthetic-Conventional	Most people move on to this stage as teenagers. At this point, their life has grown to include several different social circles and there is a need to pull it all together. When this happens, a person usually adopts some sort of all-encompassing belief system. However, at this stage, people tend to have a hard time seeing outside their box and don't recognize that they are "inside" a belief system. At this stage, authority is usually placed in individuals or groups that represent one's beliefs. [This is the stage in which many people remain.]	II. Formal-Institutional	At this stage people rely on some sort of institution (such as a church) to give them stability. They become attached to the forms of their religion and get extremely upset when these are called into question.
Stage 4	Individuative-Reflective	This is the tough stage, often begun in young adulthood, when people start seeing outside the box and realizing that there are other "boxes". They begin to critically examine their beliefs on their own and often become disillusioned with their former faith. Ironically, the Stage 3 people usually think that Stage 4 people have become "backsliders" when in reality they have actually moved forward.	III. Skeptic-Individual	Those who break out of the previous stage usually do so when they start seriously questioning things on their own. A lot of the time, this stage ends up being very non-religious and some people stay in it permanently.
Stage 5	Conjunctive Faith	It is rare for people to reach this stage before mid-life. This is the point when people begin to realize the limits of logic and start to accept the paradoxes in life. They begin to see life as a mystery and often return to sacred stories and symbols but this time without being stuck in a theological box.	IV. Mystical-Communal	People who reach this stage start to realize that there is truth to be found in both the previous two stages and that life can be paradoxical and full of mystery. Emphasis is placed more on community than on individual concerns.
Stage 6	Universalizing Faith	Few people reach this stage. Those who do live their lives to the full in service of others without any real worries or doubts.		

Appendix IV: Lawrence Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development

Kohlberg's stages are here grouped into three levels of two stages each. It is extremely rare to regress in stages, i.e. to lose the use of higher abilities. Stages cannot be skipped; each provides a new and necessary perspective, more comprehensive and differentiated than its predecessors but integrated with them.

Level 1 (Pre-Conventional)

1. Obedience and punishment orientation
(*How can I avoid punishment?*)
2. Self-interest orientation
(*What's in it for me?*)
(*Paying for a benefit*)

Level 2 (Conventional)

3. Interpersonal accord and conformity
(*Social norms*)
(*The good boy/good girl attitude*)
4. Authority and social-order maintaining orientation
(*Law and order morality*)

Level 3 (Post-Conventional)

5. Social contract orientation
6. Universal ethical principles
(*Principled conscience*)

The understanding gained in each stage is retained in later stages, but may be regarded by those in later stages as simplistic, lacking in sufficient attention to detail.

Appendix V – The Phoenix Church, A piece written for the 125th Anniversary of the Church, 1990

The Phoenix Church

Anerley Methodist Church has an especial place in my affections because it has an especial place in my ministry and because I believe it has an especial place in the Kingdom of God. From the very beginning of my association with it I sensed that it is one of those churches that has got something of the essence of Christianity written deep into its life, people and, I think, even into the bricks and mortar of the building. Some churches have it some do not. To describe it is difficult. When I attempt to talk about it I find myself reaching for words such as integrity, spiritual wholeness and awareness, humanity, compassion, love, holiness. To explain why Anerley has it is even more difficult than to describe it. But I would guess that part of the answer is to be found in the saints who have made it their spiritual home over the past one hundred and twenty five years. I have my list of such people, you must have yours. I will resist giving mine. They are now part of the communion of saints who surround us as we worship. Their faithfulness is epitomized for me in the way in which two or three kept the worship vigil in the old army hut throughout the 1939-45 war. Then there is the attempt to relate Christianity to ordinary people and daily life. When I became the minister in 1962 I was most impressed by the work that was being done by a group of men and women who came back from the war and gave themselves to working with young people. I remember with nostalgia the pantomimes in the Town Hall. Our children laughed until they cried at:-

“We ain’t got the money for the mortgage on the cow!”

My time at Anerley led to a dramatic change in the whole direction of my ministry. Together we struggled with questions about the church in the world and ways of meeting the needs of young and old in community and church. We remodeled the church, moved the hut ourselves, had the hall built, some of our members trained as youth workers and Roy Webb became our full-time worker. We had, I remember, a service to commission people for their work in the world. They were heady days. My ministry was now to church and to community. I realized I needed new skills and in the year after I left Anerley I started to study, to practice and then to teach church and community development - that is what I have been doing ever since.

My continuing contact with you through living in the circuit and through Valerie Tredinnick who is a part-time member of the staff of the organization for which I work and through Joan Loring and John and Sadie Douglas who come and give us a hand from time to time.

During the re-building programme that I experienced (you have of course had others since) I remember taking round some officials from the Department of Education and Science from whom we we've seeking substantial grants. Ron Smith and I had just told them an exciting story about our hopes and dreams when we came to what is now the vestry. We opened the door and there was a notice the builders had taken down. It was a nicely sign written finger post with an elaborate arrow. As placed, it pointed downwards. There were wry smiles. They expected it to point upwards. A profound theological truth is enshrined in my memory of the casually placed sign. It is that Anerley is incarnate. It rises up because it is embodied in the earth and in the Kingdom of God. Using another metaphor, and to borrow the title of a book about Crystal Palace and Upper Norwood, it is a Phoenix Church that rises from the ashes of fire and the dust of the earth. Lines from a beloved hymn come to mind:

“I lay in dust life’s glory dead,

And from the ground there blossoms red

Life that shall endless be”. (HAP 685)

Anerley I salute you. Anerley I thank you for your contribution towards setting me on the critical path of my ministry. Anerley I pray blessings upon you as you celebrate this important anniversary and upon your children in the Lord as they go forward into the twenty first century.

George Lovell

March 1989

Kensington Times 27-11-64

PREPARATIONS FOR YOUTH CENTRE

Methodist hope for centenary year

ANNERLEY Methodists' ambitious plans for a £16,000 youth centre were mentioned during the opening of their Christmas bazaar in the church on Saturday.

Preparations have already started for the centre, which may have a full-time youth leader and include a coffee bar and social facilities. The hut at the rear of the hall has been dismantled to make way for the centre, and is now being re-erected by Church members on another site in the church grounds.

Opening the bazaar, Mrs. K. E. Blackman, who is a former matron of Outlands Old People's Home, Penze, told Church members: "I know you have got the young people of Penze and Annerley at heart."

She hoped work for the youth centre would be "well ahead" when the Church celebrated its centenary next year.

FRIENDLINESS

Mr. John Bateman, who presided at the opening, spoke of the fellowship and friendliness he found at the Church, and said the Christmas bazaar was one of the few occasions when all Church members "got together as a whole congregation."

A bouquet of flowers was presented to Mrs. Blackman by Fiona Thompson, who is eight. Her 11-year-old sister, Hilary, handed buttonholes to Mr. Bateman and the minister, the Rev. George Lovell.

It is believed more people than ever before visited the bazaar, which raised about £134 towards the Church funds.

Attractions and stalls included a "Janes" stall run by the Misses M. Munday and P. Kelley, and Mrs. Barber's home-made cakes, sweets and bean tub by the Women's Fellowship; "The Score," by Mr. and Mrs. J. Douglas; toys by the Young People's Fellowship; "Winter Mixture" by the Sunday school and Junior Church; puns and plants by the Senior Club and side-shows by the Scouts and Cubs. Refreshments were organised by the Girls' League and the youth club took part.

MORE PROGRESS ON METHODIST YOUTH CENTRE

Teenager to open new building

"IT was in September, 1962, that the first conference was held to discuss the development of a youth centre at the Annerley Methodist Church, and the Beckenham Education Officer, Mr. B. E. G. Davies, was at the meeting," said the Rev. George Lovell, Church minister, when a "Journal" reporter went to visit the site of the centre this week.

The annuals project that the Church have undertaken is in cost about £14,500, and is expected to be completed by about next May. Already foundations have been laid, and a substantial programme has been made.

After the Church had given permission to build the centre, they applied to the Kent County Council for a full-time youth leader. Kent constituted, and so they advertised for one.

"We had an interviewing board to question applicants, one of whom was ideal. But we lost him to a centre in the north, partly because we could not find accommodation for him and Penze Church would not help us," alleged Mr. Lovell.

LEADER FOUND

However, they have now got a leader, a Beckenham man, Mr. Roy Webb, who is at the moment studying at Leicester Training College for youth leaders. Mr. Webb, who used to lead the Church youth club, is married with three children, and will take up his duties on April 12.

The centre will not have a full programme of events, but will try and run activities that "seem to attract the youth in the community."

Activities will include radio, dance, tennis, billiards, sports and handicrafts. A new and very worthwhile item is to open the centre at about four o'clock for children who cannot get on with their homework at home. The young people will also be given an opportunity to voice their views on what activities the centre should adopt.

Appendix VI: Remodelling the Annerley Church and New Youth and Community Centre 1964-66

The centre will cater for ages 14 to 21. But other organisations such as the Cubs, Scouts, Girls' Brigade, and the Junior and Senior Clubs, will use it. Indeed, some of these organisations helped Mr. Roy Webb, who will be the first youth leader, to decide on the layout which will become the centre's workshop.

YOUNG IDEAS

Mr. M. Holland, Youth Officer for the London Diocese of Worcester, will be one of the members of the management committee, that will help organise the activities of the centre. There is also a youth council, which will put forward ideas proposed by the young people. Mrs. F. Webb, wife of the leader, who is at present secretary of this council.

Dramatic art and other forms of entertainment will figure prominently in the centre's programme, and it is hoped that this will interest other groups in the Methodist Association of Youth Clubs.

"We have gone out and made contact with all sorts of people in this area, and this is why we hope the centre will be a success," said Mr. Lovell.

A teenage, Ernest Garratt, is to be the official "documentary" of the centre. He is representative of the sort of person who will use the centre.

Appendix VII: Rededication Service

Anerley Methodist Church

JASMINE GROVE, S.E.20

Minister:

THE REV. GEORGE LOVELL, B.D.

The Order

FOR THE

Service of Dedication

OF THE

Remodelled Church

AND

The New Youth and Community Centre

ON

SATURDAY, 21st MAY, 1966

AT

3.30 p.m.

in the presence of

The Deputy Mayor and Mayoress of

The London Borough of Bromley

(Alderman R. N. Allen and Mrs. B. J. Finnie)

and Representatives of other Churches and Organisations

THE RE-OPENING OF THE CHURCH

The Congregation being assembled within the Church, the Opener, Architect, Ministers and others shall gather at the main doors of the Church. The Superintendent of the Circuit (The Rev. Douglas A. Wollen, M.A.) shall knock three times upon the doors and say in a loud voice:

Open to me the gates of righteousness; I will go into them, and I will praise the Lord.

The Architect (Edward D. Mills, Esq., C.B.E., F.R.I.B.A., M.S.A.) shall then say to the Opener:

In the name of God the Father, and on behalf of the Trustees, I invite you to open these doors for the Rededication Service of Anerley Methodist Church.

The Opener (Mr. George W. Vale, assisted by Mrs. W. Mantle and Miss M. Monday) shall then say:

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and on behalf of the Methodist Church, I open these doors in gratitude and faith, and ask that the church may be re-dedicated to the glory of God.

When the doors have been opened the Superintendent of the Circuit shall say:

Peace be to this house and to all who worship in it. In the name of the Holy Spirit, we will now enter this Church and give ourselves in humility and reverence to the worship and service of Almighty God.

O come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker. For he is our God; and we are the people of this pasture, and the sheep of His hand.

THE RE-DEDICATION

As the procession moves into the Church, the congregation shall join in the hymn:

OUR Father, by whose servants
Our house was built of old,
Whose hand hath crowned her children
With blessings manifold,
For Thine unfailing mercies
Far-strewn along our way,
With all who passed before us,
We praise Thy name today.

The changeful years unresisting,
Their silent course have sped,
New comrades ever bringing
In comrades' steps to tread:
And some are long forgotten,
Long spent their hopes and fears;
Safe rest they in Thy keeping,
Who change not with years.

They reap not where they laboured,
We reap what they have sown;
Our harvest may be garnered
By ages yet unknown.
The days of old have dowered us
With gifts beyond all praise:
Our Father, make us faithful
To serve the coming days.

Before us and beside us,
Still holden in Thine hand,
A cloud unseen of witness,
Our elder comrades stand:
One family unbroken,
We join, with one acclaim,
One heart, one voice uplifting,
To glorify Thy name.

When all have taken their places, the service shall proceed without further announcement.

ACT OF RE-DEDICATION HYMN

O THOU who camest from above
The pure celestial fire to impart,
Kindle a flame of sacred love
On the mean altar of my heart!

There let it for Thy glory burn
With inextinguishable blaze;
And trembling to its source return,
In humble prayer and fervent praise.

Jesus, confirm my heart's desire
To work, and speak, and think for Thee;
Still let me guard the holy fire,
And still stir up Thy gift in me.

Ready for all Thy perfect will,
My acts of faith and love repeat,
Till death Thy endless mercies seal,
And make the sacrifice complete.

Amen.

THE OFFERING

The Congregation shall remain seated while the offering is made and dedicated on behalf of the Building Fund.

ANERLEY SINGING GROUP THE SERMON

Preacher: The Rev. Douglas S. Hubery
General Secretary of the Methodist Youth Department

PROCESSIONAL HYMN

During the singing of this hymn the Society Stewards will lead the congregation in procession out of the Church to the main doors of the Youth and Community Centre. The people in the front rows being the first to join the procession after the Anerley Singing Group, and each successive row following in turn.

THOU God of truth and love,
We seek Thy perfect way,
Ready Thy choice to approve,
Thy providence to obey;
Enter into Thy wise design,
And sweetly lose our will in Thine.

Why hast Thou cast our lot
In the same age and place,
And why together brought
To see each other's face;
To join with loving sympathy,
And mix our friendly souls in Thee?

Didst Thou not make us one,
That we might one remain,
Together travel on,
And hear each other's pain;
Till all Thy utmost goodness prove,
And rise renewed in perfect love?

Then let us ever bear
The blessed rod in view,
And join, with mutual care,
To fight our passage through;
And kindly help each other on,
Till all receive the starry crown.

O may Thy Spirit seal
Our souls unto that day,
With all Thy fullness fill,
And then transport away:
Away to our eternal rest,
Away to our Redeemer's breast.

Amen.

THE OPENING OF THE YOUTH AND COMMUNITY CENTRE

When the congregation is assembled around the Centre's doors, Mr. Edward D. Mills shall say to the Opener:

I have pleasure in handing to you, the Opener and a representative of those for which this centre has been built, the key to this main entrance.

The Opener, Master Ernest A. W. Garrard, shall say, as he opens the doors:

I declare this Youth and Community Centre open, in the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen.

PRAYER

BENEDICTION

The congregation is invited to assemble in the Centre. After short speeches of welcome, tea will be served and visitors will be free to inspect the premises.

Appendix VIII:

THREE DAYS OF DISCOVERY AND ADVENTURE AT HURST GREEN

during August 1964

by Rev. George Lovell. B.D.

Introduction:

‘Hurst Green’ was a non-residential holiday conference for Inters so planned, arranged and programmed that young people could discover for themselves some of the basic things about Christian Discipleship. It was a joint venture between two Methodist Circuits¹⁶, Sydenham and Forest Hill, and East Grinstead and Oxted, centered on the Methodist Church at Hurst Green. The children and leaders from Sydenham were taken daily by coach to the conference centre. The conference numbers were made up as follows:

Sydenham and Forest Hill - 15 girls
11 boys
4 group leaders
2 ladies to help with catering
2 conference leaders

East Grinstead and Oxted - 4 girls
3 boys
several ladies to help with catering
1 conference leader.

The aim given in the first sentence was: the primary, but not exclusive conference motive. A strong incentive was found in the desire to take the children, some of whom lived in down town areas of the city into the country. Hurst Green was an ideal spot being a modern township set in the rural beauty of the Kent-Surrey border country some 18 miles from Sydenham. The playing ground facilities were excellent. The church, recently built, was excellently appointed. An Anglican church hall situated nearby was put at our disposal for catering purposes. This enabled meals

¹⁶ A local group of Methodist Churches under the supervision of a Superintendent Minister known as a “Circuit”.

to be prepared away from the industry of the conference centre, and for the children to be away from the food until the appropriate time. Hurst Green, with all these facilities, had insufficient Interiors to run a conference on the scale planned. On the other hand the city circuit had not the natural amenities of the rural circuit. The combination of resources made the conference a practical proposition and an experiment in rural-city co-operation. Whilst most of the conference members came from the city those from the local churches made a contribution out of all proportion to their numerical size. Catering arrangements were shared but the main burden fell on the host Church.

A further aim was to deepen and extend the personal relationships existing between the children and staff. The holiday-conference mood gave both children and leaders many opportunities for discovering each other in new ways. But above all, the organizers wanted the children to enjoy themselves fully and freely in a Christian way and in a Christian setting.

There were doubts and fears about the feasibility of such a conference. Would the morale and spirit of the venture suffer seriously on account of its 'day trip' structure? Would the saving in expenditure prejudice the success of the conference? Would the children miss days through tiredness or disinterest? What follows will answer these queries. Let it be said here, that only one girl missed one day, and that on account of sickness. Each successive day found the children keener to get to Hurst Green. They were at their pick-up points long before the coach was due for fear of being left behind!

Conference Methods

It has been indicated already that the basic technique was that of encouraging the children to discover things for themselves by carrying out simple acts of research. Group leaders were not appointed to instruct and catechize but to guide, assist, answer and to co-ordinate the various and diverse activities. They shared in the preparation and were thoroughly acquainted with the conference aims and methods. Each leader had a group of seven or eight children, three or four boys and three or four girls. It was decided that each group should, as far as possible, represent the age scatter of the conference as a whole. So that in each group there were various skills, abilities and levels of development. The conference method permitted such a group structuring. Each child was able, or was helped, to discover a discovery activity within the group project at his own level. It was most interesting to observe the groups growing rapidly into well integrated harmonious discovery teams. Individual resources pooled in order to

create, rather than reserved to compete. No child was made to feel inferior, all made their contribution.

The Programme

A copy of the programme is reproduced on page *. Much of it is self explanatory but the principal sessions need to be explained and further Information is given. We will follow the programme order.

'This is Hurst Green' was a conducted tour. In addition to seeing places the children met people – thus setting the theme of discovery personal as well as topographical terms!

The Disciple at Home: An 'ideas' sheet had been drawn up and duplicates for this session. It is reproduced on page *. Most of the children on the conference wanted to visit the pre-selected homes. As well as visiting ordinary Christian homes they visited a settlement for elderly people and interviewed the Warden and a school for children in need of speech therapy and interviewed the Principal.

Before they went out the groups formulated the questions they were going to ask and arranged how they would conduct the interviews. Three tape-recorders were available. One was a portable battery operated set and proved most convenient as there was no worry about plug fittings. Such practical details are most important. The questions thought out by the young people were interesting and revealing. Here are a few of them just as they were written and asked.

1. What attitude do you think children should take to their parents?
2. What are the important things needed in a happy home?
3. Do you think neighbours matter, what are your ideal neighbours?
4. Do you think that Christian families should meet together for prayer in the evenings?
5. Should children be forced to go to Church?
6. Do you think we should say grace before meals?
7. Do you think it is better for a child to pray at home or at Church with other people?
8. Do you as a Christian mind your children doing a paper round or anything like that on a Sunday?
9. Would you mind if any of your family made friends with a Buddhist or any other religion very different from Christianity?
10. Do you believe that a Christian home should have a small room put aside as a chapel?
11. Do you think something ought to be put in a Christian house to

- signify their ways of life or faith?
12. Have you a Bible in your home, and do you use it a lot out of Church?
 13. Does your Christian life affect your job a lot?
 14. Have you changed your job because of your Christian life?
 15. What hobbies have you?

Before the 7 p.m. prayers selections from the recordings were played over and thereafter, throughout the conference, they were available for anyone's use.

Each group took up suggestion 2 and used material from suggestion 3. It was fascinating to see the ingenious ways in which Christian principles were illustrated in the models. For instance, on one model the door was left open and a note of explanation was added to the effect that a Christian home should always be open to visitors. A considerable amount of material had been collected for this activity. Boxes of all shapes and sizes had been obtained from various shops, pictures had been cut from all sorts of magazines, pencils, glue, coloured paper, paint, sellotape, and etc had been purchased and scissors and knives borrowed from several sources. (It was interesting to see the miscellany of equipment produced on the second day by the children, one of the advantages of being non-residential. In addition maps and pictures relevant to the theme of the conference were hung on the walls of the main hall (the workshop).

At the end of the session each group in turn showed the conference what they had done. This was carried out in a most informal and natural way there being no suggestion of 'group reporting' or of inter-group competition. During prayers group representatives brought models into the chapel and put them around the communion table thereby signifying a relationship between work and worship.

This session was reinforced on the second day by a coach trip outing (1.30 p.m.). Part of the outing was a visit to a local branch of the National Children's Home. There was no need to moralize or to relate to what had gone on before, the visit spoke for itself. This was followed by a visit to a farm. The farmer was a fine Christian man who opened up what was for city children an unusual Christian domestic life. Thus to the picnic!

Bible Geography: On the second day the burden of our group activity concerned with the subject, 'Where it happened'. The basic aim was to make geographical setting of the Bible more real. Local helpers papered

the floor of the large school hall and drew the coastline and the lakes and rivers and pin-pointed some of the major cities of Palestine. (The paper, incidentally, that used for newspapers. The end of a roll was obtained from the proprietors of the local newspaper. It served the purpose extremely well.) This work was completed before the conference resumed on the second day. Conference members were given an instruction sheet which is reproduced on page * and the idea explained to them. Each group was given a different geographical area, or, set work on different historical periods of the same geographical area. Some made models of houses, cities, walls, whilst others compiled descriptive tablets similar to those found on historical sites. St. Paul's conversion was described and illustrated in situ. Just before prayer time the models and etc were put in place. Pilgrim prayers were conducted on the 'map'. The story of the Samaritan had been chosen as the subject for this act of devotion. As conference members sat around the map the story was read slowly and acted out on the map. Before their eyes a man did go down from Jerusalem to Jericho, he was robbed and left half dead, a Levite and a priest passed by and a Samaritan did help. Then quietly kneeling on the map representing the Holy Land prayers were said.

Pictures and maps were collected from many sources prior to the Conference but great help was gained by writing to various embassies (listed below) Enabling the project and asking for any relevant descriptive literature and photographs. Not all the material was directly applicable to our limited purposes but it was available for perusal.

Iraq Embassy in London:21-22 Queens Gate, London, SW7

Ethiopian Embassy in London,17 Princes Gate, London, SW7

U.A.R. Egypt and Syria Embassy in London, 75 South Audley Street, London, W1

Turkish Embassy in London, 69 Portland Place, London, W1

Royal Green Embassy in London, 51 Upper Brook Street, London, W1

Italian Embassy in London, 14 Three Kings Yard, Davies Street, London

Touristic Information from:

Italian State Tourist Office, 201. Regent Street, London, W1

In addition members were free throughout the day to view coloured film strips on graphical background to the Bible.¹⁷ A room was set apart for

17 The film-strips used were produced by 'Educational Productions Ltd, 17 Denbigh Street, London, SW1' They were entitled 'The Geographical Background of the Bible' ?? I 'The Old Testament' C 6270, Part II 'The New Testament' C 6271 and 'The Spread of the Church' C 6272.

this purpose and two projectors were fitted up. This enabled the children to gain some real concept of the area. Day-light screens were used and so children who wished to were able to sketch and model from the film strip pictures.

Christian Behaviour: On the third day the theme was Christian Behaviour and yet another ideas sheet had been drawn up, see page *. This session became in actual fact more of a talking than a modelling session. By now it appeared that the young people wanted to 'discover' things through conversation with their leaders within the group context'. The 'Thursday Break' programme was given up to Christian sex education. Boys were taken separately from the girls. For most of the young people it was first real discussion on the subject. Questions poured in during and after the official session.

Closing Act of Worship: During the early part of this day the theme was altered to find time to plan the concluding act of worship, 'Broadcasting for God'. In open conference the order and content of the service was worked out step by step as the leader explained the need for the various parts of an act of worship. People volunteered their ideas and services. At this point it was explained that opportunity would be given to any one wishing to become disciples of Jesus to a sign of 'Disciples Roll' and a 'Decision Card'. The card used was one published by M.Y.D. One side of the card is for a 'decision' whilst the other side is for re-dedication. The lower part was a tear-off slip to be handed to the teacher or minister. In the informal atmosphere still prevailing the meaning and significance of this was made clear and questions answered. This gave the young people several hours in which to discuss the question of discipleship and to come to a decision. The service was recorded hence the title 'Broadcast for God' and in the service preparation group it was suggested that this could illustrate the objective side of worship.

During the service Christian discipleship was presented through the analogy of apprenticeship viz the young people challenged to become apprentices of Jesus Christ, so that, from Him, they might learn how to live. There was no false glamour, the hardness of the way was presented and some of the initial steps of discipleship outlined. Fifteen remained at the end of the service to sign the discipleship role. After further instruction eleven signed and four took cards away to think and talk further about it. One of those four signed the card at a later date and has become a wonderful Christian.

This account does not capture the excitement of the conference nor

wonderful atmosphere experienced by all. The games, the outings, the lunch breaks, and the bus journeys the friendships formed and extended. An Inters club has come into being on account of what happened at Hurst Green and a Sunday School has been re-vitalized by some of those who were converted. There was (is) great demand for another such conference.

Cost:

In order that some idea may be gained of the cost of this conference the statement of accounts is found on page *. Each child was charged 7 shillings and 6p. The actual cost per child was estimated at 30/-. Local churches and youth organizations sponsored each child and made up the 22/6d. A deficit of £4.4 was met by the Circuit Youth Council. The coach was the most expensive single item but we could not have provided residential accommodation for the difference between this amount and that of transport for one outward and one homeward journey. On each of the three days we took two people from the city to assist with the catering.

Conclusion:

By way of conclusion it must be said that this non-residential conference was a happy and profitable experience. It was relatively easy to raise the necessary capital. Travelling was tiring. Fortunately the conference was held on three beautiful and very hot days but this made travelling something of a burden. It would seem that the conference was not adversely affected by its non-residential nature. It may well be that the way outlined above is a good way for people to start circuit or local holiday conferences.

III CROYDON (SOUTH NORWOOD) CIRCUIT

The invitation

Co-incidences or vocational premonitions?

Introduction: my approach to writing this section

Documentation and published material

Sources of influence

Approach to ministry and professionalism

1. Professional approaches to church and community development work,
researching and consulting:
Training as a non-directive church and community development worker
Training in action research
Consultor, consultant and trainer
Collaborative leader and worker
Nature of my professional stance
2. Commitment to work in, with and through the institutional church for holistic
spiritual and human development in church and community
3. Commitment to local work

The Circuit

Parchmore

The distinguished history and ministry of the Church

A new era as a church, youth and community centre

The service of dedication of the remodelled church and the youth and community
centre

My ministry

Vital human resources infrastructures

The Kingdom of God is inside you

Local ecumenics

Morden

Fellow travellers in Morden

People and pastoralia

Extramural training

A national ecumenical ministry evolves from local one

Connexional recognition

Associated developments

Connexional in-service ministerial training

My first book on church and community development

Catherine Widdicombe active in the field

A new discipline and movement is born

Achieved status in and through local Methodist and national ecumenical work

Seven aspects of my Parchmore ministry

A ministerial 'technician'

Beginnings of the end of my time at Parchmore

The fouled up re-invitation

Overstretched

A mission to the church?

Reflective assessments, 1969-2008

Parchmore Bulletin, 1969

The 90th Anniversary of the Church, 1990

The Methodist Social and Community Work Forum, 1996

The 108th Chapel Anniversary

Conclusion

Appendices

This section shows that my appointment to the Croydon Circuit and to Parchmore Road Methodist Church transformed the nature and shape of my ministry somewhat dramatically. My Parchmore ministry was exciting, creative and fulfilling. I count myself fortunate and privileged to have been given by God and circumstance the opportunity to play a part, possibly a key one, in developing a distinctive mode of church and community ministry and mission. So, it is with a thankful heart that I turn to write notes about my Parchmore ministry.

The Invitation

At the point at which we had decided to leave Sydenham and Forest Hill and declined an extension to my appointment we did not know where our next appointment would be or the kind of ministry in which I should/would be engaged. Various possibilities had emerged and been pursued unsuccessfully; the MAYC national secretary's post; high profile chaplaincy ministry in Bristol's University Church; minister and warden of Bermondsey Central Hall; researching sociological factors in Christian education; minister of a thriving church on the outskirts of Bexhill-on-Sea with an elderly congregation which was planning to develop a more vigorous youth and community work programme. (I discussed the first three of these earlier, see [Part 3](#). Pressing invitations were extended from Bermondsey and Bexhill which we declined: Bermondsey for family reasons even though the work was a kind to which I felt called; Bexhill because it would involve much work with elderly church people.

At a point when we were getting a little anxious early in 1966 not least because of Janice and John's education I received a call from John Mitchell to ascertain whether I would be interested in succeeding him at Parchmore in September 1966. Immediately and instinctively I knew that this was the kind of opening for which I had been waiting. Parchmore had been designated to be one of the Ten Church and Youth Community Centres in Greater London. It resonated with my vocational call to urban ministry; it was a natural progressive work-wise sequence to that in which I had been engaged during the previous five years; it provided good educational possibilities for Janice and John; domestically it was most acceptable. In short it was a tailor-made follow-through from Sydenham and Forest Hill vocationally. To Molly and me, it was God's call and provision.

Thorough ongoing discussions with the Circuit Stewards and their wives, Mr & Mrs Norman Wall and Mr & Mrs John Alderson (four gracious but astute and kindly people) led smoothly to an invitation unanimously endorsed by the Quarterly meeting and Parchmore 'to join the staff of

a Circuit with pastoral charge of the Thornton Heath Church as from September 1966' (correspondence on file).

As I wrote this, the enormous importance and significance for all my subsequent work of developing a church and community development programme in a traditional suburban cover urban church rather than in a specialist mission church such as Bermondsey Settlement was born in upon me once again. Vast numbers of churches would identify with it which they would not do with Bermondsey. Therefore it was a telling representative model. I did not select it for these properties; it presented itself as such in the providence of God.

***Coincidences or Vocational Premonitions?*¹⁸**

Gradually it dawned upon me that my appointment to Parchmore was foreshadowed in two ways both of which I have already described. The first was feeling I knew Thornton Heath through my association and friendship with George Apps in Egypt during my National Service and then through spending time with the family along with Molly in the early part of our married life. The second was that in 1950 I had been captivated by Derrick Greaves' description of and excitement about Parchmore at the [Rakefoot Sunday School Anniversary Service](#). Previously I had no idea that such churches existed. Thereafter I remained inspired by what I had heard and treasured the vision of what churches could be. Were those coincidences, if so they were meaningful coincidences, or were they premonitions? When I wrote about the Rakefoot event in March 2011, I described it as 'a providential encounter with my vocational destiny'. As I started my Ministry in Parchmore and remembered these events, they helped to confirm and seal the conviction that it was God's will that I should be there, in Parchmore and Thornton Heath. My life's work started here. They were both meaningful coincidences because they were vocational premonitions and confirmatory signs.

Introduction: My Approach To Writing This Section

From this point onwards the main thrust of my ministry was related in one way or another to the non-directive approach to church and community development. During the six years I was minister of Parchmore Methodist

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Church I:

- learnt how to practise this approach as a circuit minister;
- researched my experience of doing so;
- tested out the viability and applicability of it to local church work in an urban setting;
- inducted and trained others in this way of working *with* rather than *for* people;
- promoted my findings as widely as possible.

Throughout, I carried out these aspects of my ministry as an action research project which I wrote up as a PhD thesis. Consequently this aspect of my ministry was extensively documented and various articles and papers and two books were written about it. This material is variously available and accessible. Inter alia, this means that I must approach the writing of this part of my circuit ministry somewhat differently from that in Llanelly and Carmarthen and Sydenham and Forest Hill circuits (sections I and II). In this section I list the documentation and publications but studiously avoid repeating or restating the material they contain and make no attempt to summarize it.

So what do I write about here? That is a question with which I have struggled not least because it is as relevant to the remainder of these notes about my ministry as it is to those about Parchmore. Eventually, the best answer I could find came through comparing what I and others have already written with what I might now write. What has been written could be described as analytical descriptions of the Parchmore church and community development project and of my approach, praxis and theology. The nearest I can get to a short title for this is, the technical story of the project and my approach to it. Whereas, what I have attempted here are notes about significant and critical aspects of my personal story of my ministry at Parchmore. These notes show that Parchmore and my ministry and vocational were more and other than the technicalities of the project, dominant as this was to all three of these. This section, therefore, complements the other accounts and helps to set them in the context of my overall ministry and vocation.

Documentation and Published Material

The extensive documentation and written material about Parchmore can be accessed through publications, the Internet and the Avec and my personal archives. Here I indicate where it can be reviewed and accessed.

Researching and writing up the Parchmore story accurately and faithfully was enormously helped by a dedicated group of people industriously and systematically producing ‘records’ of all meetings and conferences using a system of recording developed by Dorothy Household which is described in *Analysis and Design*, pp 178–79. These are housed in the Avec archives.

Section 9:8 describes and lists all my published and unpublished writings, discusses their nature and lists articles, papers and a lecture notes. For those specifically about Parchmore see pp 9.8.2 – 3 and Appendices I and II.

A thorough going description and analysis of the Parchmore project 1966 – 72 is in my 677 pp Ph.D. thesis: *An Action-Research Project to Test the Applicability of the Non-Directive Concept in a Church, Youth and Community Centre Setting*, University of London, 1973, unpublished. Copies are in both Archives.

The Parchmore Partnership: George Lovell, Garth Rogers and Peter Sharrocks edited by Malcolm Grundy (1996) tells the story of Parchmore from its beginnings in 1964/5 to 1994.

Critical aspects of my praxis during my Parchmore Ministry are described and discussed in:

‘The Church and Community Development’ in the *Expository Times*, 1971, later reproduced in *Social Sciences and the Churches*.

The Youth Worker as First-Aid Counsellor, 1971.

The Church and Community Development: An Introduction, 1972. (Full text on line, www.avecresources.org/)

Dorothy Household’s Dissertation

In c1969 Dorothy wrote a dissertation as part of her studies for a Certificate in Education, Stockwell College of Education, and University of London Institute of Education. She gave it the title: *Parchmore Youth and Community Project: An account of the development and progress of the Youth Centre work*. It is presented in Appendix I. See also have paper/essay ‘The People of God in Their Relationship with the World’ in *Parchmore Background Papers*.

Material in the Avec Archives

The material in this archive is listed in the *Avec Archives Annotated Catalogue*, pp x, 18 – 19 (Full text on line, www.avecresources.org/)

On Parchmore: *ibid*, pp 18 – 19. (Including Parchmore Occasional Papers and reports of Sunbury on Thames Conferences.

On The Greater London Youth and Community Service of the Methodist Church (GLYCS) Ten Centre Scheme, 1964-68 *ibid*. p 16.

On The Board of Lay Training, The Methodist Church, 1966 – 74, *ibid* p 16.

On The Community Development Group of the Methodist Church, 1970 – 80 *ibid* p 17.

On the Interdepartmental Youth Committee of The Methodist Church on Community Development, *ibid* p 17.

On the Training and Consultancy Programmes, 1969 – 73, *ibid* p 19 – 20.

Various Autobiographical and Biographical Pieces about Catherine Widdicombe and George Lovell

These pieces are collated in a file of that title which will go into my personal archives along with the *Notes From Retirement*.

Background Files

A miscellaneous collection of articles and press cuttings covering different periods of the Parchmore project are in various background files on the respective periods of my ministry in Parchmore and in ‘Some Background Papers’(two lever arch files).

Diaries, Journal notes, sermons, articles and pieces in church magazines

Photographs

A miscellaneous collection of photographs are to be found in a background file and in various albums.

Sources of Influence

The movements and developments that influenced me during the period 1962 – 66 continue to do so. From 1966 onwards TR Batten, his person and his work and writings, were the dominant influences upon me. (See the section above.) Under his direction and that of the staff of the Institute of education, University of London, I engaged in wide ranging studies which led to the award of a PhD in 1973. The sources and writings which influenced me during my Parchmore ministry and well beyond are listed in the bibliography to my PhD thesis (pages 662 – 677). These influences I listed under the following headings:

Sociology – books and articles describing the society in which those engaged in church and community development work are set.

Community development – books and articles about the development of people and communities; ways of working with people individually and in groups; and the training of workers.

Christianity, society and community development – books and articles about Christianity the church, society and the development of people and communities.

Education and youth – books and articles about educational principles, methods and processes and about youth and community work.

Research theory and method – books and articles relevant to research into community development programmes.

Studying these sources rigorously and applying them meant that I developed substantial theoretical and theological foundations for the praxis of my ministry and the work at Parchmore as it evolved.

Approach to Ministry and Professionalism

Considering the invitation to be the minister of Parchmore Road Methodist Church with pastoral responsibility for its development as one of the Ten Centres led me to think seriously and take action about the kind of training that I needed. This was the beginning of processes that led to the radical reshaping and extensive development of my approach to this form of ministry which continued throughout the next six years.

From the outset I was determined that I should be equipped to do the work upon which I was embarking as competently and professionally as possible. Pursuing this led to a sequence of critical decisions about training, studying, consultancy and research. Importantly, the nature of all the training and research in which I became involved was ‘in-service’ and ‘on-the-job’: this meant that I was learning and enhancing my practical competence and theoretical and theological understanding through in-service training courses, doing the work, studying and researching the work in which I was engaged at Parchmore as I was doing it. Consequently, I was engaged in various processes between which there was creative interplay, gradually and incrementally, there is comprehensive approach to my ministry and work, formed me into a minister who was an experienced professional non-directive church and community development worker and trainer and an action researcher with what was to prove invaluable experience of non-directive consultancy, both as a consultor and as a consultant (I did not use this terminology of the time).

At the same time I became convinced about and committed to the

vital strategic importance of local ministry in the economy of the human and spiritual development of people in the church and in society and the ministry and mission of the Christian Church. This section is about the decisions made, the nature of the approach and the professional stance I adopted in relation to all of this.

1. Professional approaches to church and community development work, researching and consulting

Training as a non-directive minister in church and community development work inexorably led into training in: collaborative leadership; action research; acting as a consultor, consultant and trainer. This section describes and traces out this progressive sequence of professional development and my overall professional stance i.e. how these various disciplines related to my substantive vocation as a Methodist presbyteral minister.

Training as a non-directive church and community development worker

A highly attractive feature of the Parchmore invitation was that it would enable me to build upon my earlier experiences in youth and community work in Anerley and Wesley Hall through participating in the Ten Centres Scheme. To do that I knew that I needed further training because I was fully conscious that the work I had done was faulted as the following assessment shows.

Training in action research

When I had completed the course Reg Batten offered to act as consultant to me, an offer which I enthusiastically accepted.¹⁹ As the work got under way Batten strongly recommended that I should write up what I was doing for a research degree, he was so impressed by what was happening and the value of the material. Explaining what this would involve we discovered I would have to do a PGCE and a Certificate of Education at the Institute of Education to qualify to be registered for an M.Phil. Whilst I was attracted to the proposition of researching what I was doing at Parchmore as I was doing it, qualifying would involve an enormous amount of work. Both Molly and Dorothy (Household) were strongly against the idea. They

¹⁹ I describe my consultancy relationship with TRB in my PhD thesis, Chapter XXII, pp324-330 and the value of it in *Parchmore Partnership* pp34-35.

thought the workload to be an impossible one; it would make me ill or kill me. Their opposition was determined and formidable. Persuaded by it I wrote to Batten saying that with regret I would not be pursuing the idea. He wrote back urging me to reconsider my decision and arguing most strong and persuasively that it was of the greatest importance to my vocational future and the development and promotion of church and community development in the Church at large. In my bones I knew he was right but I was already stretched to what I thought were my limits. Re-consider my decision I must because another conviction alongside that of the vital importance of adopting a professional approach to the work and to be seen to be doing so was forming inexorably in my mind and becoming deeply rooted in my whole being. It was the need for the work to be independently assessed for its professional integrity and viability and value by those academically qualified to do so and known to be. Such an evaluation would establish church and community development work in its own right as a reputable mode of professional praxis with its own body of knowledge and theory.

Consequently, I was in a hard place tossed and torn between my convictions, Batten's pressure (and that was what it was for all his commitment to the *nda*!) and Molly and Dorothy's resistance out of deep concern about my well-being and welfare. I agonised over the whole matter vacillating between deciding for and against taking up the challenge. Eventually, I decided that I simply must go for it as they now say. And I did. Batten was delighted. Molly and Dorothy reluctantly agreed but with concerned reservations. They knew as I did what would be the cost to them as well as to me. They accepted the importance of my conviction, Dorothy possibly more so than Molly. Once the decision was made they gave me enormous unstinting and sacrificial support. Molly typed all seven hundred pages of my thesis over and over again through what seemed endless revisions in days without computers when edited pages had to be retyped! Dorothy read every word, discussed it with me at great length and offered editorial suggestions. Both of them corrected my grammar! How fortunate and blessed I have been. Once the decision was made they simply gave themselves to the implications and never suggested I should withdraw from it even in the toughest times.

The correspondence and notes about all this are in the *Avec* Archives but it must have taken place during the latter part of 1967 and the early part of 1968 because I studied for the PGCE during the academic year 1968 – 1969 and then for the Certificate in Education. Presumably for 1968 I was registered as an M.Phil student and eventually the status of the work was

upgraded to a PhD. (How well I remember the day when Reg told me about this. When I arrived at Wimbledon for a tutorial uncharacteristically he was waiting for me outside the house. He was so excited that he could not contain himself. As I got out of my car he came towards me, put his arm around my shoulder and with enormous joy and pleasure told me Milson had agreed to the upgrade after he had read the specimen chapters I had sent him. He was as thrilled as I was!)

So from an early stage Parchmore became an action research project and a place where I developed and honed my skills as a non-directive worker, action-researcher, trainee and consultant. Action research was in its infancy; I had to devise my own approach to it; it involves continuously assessing work done for what can be learnt from it and using whatever is learnt from doing so to inform future decisions and action.²⁰

Reg Batten was first a tutor/trainer, then consultant, research supervisor, mentor, colleague and soul friend as was Madge.²¹ I have acknowledged my enormous indebtedness to them in too many places to mention here. In the foreword to the reprint of the first part of the ground breaking book, *The Non-Directive Approach* as an Avec Publication, Catherine Widdicombe and I indicate his great contributions to community development and to our work and lives. I have also written two accounts of his contributions in Essays in *The history of youth and community work: Discovering the past*. I have a chapter on “T R Batten’s Life and Work”. And in a series on the Internet I wrote an article, “T R (Reg) Batten and Madge Batten, Non-Directivity and Community Development” <http://www.infed.org/thinkers/batten.htm>.

Several things strike me as I recall this exciting fulfilling and extraordinary period of my ministry. It is not possible for me to overstate the importance of doing this study, training and research not only to me personally, my vocational life and work but to the purposes and cause to which I was utterly committed. Not only did it give me the credentials I needed but also the depth of understanding, confidence and knowledge that comes uniquely from researching in depth and especially through the kind of qualitative action research (in contra-distinction to pure research) in which I engaged then and subsequently through Project 70 – 75, Avec and the post-graduate courses in evangelism, mission, ministry, community development and

20 See *Parchmore Partnership* pp 62, 91; Chapters VII & VIII of my PhD Thesis, pp 48 – 74, and various other places.

21 There is a description of the consultancy relationship between TRB and me in my PhD Thesis, chapter XXII, pp 324 – 330

consultancy. This period was in fact a six-year apprenticeship in church and community development work and in the craft of action research. I emerged as a qualified and experienced community development and group worker and an action-researcher and a budding theorist. (Amongst other things, along with Graham Riches in the first instance, I devised a system of evaluating church and community development work which I defined as a 'directional analysis of change'. See *Community Development Journal*, October 1967 and January 1968, my PhD Thesis Chapter XI and *Analysis and Design*, p.132). I could not have seen at the time just how important all this was to become and what it enabled me to do and to be. But I did know that it was important. Additional to this significant and substantial enhancement of my professional and practical abilities, the title of 'Dr' gave me a readily recognised and accepted status in all the spheres in which I operated. (Reg Batten was encouraged by the University to take a doctorate, he told me. He refused because he was too busy but the University prevailed and accepted one of his books as a thesis. To his surprise, he told me, he was amazed at the way in which his doctorate opened up his work in many ways through enhancing his status in the eyes of many people!).

To my joy and surprise the studies I did for the PGCE and to lesser extent for the Education Diploma, provided insights and understandings that I did not get from Batten which were complementary to what I was learning from him and directly relevant and applicable to the work I was doing in Parchmore. This was particularly true of the lectures and writings of the head of the development, Professor Basil Bernstein on socio-linguistics, socialization and education (see p. 673 of my Thesis). This helped me directly into the work with skinheads and West Indian youths. Then there were the lectures on 'participant observers and observations' which led me to an original piece of work on comparing active and passive observers (see my Thesis, pp 57 – 66). And there was so much more that I have drawn upon ever since. In every way it was an extremely profitable and exciting time.

What amazes me is how I managed to do all that I did during this period more of which will become clear as I write this part. The PGCE involved attending lectures at the Institute of Education and doing assignments. That was demanding even though it was very much a part-time course. The curriculum required each student to take a lesson in a school which I had to do even though they said that in place of this requirement they would examine my group work at Parchmore. My lesson was with a sixth-form group on the conversion of St Paul. I arrived in good time to find the teacher in the classroom which had a store room at the back of the front

of the class where he located himself throughout the lesson I took. Two very large examiners wedged themselves in desks far too small for them. I had prepared work sheets and sub-group work. During the plenary sharing I asked them how they would explain Saul's conversion. One of them said, 'he had a mental breakdown, sir'. I acknowledged that as a possible explanation and invited them to speculate about others. Almost in unison they said, 'That is what our teacher told us, sir'. I felt trapped between the examiners and the teacher listening in his cubby hole. I extricated myself by getting them to assess all possibilities including an experience of the risen Christian. When it came to preparing for the exams, I had only a few days in which to do so. That was hard going.

The practical side of the action research was the work I was doing as minister of and worker to the project. This was done collaboratively with teams of people. My reflection and analyses of developments was sharpened by ongoing discussions with Dorothy Household and the other workers in the centre. Data collection was greatly helped by the recoding of events and meetings and conferences by Dorothy Household and her team of helpers. Studying the theory and analysing and evaluating the data and writing up the dissertation took an enormous amount of time but it was work I really enjoyed doing. Regularly I used to do this work at the end of the day, 11pm to 3am and then get up at 6.30am. It was a wonderful feeling of freedom to sit down to work at something knowing there would be no interruptions. Dorothy said one evening as I was going to my study for such a stint on a particular tricky issue, 'I admire your courage'. I had never thought of it as requiring courage although I suppose in a way it did, I just thought of it as an opportunity to engage in the reflective and analytical thinking that I love to do.

Throughout I had the support of Molly and Dorothy in a thousand ways. Without them I could not have done what I did. Dorothy helped me enormously to think through difficult issues; conversations with her refined my thinking and extended it; she helped me and encouraged me to find ways of expressing things and formulating ideas; she drew out of me insights and understandings I didn't know I had. To better equip herself for the work and also for thinking things through with me, she went on the three-year course that led her to gaining a 'Certificate in Education' in 1970. The tragedy of her premature death in 1974 still overwhelms me. I lost so much; the causes we espoused lost enormously; the church was denied the enormous contributions she could have made had she lived. And that is all additional to the personal loss Molly and I suffered.

Consultor, Consultant and Trainer

My first experience of consultancy was through being the fortunate recipient of it through Reg Batten and I started to practise it by doing what he did but with far less expertise. All this happened way before I gave it a title or even knew it had one or that it was a discipline in its own right. I have described how this happened under the title of 'A Providential Discovery' in the introduction to my book *Consultancy Ministry & Mission* which I wrote some thirty years or more after first stumbling across it (see pp 4 – 6) – and in several other places! Essentially, consultancy praxis is one application of non-directive praxis which is self-evidently of enormous importance in the whole field of church and community development work and in the development of my vocation. I have been enormously privileged to practise it, to research it, to write about its theory, theology and practice and to teach it.

Combined, non-directive and consultancy praxis facilitated the processes of the various modes of in-service training in which I engaged and determined the approach to it. Practising them in this way schooled me into a church and community development trainer.

Collaborative Leader and Worker

My commitment to the non-directive approach determined the kind of leader and worker to which I aspired. Fundamentally I was attempting to promote and engender egalitarian working relationships. I have described something of what this involved for me in *Analysis & Design*, pp 267 – 271.

Nature of my Professional Stance

Searching for the skills and knowledge I required to engage competently and professionally in the developments of Parchmore unavoidably involved me in the study of disciplines other than those traditionally associated with Christian ministry. Again I have written about that: its rewards; opportunities; difficulties; complexities; dangers; my approach in *Consultancy, Ministry and Mission*, see particularly pp 287 – 290. Basically, I was studying other disciplines in order to enhance my ability to practise my own, that of Christian ministry in the Church and the world at large in and through the Methodist Church. Moreover, I was committed to doing so through working with churches as institutions for the interrelated development of churches and the communities in which they were set (see *Church and Communities*, pp 38 – 39 and *The Church & Community Development*, pp 33 – 35 and *Human & Religious Factors in Church & Community Development Work*, pp 12 – 14).

²²Discerning the concept of interrelated development was a eureka movement. For some considerable time I had been grappling with my unease – personal, ethical, professional, theological, spiritual unease that is – about aspects of my approach to working/engaging with people in the community and that of the church. I was clear that I wanted to work with rather than for them for their development and human and spiritual well-being. Equally, I wanted to avoid any vestige of superiority, condescension, do-gooding, patronage within me, in my attitudes, approaches and stance and in that of the church and in what we did, how we did it and the way in which we related to people was perceived and received. Moreover I wanted to be faithful to my calling to witness to and proclaim the gospel and to bring people into Christianity and the church without proselytizing and appearing pious. I wanted to serve people and work with them on equal terms openly for their well-being and development. Clearly, I wanted people of their own free will to become Christian and members of the church but I did not want to be working with them simply and deviously to achieve such ends. I wanted to work with them as they were to help them to become the best they could become. And as I did so, I wished to be in open dialogue about moral and spiritual issues implicit in what we were doing. In short, honest and real engagement with people about the practicalities, feelings, issues, hopes, fears, beliefs, purposes, spirituality (I am groping for a word to cover all the deep issues and aspirations of human beings without success) related to their well-being, development and destiny.

Implementing the interrelated development concept involves, *inter alia*, overcoming or overturning some deeply ingrained and unhealthy attitudes assumptions and perceptions. It is common place for local churches to be active in their neighbourhood in many different ways from providing leisure and educational facilities for people of all ages through organisations and clubs to social and pastoral care. This is widely acceptable. However, whilst churches helping people in their communities is normative, communities helping churches is not: by and large people in churches and in communities would not think of helpful and developmental action flowing in the opposite direction from neighbourhood to community; in fact some, if not many, church people would find it totally unacceptable and be somewhat offended by the idea. Christians help and promote development that is their God given servant vocation; receiving help is not. That is akin to students contributing to the education and development of their teachers overtly and purposefully; teachers teach and students learn; churches promote development and others are developed! Consequently, getting people in churches and in communities working together consciously and purposefully

for the interrelated development of churches and communities, Christians and non-Christians, people and environment, the human and spiritual involves attitude changes which are difficult to effect. But it can be done – and must be as the following incident in which I was involved after I left Parchmore and was engaged on Project 70 -75. During the conversation I had explained the interrelated concept to which we were committed and on which we worked.

With the executive's agreement the two full-time members of the team met the community development officer in January 1974. He described the unit and his approach to community development work. The team described Project 70 – 75 and the church, church-community and community work in which they were engaged in Ronsey. He said that the team had opened his eyes to a new area of work as he had not previously thought of the churches as organisations through which to promote community development. He now saw that a non-church person could act as a catalyst to church people just as church people could act as works to non-church people. *Church & Community*, p.150.

This conversation led to the development of good working relationships between the Executive. Within a few months the community development officer was involved in helping eight church and community development schools in the area! See *Church & Communities*, pp 150 – 152 for the story of this.

This messy presentation of these aspects of my thoughts and feelings mirrors the inner confusion and turbulence so I have avoided tidying them up! Discerning the concept of interrelated development ²³ provided me with a working model which enabled me to resolve some of the issues – others may well be irreconcilable and have to be kept in creative tension – and gave me a much more cohesive and purposeful and honest approach. For one thing it shifted me from 'we the developed' are helping you 'the underdeveloped' to develop. (God forgive me/us this awful assumption, but it was implicit howbeit unstated in our thinking). So let us work together for our separate and mutual development. Thus it spoke to the realities that we all need to develop that Christian and non-Christian, church and non-church people can help each other to develop and do so through working together on things of mutual concern in egalitarian partnerships. This concept gave cohesion to my approach and provided me with a theologically and spiritually underpinning to it. I felt it to be wholesome, honourable and

²³ See across and the telling incident in the Anerley Youth Centre Management Committee Meeting described in 9.1.126 – 7. This is a living issue now, see writings of Richard Holloway in his autobiography and *Goddess Morality*.

morally sound. It was/is a model which, whilst it does not resolve all the issues related to Christian mission and involvement in society, it is one which I can share openly with anyone because it is consistent with the purposes of the church and religious and secular approaches to development.

Returning to the study of other disciplines to enhance my competence, I have discussed the changes and difficulties of foraging in other disciplines for help with my own and how I tried to cope with them in *Consultancy, Ministry & Mission*, p.289. Here I limit myself to making the following points.

Throughout my foraging I remained firmly located in my own disciplines/profession that of an ordained Christian minister in the Methodist Church – latterly described as a ‘presbyter’. I did not at any point see myself as or aspire to be a community development worker or a secular consultant or a trainer. So, I did not do a role switch or change any vocation.²⁴ But I did radically modify my praxis of ministry by assimilating into my own profession, things I considered of value to its praxis from other disciplines notably from community development, community studies, action research, and consultancy. Doing this involved not only determining that the aspects of other disciplines were useful to the praxis of my ministry but that they were consistent with my theology and enhanced my spirituality. So, I became a minister who could and did and does work non-directively as a group worker and consultant and was/is able to engage in community development, action-research and train others in these disciplines. All these things were subservient to my discipline, profession and vocation as a Christian minister. I am trying to recall and trace but with little success a way of thinking about this position which I found very helpful. It was something like, in my case, being a Christian minister with an allied profession/discipline (community development, researcher, and consultant). The things I valued in the terminology was the idea of enwrapping other professional attributes within one’s own whilst remaining firmly rooted in and focussed on one’s own profession and without any pretence or assumption at being in one’s self multi-disciplinary or interdisciplinary or omniscient.²⁵

24 Many or several people did this in the 60’s and 70’s by becoming social workers, probation officers, community workers and teachers. Harry Salmon became a sector minister community development worker, for instance.

25 In relation to all this, I am concerned about the tacit untested assumption which is widespread that people with business experience have knowledge about management and organizations that is superior to that of clergy in relation to churches which they can use once they become ordained or employed by the

During the time leading up to his becoming Vice President of the Methodist Conference in 2003 and in preparation for it, Professor Peter Howdle and I had interesting conversations about professionalism in medicine and ministry. A key diagram we produced is presented in *Sustaining Preachers & Preaching*, pp 44 – 45. Notes we produced are in Peter Howdle's file'.

2. Commitment to work in, with and through the Institutional Church for Holistic Spiritual & Human Development in Church & Community

The Parchmore appointment was to do that in contradistinction to working for such development through agencies be they Christian or secular in formation. In Project 70 – 75, I was to waver by default but corrected my position and received my commitment to work for development through local institutional churches (see *Churches & Communities*, pp 38 – 39, 200 – 204).

This is implicit in 1. Above, 'Professional approach to Church & Community Development work, Researching and Consultancy'. As it is fundamental to my work in Parchmore and through to this day, I simply wish here to make it explicit as one of the cardinal principles in my 'approach to ministry and professionalism'.

2. Commitment to Local Work

Prior to my Parchmore Ministry I had become increasingly involved in regional and national work. Also, serious consideration had been given to my taking up a national appointment. Soon after taking up my appointment to Parchmore I became very concerned about the possible adverse effect on the demands of my continuing regional and national work would have upon my ability to do what I realized needed to be done at Parchmore: I became increasingly aware that to do that work with any chance of success I would have to give it my total and exclusive attention. To do that I would

Church to dramatically improve the workings of the Church. Inherent in this assumption is the fallacy that transferring such things from industry or business to the church or voluntary organizations is a simple matter. It is not: crossing cultural and theological boundaries is a complex matter and must be treated as such. The latest example of this is in the discussion about the appointment of the new Archbishop of Canterbury.

need to resign from various connexional and district committees and my post as District Youth Secretary.

Making that decision was extraordinarily difficult because I was at that time convinced that radical change came from above rather than from below: power resided at connexional and district levels and I desperately wanted to retain my place in what I saw to be significant power bases. Torn and stressed with indecision, I vividly recall storming from room to room as I wrestled with the issues and every time I met up with Molly, who was I think in the kitchen doing the washing, I exploded with one or other aspects of the dilemma with which I was grappling and the possibilities and their consequences. Eventually, but without any assurance that I was not going to lose my overall effectiveness because my views about where the real power lay remained unchanged, I became utterly convinced that I must resign from all connexional and district work and give myself totally to Parchmore and decided to do so. That was more an act of faith than rational conviction prompted by a realistic approach to work economics. Immediately, I wrote letters of resignation. The Chairman of the District, the Rev Ronald Ducker, responded very warmly and understanding but with regret to my resignation as District Youth Secretary.

Very soon afterwards I received an invitation from Pauline Webb to join the Board of Lay Training, of which at that time she was the dynamic Director. That had an enormously positive effect upon me: it confirmed deep within me that the decision I had made was the right one; it gave me a national position of considerable influence in direct relation to the work in which I was engaged at Parchmore: I saw it as a providential act of a loving and caring God who was gradually unfolding before me the vocational path that I must take. Events were to prove what I glimpsed at the time that the Board and the work which it enabled me to do proved to be of inestimable value in the promotion of Church and that the Community Development Group I was enabled me to work concurrently at local and national levels on church and community development to the benefit of both and to gain much needed help and support for much of my subsequent work in this field.

Gradually over the years I was able to see the enormous significance of my decision to give myself totally to my Parchmore ministry. From that time onwards my commitment to and understanding of the importance of focusing on the local – even when working with people at regional and national levels – increased until it became an axiom of praxis. Much later, mainly through the work I did on the postgraduate courses on evangelism and mission at Cliff College and the writings of David J Bosch, I saw the

primary importance of the local church everywhere in the mission of the Christian Church. When I came to write Consultancy Ministry and Mission in 2000 I was able to give a more mature understanding of the relative importance and contributions that could be made at local regional and national levels.

[Subsequently, and throughout my career I was enormously privileged to engage extensively with people at regional, national and international levels on their work. Significantly this was non-executive involvement through providing in-service and postgraduate training and consultancy for people operating in all the principal denominations. A principal thrust in this work was enabling people at these different levels to be more effective in promoting local work. At the beginning of my Parchmore Ministry when I had to make a decision about local versus regional and national work I had no idea whatsoever – and I could not possibly have had – that it would be possible for me to make such contributions without being in executive positions in the administrative and power structures of the church. In fact had I located myself in such structures it is very doubtful whether I would have been able to engage effectively in as wide a field as I eventually did and make significant contributions?]

My search proper for more effective ways of working with people goes back to my ministry in Anerley and Sydenham, areas of urban deprivation in South London. It was there, in the early 60s that I made my first serious attempts to get each of two churches involved in meeting community needs, those of 13-16 year olds described at the time in the *Newsome Report* as being of 'average or less than average ability' and greatly deprived. Two projects evolved. They had some success but they failed to achieve what I hoped they would because, I concluded, I had failed to get the churches as involved as they needed to be in order to sustain things themselves. They were my projects, not theirs. Eventually I worked out that this was because my approach just did not work, I lacked skills. I tried to work with the people. I faithfully followed church procedures and especially those which were democratic. But I was adopting a way of working with people which was a dysfunctional combination of elements from democratic methods, directive approaches and laissez-faire attitudes. (I continued to use and develop what I was learning about the experiential approach to education to good effect. But this was more or less self-contained in educational programmes for adults as well as those for young people and children).

This analysis convinced me that I needed to acquire appropriate skills and knowledge if I was to do the work at Parchmore more competently. I desperately wanted the skills and knowledge because I was utterly committed

to doing the work in as professional a manner as I possibly could. This approach derived from my deeply held conviction that any and all aspects of the life and work of the church should have the respect of professional in the field; it must not be seen as amateurish do-gooding; it must have its own professional integrity. Consequently, once I had accepted the invitation to the Parchmore ministry, I started the search for training. Some time ago I described how I discovered just what I needed and wanted in the following way in a paragraph which in the original followed directly from the above quotation.

So I set out to find appropriate training. I wrote to many different people describing my problem. People in the church were singularly unhelpful (almost unsympathetic). Hope and help came from Dr T R Batten, at that time Reader in Community Development Studies in the University of London. A letter I wrote to the University about my problems arrived on his desk. He rang me suggesting that we meet after I had read his books. We met and almost immediately were immersed in one of the most exciting discussion I had ever had. As we constructed and poured over diagrams and charts about my situation and my felt need I knew intuitively and conclusively that I had found what I was looking for. I was convinced that he had discovered, researched and tested out ways of getting people to think and work things out for themselves which respected their autonomy and which I could see would be successful in the situations in which I had failed to do just that. I left his room in Woburn Square in great excitement and anticipation. I had found that for which unknowingly I had searched. It is frequently described as the non-directive approach to working with individuals and groups.²⁶

Since writing this piece about searching for training, I have come across correspondence I had with the Rev Dr Fred Milson about appropriate training from 13th February – 28th March 1966 at the same time that I was in touch with Reg Batten. Sadly, we could not find a mutually convenient time to meet. He offered me a place on a two-week course which I could not take up and which wasn't exactly what I was looking for. Conversations with Batten were so successful that I abandoned my attempts to meet up with Milson or a Miss E van Bienen, a member of his staff who he put me in touch with. However, he came back into my life later when he acted as external examiner to my PhD – and referred to my work in articles. Correspondence in the 'Same Background Pages' file, Section 9.1.

26 First in *Our Church & Community Development Studies* by CW & GL (1987) jp.6 then in Parchmore Partnership p. 12.

What followed is documented: the Parchmore people seconded me to a three-month training course in 1967 on the understanding that what I learnt I should share with them: trainee was to become their trainer! So, we, the Parchmore people and I, were on track to acquiring the requisite understandings and skills and changing our approach from a directive to a non-directive one.

²⁷Subsequent to writing this, I have read an outstanding book by Rowan Williams's with the section on the 'Big Society', and written a sermon on the subject S.531. The book contains some impressive material about 'localism', eg

Localism does not mean the dissolution of a complex national society
276

God is necessary to localism and local power

Big society and small world 276

A thick textured social life needs a thick textured spiritual / religious/
empathetic life 277

Tension between local and global 278

THE CIRCUIT

Geographically small, the Circuit had six ministers and seven churches. This meant that five of the ministers had pastoral ministries. One only had two churches, Addiscombe and Cherry Orchard Road. The ministers at the outset of my ministry were: John R Gibbs, John Garbutt, Thomas Drew, Brian J N Galliers, and Ernest Goodridge. Brynmor Salmon followed John Gibbs in 1971; Frank Smith followed John Garbutt in 1971; W Peter Stephens followed Brian Galliers in 1967 and was succeeded in 1971 by David Driver.

²⁸All these members of staff were good ministers and some of them were destined to have outstanding ministries, especially Brian Galliers, Peter Stephens and David Driver. Ernest Goodridge had established exciting ecumenical partnerships in Addiscombe when few such arrangements existed. They were extraordinary good colleagues who gave me enormous magnanimous moral and practical support in my work at Parchmore to which they were deeply committed. This was very important to me. Most

27 27.7.13

28 3.4.13

of them were senior to me in my ministry and were concerned about my welfare.

Both of my superintendents were superb. I could not have had better. At a point when I was under great pressure, John Gibbs arranged for me to have a two-month sabbatical to write a book at a time when such arrangements for circuit ministers were unheard of. Just before I was about to go on this sabbatical, John had a very serious heart attack from which mercifully he made a good recovery. When I went to see him in hospital, his first words were, 'I have been thinking a lot about you. This attack must not be allowed to disturb the arrangements we have made for your sabbatical. You simply must take it.' That was typical of him, superintendency and pastoral care at its very best. Brynmor Salmon was equally as good and committed to the work of Parchmore for which he had a natural bent. Both were fathers in God to me.

[A copy of the Croydon plan for September – November 1970 is included in the original text.]

Three other ministers were resident in the Circuit in addition to four supernumeraries In Hall Grange, a Methodist House for the Aged. There were connexional secretaries resident in the circuit: Edward Rogers and Kenneth Greet both in the Christian Citizen Department and Elliott Kendall who was with a Missionary Conference. These outstanding ministers offered me unstinting support and Edward Rogers was to become a key figure in the work of Avec from 1971 onwards for many years.

One of the churches, Shirley, was properly suburban; one, Addington, was on a vast housing estate, the others were urban churches some of which had been suburban, others town churches. By and large the congregations were middle class. All were thriving and led by some extraordinarily able and dedicated lay people. They too gave me enormous support and encouragement. Parchmore was undoubtedly a circuit as well as a Parchmore Church project. In *The Parchmore Partnership* I described the Circuit support for the project and its staff (see pp 81 – 2).

In the Llanelly and Carmarthen circuit I had pastoral charge of four churches; in the Sydenham and Forest Hill Circuit, two; in the Croydon Circuit, one a single pastorate. Being freed to concentrate on one church was absolutely essential in such a period of transition.

An incident in Cherry Orchard Methodist Church

²⁹Whilst tidying up my papers after completing 9.1 an anecdote came

back to me which I have used many times to illustrate the difficulties of promoting creative interactive between groups of people who, whilst having much in common, differ so significantly that they lived in splendid isolation from their neighbours or day are in faction with them.

The incident occurred early in my ministry in the Circuit. On this occasion I was due to speak at a mid-week meeting on Home Missions. An urgent telephone call from the architect about the Parchmore developments delayed me. Arriving on the dot of 8pm, I thought providence was standing upon me because there was a parking space immediately outside the Church. I had visited the Church to take a service only once, the previous Sunday when I was bemused by the number of doors and the complicated way in which we processed out of the vestry with the choir to enter the chapel by another door! In a hurry, I opened the first door I saw and entered what I thought was the Church. I was not pleased by what I saw in what appeared to be a Methodist room: two concentric circles, the outer one of women, thirteen of them, the inner one of men, nine of them. (I think this was the way in which they were seated).

They seemed to be expecting me because a man stood up, came over to me, placed a chair between the circles and indicated I sit there. (I was in clerical garb.) I felt at the time that I didn't qualify for either the men's or women's circle! All the men had dark suits and wore spats and had open Bibles in their hands; the women were all knitting; the men were in a deep (well informed about the literal texts) typological exegesis of I Samuel 17.54 (I am not sure whether I was given a Bible or not). They certainly 'knew' their Bibles but the exposition was bizarre, literalistic but fascinating.

At first I thought this to be highly unusual even for ex-Primitive Methodists. I didn't recognise anyone. I waited for someone to welcome me but I was completely ignored although I felt some of the comments were directed at me in an attempt to show me the error of my ways. Gradually, I realised I was in the wrong place. After what appeared an eternity but was probably a few minutes, I said to the man who had provided me with a chair, "I am a Methodist Minister". "I know", he said. "I have come to address a Home Mission Meetings" I ventured. "Next door", he said. I made my exit in as dignified way as possible, feeling I had been snared and eventually found my way into the meeting I was meant to address.

The people of Cherry Orchard had started their meeting hoping I would eventually arrive. They gave me a warm welcome and I explained that inadvertently I had got into the adjacent building. They were most interested and surprised. "Goodness me", they said, 'over the years we have

often wondered what goes on in there; we have had no contact with them. Tell us first what you saw'. And I did. They were Plymouth Brethren.

On many occasions, I have used the incident to illustrate how neighbouring religious groups do not in so many cases and for so long – 50 years? – become good neighbours; chasms can exist and the difficulty of bringing them into creative dialogue and relationships (see for example Sermon 159).

Parchmore:

***The Distinguished History & Ministry of the Church*³⁰**

From the outset of my ministry in Parchmore, I was conscious that I had been privileged to become part of a great heritage: I knew very little of the pre-1939 – 45 war period of Parchmore's life but the impact of the life and work of the church and ministers from 1939 onwards was tangible in 1966: Parchmore was alive with its history. Each of the ministers had made their own unique contributions to the life and work. The minister during the war, the Rev Kenneth Bear, Peggy Rush told me, had said that one of his primary objectives was to see that there would be a group of people in the church equipped and trained to staff a post-war programme of Christian education. There is no doubt he achieved his objective and up to a short time before I arrived there had been an outstanding educational programme for children and young people. The Sunday school was in eclipse when I started my ministry but the commitment to education was strong. We rebuilt on that. (See *The Parchmore Partnership*, pp 43 – 46, for instance.)

Earlier I described the church during Derek Greeves' ministry (1947 – 52). At the heart of this vibrant church, he exercised a scholarly preaching and pastoral ministry of a very high quality. This led to an educated and informed clarity. There can be no substitute for this kind of ministry which was intellectually, theologically and spiritually profound. William Strawson (1952 – 54), Benjamin Drewery (1954 – 57), Norman Dawson (1957 – 63) and John Mitchell (1963 – 66) to a lesser extent maintained this tradition of high quality ministry which was academically and spiritually substantial. (Greeves became the minister of Westminster Central Hall; Strawson, tutor in Systematic Theology & Philosophy first at Handsworth College and then at Queens; Drewery, lecturer in Ecclesiastical History, University of Manchester; Dawson, Chairman of the London S. E. District).

Each of these had added significant layers in the character building of Parchmore. As I went about my ministry, I was conscious of them in the lives of people and in the way in which meetings worked and groups thought and acted. To use another metaphor, they were rich seams in the personal lives of the people and the corporate life of the Church.

Moreover, I could see much evidence of the same phenomenon in the layering of the history and character of Parchmore by outstanding and ordinary lay people and organisations through their formative influences and power.

What an incredible privilege to be allowed to build yet another layer on all that in the emerging character of Parchmore as a church, youth and community centre through collective non-directive processes with diverse groups of people.

Parchmore: A New Era as a Church, Youth and Community Centre³¹

A new era in the history of Parchmore began when it was decided that it should become a church, youth and community centre as a part of an ambitious Methodist scheme for ten such centres in Greater London. In the event Parchmore became the flagship of this scheme which sadly was never fully realised.

Gradually as this decision was implemented, Parchmore was transformed multi-dimensionally, radically and irreversibly:

- Buildings were extensively remodelled;
- New ways of working with people were introduced;
- Extensive in-service training programmes for paid and voluntary workers were developed;
- Reflective practice became normative;
- A full-time and part-time youth and community workers were appointed;
- The essential nature of the project was converted from a building/caring/service and facilities providing scheme to a holistic developmental one through the design of a diagrammatic 'disclosure' development model.³² (See *Parchmore Partnership*, pp 16 – 2. For ease

³¹ 15.4.13

³² In contrast that is to 'picturing' or 'scale' models, see *Diagrammatic Modelling*, pp 16 - 17

of reference this model is reproduced below.

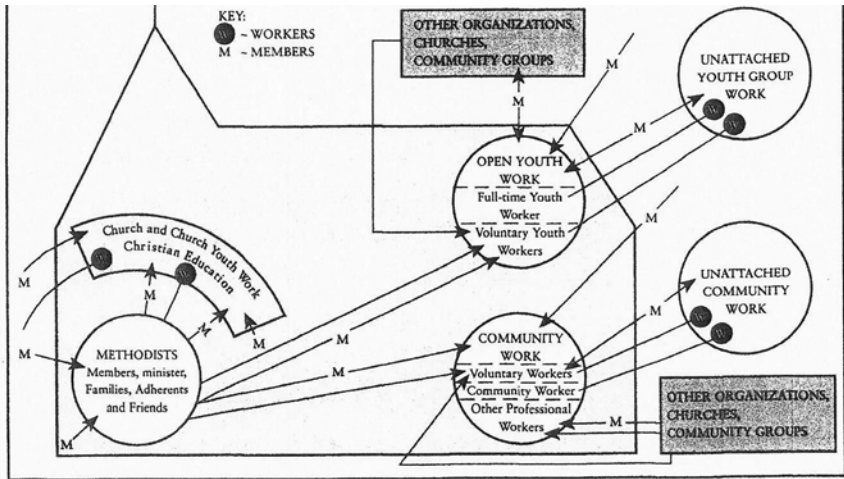
- The programme of events and work was greatly extended and the number of organisations was increased.

The story of the developments from 1966 – 72 is told in Part One, ‘Laying the Foundations’ of *The Parchmore Partnership*, pp 1 – 92 and much more fully and analytically in my PhD Thesis.

The Service of Dedication of the Remodelled Church and The Youth and Community Centre 18 May 1968³³

Undoubtedly, the dedication of the remodelled church and the youth and community centre was a great day: the opening not only of new premises but a new era in the life of Parchmore, a moment of destiny; and we were aware of it. Excitement and expectation were in the air. Ministers, workers, and people alike had prepared for the day as well as they could have done through extended discussions, thorough-going preparation, careful planning and appropriate training. A long period of controversy, indecision, uncertainty and living and worshiping on a building site had ended. We were where we had opted to be, in a new place. Now we were faced with the exhilarating, challenging and awesome task and responsibility of realizing the potential of the project by making our effective transition from plans, purposes, theories and visionary religious thinking to putting our new found praxis into effective action in the given realities of Parchmore and Thornton Heath. On that day our hopes and spirits were high surrounded by large numbers of people: young and old; people from Parchmore’s past, other churches, charitable Trusts who has supported the project financially, the Local Authority, the Borough, ecumenical agencies ... and to my great joy, my mentor, Reg Batten who spoke. Derek Greeves, the most popular of previous ministers who inspired me so long ago, preached. I am struggling to give adequate expressions to the spirit of the day and my feelings. Details of what was said have long gone from my memory and I cannot find a copy of a report on the day written I believe by Dorothy Household which appeared in the Methodist Recorder and would give some of that detail – it is possibly in the Avec Archives. After all the celebrations, the youth centre opened for business!

Various aspects of the day are represented in the order of service, Architects drawings and photographs that follow and notes and originals on file.



[Not copied. Parchmore Opening Order of Service]

My Ministry

In Parchmore (as well as in the Circuit) I pursued a traditional preaching and pastoral ministry and engaged in committee work, administration and executive action. Additionally, I introduced and practised the non-directive approach to working with colleagues and the people in the church and in the community and engaged with them in programmes of interrelated development. Pursuing these aspects of traditional and innovative ministries together was very important to me and to the church. Additional to the normal functions that my preaching provided, it is presented opportunities to explore publicly biblical, spiritual and theological aspects of the developmental work in which we were engaged. Similarly, in addition to the normal functions of my pastoral ministry it enabled me to engage personally with those who were experiencing conflict, difficulties and misgivings in relation to the developments.

Thus, preaching and pastoral work made very important contributions to holding and bringing people together in the church and the neighbourhood and building up the fellowship of the congregation when they were divided in their opinions and feelings about the developments that were occurring and experiencing the ups and downs, stresses and strains of developing the youth and community work. In fact, the part they played in wrapping the project in the mission and the fellowship of the church and preventing members and the church from being eclipsed by the project cannot be overstated.

Pursuing this interactive course of action between traditional and innovative aspects of my ministry was both exciting and exhilarating and stressful and fractious. Throughout, however, I was convinced that they must be held together, and allowed to interact even when that was painful for the congregation and for me because I believed they were complementary aspects of my ministry and mission and potentially inter-creative. Events proved that the practice of the non-directive approach was a key factor in the effectiveness of the pursuing this approach.

As I have already said, the Parchmore story has been told in several different places and ways. Therefore, I make no attempt here to read tells the story; as far as possible I restrict myself to noting and commenting on some key aspects and to sharing my reflections on significant features that have occurred to me as I have prepared to write this section.³⁴

Vital Human Resources Infrastructure³⁵

By and large those who participated actively in the Parchmore project

34 **Hand written and typed notes.** This is a convenient point at which to



Some of those involved in the Opening Ceremony waiting to enter. 9.1.1988
 From left to right: The Rev John R Gibbs (Superintendent), Miss Penny Thatcher,
 (First full-time youth worker), The Chairman of the Croydon Education Committee,
 The Rev Ronald Ducken (Chairman of the District), ? The Rev Derek Greaves,
 Mr Manbague Stephens (Borough Youth Officer), Master Peter Eastman, Mr Paul
 Bonblatt Lang, Dr T. R. Batten. Miss F Calverdale. The Rev Dennis Gendiner

were attracted by and to the vision of it and generally speaking had some experience of working with people howbeit in traditional ways. Nonetheless, engaging in the Project was a new experience to us all in several ways: the purposes were extraordinarily ambitious; the nature and the scale of the programme took us well beyond the comfort zones of traditional church life and work with like minded people; the preferred approach and methods differed enormously in praxis and theology from conventional and commonly accepted ones and deceptively difficult to use. Furthermore, it had a high profile and was a risky venture so it was watched by the Church at a distance and not always sympathetically!

Unsurprisingly we turned to each other instinctively and spontaneously for moral and spiritual support, often prayerful, and practical and technical help and know-how. Three of the ways in which we found it were: interpersonal private support relationships; collegial teamwork; in-service training; theological and technical study groups and workshops; consultancy and co-consultancy relationships.

My purpose here is limited: to classify and list these different kinds of support and means of development in an illustrative way. These means of support were distinctive and had their own autonomy but they overlapped in personnel and in the functions they performed and were complementary.



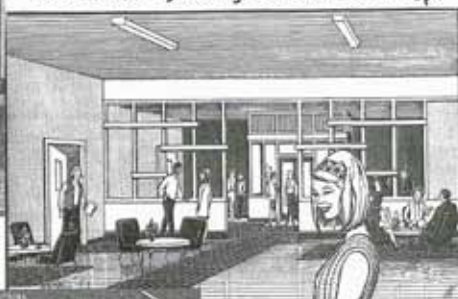
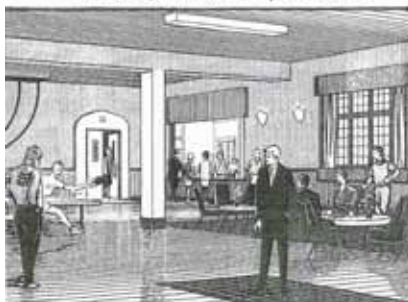
*The Architects drawings
of the side and front
elevations of Porschemore.*



The interior of Parochione as it was at the beginning of my ministry.



The outside of Parochione as it was never a less before & after the remodeling.



The Architects drawings of the new Chapel and the Centre

1979

Much of it was formally organized and structured; some of it was ad hoc and informal. Each aspect made vital contributions to participants and their well-being and to their effectiveness and that of the Project. Some of them were purposefully and carefully introduced and organized; others simply emerged as responses to felt needs and through working relationships. The overall structure and pattern was therefore only partly designed; the pattern presented here is a retrospective one, not consciously seen at the time.

Private support relationships

Molly and Dorothy Household gave me invaluable private support and technical help; Colin Grant, who eventually became a part-time youth worker at Parchmore and then went on for professional training, was extremely bright. I gained enormously from conversations with him. Roger Neave was a great source of private, moral and spiritual support and enormous practical help.

Collegial teamwork

There were many such relationships: the circuit staff which met regularly; the full and part-time workers at Parchmore.

In-service training

There was an impressive and highly productive series of in-house in-service training programmes for anyone from the church or community who wish to participate: non-residential workshops (see *The Parchmore Partnership*, pp 31 – 33) and residential weekends at Sudbury. Also there was in-house in-service training for those engaged in youth work, Christian education and playgroups. Additionally, some people attended local authority training programmes in youth work and for playgroups staff.

[People in the Shirley and Addiscombe Circuit churches invited me to conduct training courses in church and community development for them.

Interestingly, as a consequence of the Parchmore in-service training programmes I was invited by one of the HMI's of the London Borough of Croydon, Miss Elaine May who became quite a close friend, to organize and conduct in-service training programme for teachers in the borough. I saw this as a particular aspect of our community work.

Another interesting development occurring in relation to the work we had done on integrating the local Boys Brigade Bible class into the comprehensive Christian education programme. This came to the attention

of a national committee exploring how to develop BB Bible classes. I was invited to help the national executive group commissioned with this task. I remember them flying me up to Glasgow for meetings. It was an interesting experience and a privilege to be able to influence such an organization.]

Planning, designing work programmes and problem solving

Some of this grew out of in-service training programs and of itself became a means of further training. (See *The Parchmore Partnership*, pp 36-61)

Theological and technical support groups

Three particular groups did an enormous amount of creative thinking and proffered to their members substantial inter-personal theological, practical and technical support. One of these was a group of the ministers, full time and part-time youth and community workers of the Ten Centres. They met on a regular basis non-residentially with occasional residential sessions. Another was The Board of Lay Training. And yet another was the Community Development Group. I acted as the work at of the first and the third of these. During the latter part of my ministry I also got support from a group convened by Catherine Widdicombe which eventually became the staff of Project 70-75.

Consultancy and co-consultancy relationships

As I have already said, T.R. Batten offered me his consultancy services throughout my ministry at Parchmore (see *The Parchmore Partnership*, pp 34 – 5). Several of those of us working in Parchmore offered each other co-consultancy help but we did not refer to it as of such time.

A reflective note

The value of this list is that it gives a concise overview of the underlying training and support infrastructures in a way that has not been done elsewhere – and that is what I set out to do. However, I am not entirely satisfied with it and I am reluctant to leave it in this form but I think I must. My dissatisfaction and frustration relates to my realization that it could be developed into a very interesting piece about infrastructures. Not least because some high-quality deep thinking – in some cases original thinking was done by these groups of ordinary people as can be seen from The Parchmore Partnership and my PhD thesis. But such an exercise would take a lot more work than I am able to do at this moment of time and possibly

more than I should do.

Almost all of the meetings and training and consultancy sessions are extensively documented. Meticulous note taking of events as they occurred followed by the writing up of analytical records was part of our standard practice not simply carried out as part of the action research programme important as they were for that. These notes and records are in the Avec Archives and would make interesting reading for those who wish to study the material further. I used this material in writing up my PhD thesis which gives the most comprehensive analytical picture of the Parchmore project. But it does not cover the Ten Centres training programme and the work done by the Community Development Group. Both of these groups made impressive contributions to the development of the praxis and theology of church and community development work. It is a great pity is that it has not been written up and published. The same is true of the consultancy sessions I had with Reg Batten and those which Catherine Widdicombe and I had with him for many years afterwards. I am consoled by the fact that the original material is in the Archives, catalogued and accessible for anyone who wishes to study and research it.

³⁶The quality of some of the discussions is well illustrated by working, and written note on the kingdom of God by Dorothy household. A transcript of it was an introductory note is presented below.

The Kingdom of God is inside you The Kingdom of God is among you Luke 17 v. 21

This is a verbatim transcript of hand written rough working notes dated 21 July 1968 by Dorothy Household which I found amongst her papers. Possibly for a piece she was writing. The original I have kept on file. They were written as a time when we were experiencing aggressive behaviour during the Saturday night club sessions in the Youth Centre which eventually led to its closure, analysis of behaviour in the centre, formulating a programme of work based upon our finding and subsequently an exciting new period of creative youth work (see The Parchmore Partnership pp 53 – 61 and my PhD Thesis).

Dorothy was on the youth centre staff during these disturbances. This piece is a typical perceptive theological reflection on what happened possibly associated with the study she was doing for the Certificate of Education. It illustrates the quality of her contributions.

‘Every major event in our lives is a major event because of its interior personal counterpart’ therefore the Kingdom is among us historically and existentially.

As long as it remains simply historically and not existentially it has not come.

The interior aspect of life particularized by Jesus in such teaching as “Do not commit murder – anyone who shows anger in his heart against his brother must be brought to judgment” – “Do not commit adultery” etc.

The external law has its internal counterpart.

Disturbance in the life of Parchmore which has had its interior effect or ‘counterpart’ – afraid, baffled, bewildered, loss of control, ‘noise is dreadful’. Our world has been turned upside down – interior and exterior Church – and Christians – has no status. Prayers of 60 years of Parchmore people have been answered – the world has come in. Because for these outsiders there is an interior drama of the Kingdom which we may find unrecognizable because it is so different from ours. It may well be that it is that our structures have obtruded and become a fence or wall around the Church.

If a person finds acceptance here he finds he has an internal component of the Kingdom as vitally important as attending church. The one does not replace the other, both are necessary for the full Christian life – all this experience is productive.

The Kingdom brings agony, fear, resistance, aggression, loyalty, excitement.

We are trying to change other people – we ought to be prepared to accept changes in ourselves and our structures. Thus empathy between ourselves and those who come in.

The Communion Service – the Divine disturbance of the Gospel – interior and exterior happenings.

Local Ecumenics ³⁷

Local practical ecumenical cooperation in Thornton Heath goes back to the murder of PC Miles by Christopher Craig and Derek Bentley on the 2nd November 1952. Craig actually shot Miles but Bentley, who shouted at Craig, ‘let him have it Chris’, was hanged for the murder not Craig in what can only be described as a miscarriage of justice. (See articles in file). I remember the case well and particularly seeing Ludovic Kennedy’s play about it, *Murder Story*, 1954. It was deeply moving and I can see in my mind’s eye and feel the emotion of the scene in the cell where a kindly warder was helping him to prepare for his execution through introducing him to and assisting him to learn by heart the hymn ‘God be in my head ...’ with its poignant last-line, ‘God be at mine end, and at my departing’. Understandably, this terrible event had an enormous impact locally. One constructive response was the setting up of a youth club by local churches in

cooperation with the local authority administered and managed by a local ecumenical committee.

The idea was to get unattached young people off the streets and involved in creative activities. Some very important work was done over the years. The clubs met in various centres – schools and churches; the last venue was Parchmore. The Parchmore Project was meant to build on this work. However, when I started my ministry the club had had to be closed because of difficult aggressive behavior and the Management Committee was in disarray and had not met for some time. In cooperation with the Secretary we reconvened the meeting. The committee and the churches represented by it were entirely supportive of the project which was in limbo because of a government building moratorium on Youth and Community Centres. As far as I remember it was decided not to try to regenerate the youth work under the aegis of the Committee but to await the development of the Parchmore Ten Centre Scheme. What transpired was that Parchmore took the lead with the goodwill and support of the local churches and their continued but limited involvement. I have long forgotten the detail. My impression is that the scheme never became a thorough going ecumenically led and managed enterprise: it was Methodist in an open ecumenical/community way, supported by the churches with some representation and input. One of the full time workers was an Anglican and another, Jim Jones was a devout Roman Catholic.

If my experience is anything to go by this kind of practical ecumenical cooperation was unusual at that time. Ecumenical developments tended to focus on fraternal meetings between clergy, more for discussion bible study and prayer and organizing pulpit exchanges and joint services rather than social action. And even that kind of ecumenical action was in its early stages. Researching the ecumenical developments in Thornton Heath could be interesting.

During my ministry close relationships developed between St Paul's Anglican Church³⁸ and the Roman Catholic Church, St Andrew's, both of which were near neighbours. Close working relationships developed between our churches. Both vicar, The Reverend John H Lovelock, and the RC parish priest, Father James Furey became good colleagues and friends.

³⁹

During my ministry Father Furey and his congregation undertook the enormous task of demolishing their existing church and building a new one.

³⁸ See *Centenary Year Booklet* on file.

³⁹ See file and overleaf

They approached me to see if we could provide accommodation for them to say mass on Sunday mornings and possibly at other times. Parchmore leaders were very keen to offer hospitality to St Andrew's and somehow or another we got round the legal problems of doing so. For many months they said mass in the Youth Centre – we wanted them to use the church but Methodist law and policy prevented us from making this arrangement. (See letter below.) So Jim Jones worked with young people in the centre on a Saturday night and worshipped there on Sunday mornings with his family. During one of our meetings I asked him how he found this arrangement. 'All-right', he said, "but for some reason I feel all right on a Saturday and uncomfortable on a Sunday". As we tried to tease out why this might be he said in a moment of insight: 'I know why—the Centre is painted orange!'.

**Copy of a letter to the Rev John Gibbs, my superintendent,
from the Rev Herbert Simpson, General Secretary Of The
Department For Chapel Affairs in the Methodist Church
based in The Central Buildings, Manchester, M1 1JQ dated 1
December 1969**

Dear Mr. Gibbs,

Parchmore Road, Thornton Heath

Thank you for your letter. We are all, of course, aware of the improved relationship with the Roman Catholic Church but the simple fact is that the doctrinal clauses of the Model Deed prevent our premises being used for instruction contrary to the doctrine of the Methodist Church. You will know that clause 7 specifically brings the schoolroom and ancillary buildings under these provisions so that we could not agree with what is suggested.

Regarding the Sharing of Church Buildings Act, this is only operative where it is specifically invoked by the Trustees a Sharing Agreement is in force. You will know from the decision of the Conference that any such Sharing Agreement, so far as Methodism is concerned, requires the support of the District Authorities plus the approval of the Rev J. Stanley Garner's Committee for Joint Working With Other Churches. When that agreement is given, the Sharing Agreement, which is a legal document, has to be drawn signed and sealed with the approval of the General Chapel Committee. Inasmuch as the Roman Catholic church is one of the parties on the Schedule of The Act, they are capable of entry into such an agreement with the Methodist Church, but it has never been envisaged that such an agreement is invoked simply to accommodate a use such as you mention, apart from churches worshipping and acting together in a total way.

We have replied stating the position without, of course, commenting on the policy issues involved which at the moment are the responsibility of yourself and the Trustees.

With all good wishes,

Yours sincerely

Signed, H Simpson

James Furey invited me to preach/speak at the mass on the 18th January 1970 at the beginning of the Octave of Methodist Unity. I still have the notes from which I spoke. With Jim Jones' permission I told them how we had had to discuss some of the issues involved in two people of different denominations working together in a Methodist led project. Amongst the many things we said to each other the most important were: we must accept each other's integrity; that we have different beliefs which are unlikely to change because we hold them so strongly and devoutly, whilst we don't agree theologically on many things we believe in the same Lord and wish to work together. It was a moment of release. Our relationship in Christ was based on both our differences and similarities. Then I said that I was there at their mass on this basis. As I said that I felt the congregation relax. Many came to me afterwards and said that in spite of all the help Parchmore had given to them, they were uneasy about me speaking at the mass until I had said that. They thanked me for my honesty and openness and avoiding the hypocrisy of feigning that 'we're all the same'.

Another incident showed, however, just how deep the suspicion with which we approached each other. A small group of nuns had established themselves in a modest sized terraced house just opposite from the church. Their superior was a very fine saintly woman with whom I got on very well and had many conversations with her. I think she was called Sister Mary. One day during the rebuilding period she approached me about a problem they had. On Saturday mornings they had some 200 children meeting in their house for catechetical classes. It was an impossible situation – groups were meeting in every room, in the corridors and on the stairs! Could we help? I said that I would discuss it with our leaders. Which I did. Whilst they said they would like to help they said they were most apprehensive, 'they'll take all our children from us once they get on our premises'. Some time later I met Sister in the street and reminded her of our previous conversation. Before I could tell her what happened she had averted her eyes from mine and was clearly very embarrassed. Then she said that she had talked to people in her church about the possibility of having the classes in



ARCHBISHOP AT NEW CHURCH

A GUARD of honour met the Rt. Rev. Cyril Cowderoy, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Southwark, on Saturday, when he visited Thornton Heath to lay the foundation stone of the new St. Andrew's Church.

After inspecting the Scouts and Guides, who made up the guard, he entered the new building for the service.

He began at the large wooden cross where the altar is to stand. Moving round the building, blessing the four walls, the archbishop also blessed smaller crosses in each corner.

Speaking to a large congregation, including clergy from all over South London, the Archbishop praised the work of St. Andrew's, and in particular of its former priest the late Father

Edward Mostyn who was first priest at St. Andrew's.

He also praised the help given by two local churches and their clergy, the Rev. George Lovell, of Parchmore Road Methodist Church, and Rev. D. Bretherton, of St. Jude's.

Both churches have welcomed members of St. Andrew's Church who have held services in their halls while their old church was pulled down to make way for the larger church.

During the afternoon the Archbishop made two presentations of the Cross Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice, a Papal award. They were presented to Mrs. Ruth Chasseaud for her 21 years' work as a catechist and to Mr. George Smith for his work for charity over the same number of years.

The Advertiser, 6.12.68.

Honorable mention in despatches. I attended the service & reception and was introduced to the Archbishop!

Parchmore and had got a bad reaction. “Hope you won’t be offended” she said but they said that they couldn’t possibly take the children to Methodist premises because once the Methodists get hold of them we will lose them! I told her my story. We were amused by the incongruity, bemused by the irrationality of it all and saddened by the mistrust and mindless prejudice.

St Oswald’s Anglican Church and the vicarage were situated half way between Parchmore and the house. It was in a different ecumenical grouping as was Downham Methodist Church. I developed close relationships with the Vicar, The Rev Frank Doe and the Methodist Minister, Edgar Hopkins, ‘Hoppy’. At one time the caretaker and his wife were from Rishton. We knew them well, their daughters were our contemporaries!

A further ecumenical aspect which was very important was my association with the Urban Ministry Project and The Revs Donald Reeves and John Packer. This is described below in ‘Allied Movements’.

All in all it was a very rich and rewarding period in ecumenical relationships and fellowship.

Morden

Morden lies at the southern end of the Northern line (Underground) and there situated on the outskirts of Morden is St Helier, the area with which we are concerned. St Helier is a large GLC housing estate consisting of 10,000 houses and a population of 35,000 and extending into two London Boroughs, those of Sutton and Merton. The estate was built in the early thirties and consists mainly of narrow roads lined with rows and rows of houses, with open spaces of green here and there. The houses were described as “Regency cottages for the working people”. The estate was built before the time of planning and the houses were built without bathrooms or garages. Bathrooms are now being added to the houses, but it is not so easy to provide garage facilities and so the narrow roads are blocked by cars parked on either side. The roads, almost all, run in alphabetical order throughout the estate, so theoretically you shouldn’t lose your way in St Helier, but each road looks the same, with its council houses, its grass verges, its trees and its cars parked on each side.

Meeting places for people during the day in St Helier, apart from old peoples’ clubs, are provided by the two main shopping centers at Rose Hill and the Circle. As far as amenities go in St Helier, there is one Bingo Hall, one GLC Social Club, (the Southern Equivalent to the Northern Working Mens’ Club) and two pubs – the St Helier Arms (where entertainment includes a strip show and a drag show) and the Rose (which has the longest

bar in the South of England). There is one library, nine schools, one RC Church, one Methodist Church, two C of E churches, numerous small missions and, dominating the landscape, the huge St Helier Hospital.

The people who live in St Helier have come from various parts of London. All those who moved there in the thirties are now retired or near to retirement, and although there are still hundreds of children about, the average age of the residents is high.

Fellow Travellers in Morden⁴⁰

Highly significant developments were taking place in an Anglican parish in Morden (below is a note about Morden written by Reeves) some 5 miles west of Thornton Heath in a similar urban community which resonated with what we were doing in Parchmore. It was known as the Urban Ministry Project, Morden-Ripon Hall Training Scheme which started in 1969.⁴¹ It was led by the parish priest, The Rev Donald Reeves⁴², a gifted and dynamic Anglican priest and the Rev John Packer (now Bishop of Leeds) in cooperation with the principal of Ripon Hall, Oxford, an Anglican Theological College. We became very interested in each others work, I shared in some of their meetings, we had much discussion, exchanged papers and John Packer visited me in Thornton Heath. This is not surprising because we had much in common:

- Both projects were firmly based in local church and community work in South London;
- UMP was linked to a theological college, Parchmore to London University, Department of Community Developments)
- Both were involved in ministerial in-service training.

Consequently, both projects triangulated on local work, academic back up (UMP on theology, Dyson was an outstanding theologian and Parchmore on community development) and in-service training. So Parchmore drew on a secular discipline, UMP on a theological one. Another difference was that I was engaged in researching the work I was doing as I was doing it, i.e. Parchmore was an action-research project. So whilst the project models were similar they were significantly different. See diagrams below. There was another difference which influenced the training programmes especially. UMP as the title states was about urban ministry; the Parchmore project was firmly set in an urban community but it was not exclusively

⁴⁰ 6.5.13

⁴¹ 6.5.13

⁴² See *Memoirs of a Very Dangerous Man* by Donald Reeves, 2009

about urban ministry. Essentially it was about an approach to working with people for human and spiritual development which was appropriate to any kind of church in any social context. That profoundly affected training programmes and research which developed from the Project. From the outset I was concerned not to become identified with urban ministry in an exclusive manner. This affected the nature of my relationship with those such as Reeves, Packer and Vincent who were focusing on urban ministry and making enormous contributions to church and society as a consequence. My focus was and remained ministry in church and society in all its varied forms.

People and Pastoralia⁴³

For some reason, I keep putting off writing this section. I think the blockage is partly emotional and a feeling that I simply cannot do justice to the people that come to mind who gave themselves instinctively to supporting and helping me and to serving Parchmore. I am thinking of saints of God such as Tom Crook, Roger Neve, Eileen Leonard and many other people for whom I thank God. I was greatly blessed and empowered by them. Similarly with the pastoral work, I am finding it difficult to write about it. There was enormous amount of it, both of ordinary and extraordinary kinds. It stretched me enormously.

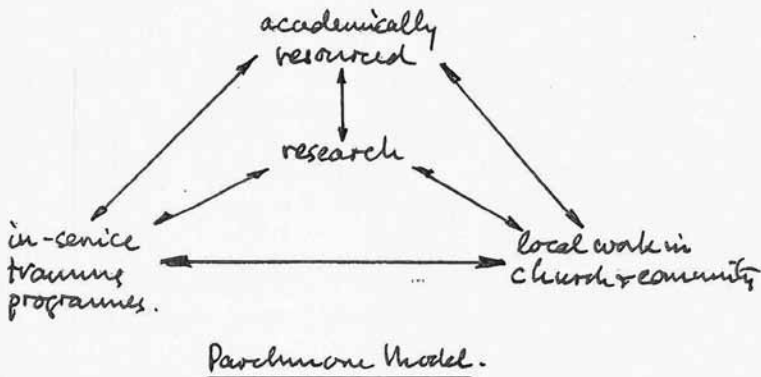
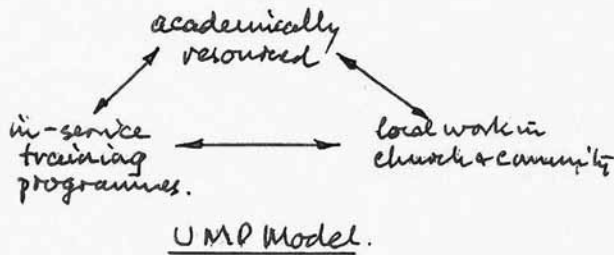
[Somehow or other I don't seem to have the same energy for these notes as I have had so far. I think I am working to finish the work and move on not only to other work but to a new phase of my life, including moving to an apartment; I am somewhat restless and also feeling quite weary today. I will write what I can; I can always add to it later.]

Tom C and Roger N were both retired. Tom was a real South Londoner who had working himself up to a senior person in the Post Office. His daughter gave me his presentation watch after his funeral, which I took. Throughout his adult life he had given himself to Sunday School work and to the pastoral care of children. He was a rock; always there for me and Molly and the family. Roger N was much more sophisticated. He had been in some kind of office work. When I first arrived at Parchmore he was a steward and wrote to tell me most graciously that he was not in favour of the new scheme. However, quite soon we established a deep relationship of mutual respect and support. Also, Dorothy H got on with him very well: they became very good friends. (Tom was a widower, Roger a bachelor). Many hours of conversation about the scheme led Roger to be one of its most

43 27.6.13

devoted supporters. He spent countless hours in association with Dorothy in producing reports and literature. When I took Dorothy's funeral he was there, I remember meeting him on the stairs at Parchmore and asking him to go into the vestry with me and to pray which he did beautifully. Eileen Leonard was a highly intelligent South London housewife who had never realized her potential; she lacked self-confidence and was unaware of her ability.

She first came to my notice at a Sunday School staff meeting at an early stage in my ministry. The Sunday School was in a parlous state and various ideas emerged about how to revive the work. At a late stage E spoke. She was so nervous that she could hardly get her words out. Some in the meeting were irritated and impatient with her. I helped her to express herself by showing genuine interest in what she was saying and developing her ideas with her. They were the most sensible ideas that had emerged and led to the revival of the Sunday School. About 11pm that night I had a call from the S.S. Superintendent, an extraordinary capable



woman, a teacher by profession and a much respected pillar of the Church with a real presence. She said something like, “Mr Lovell you will know when you have been here a little longer those of us who are properly trained and informed about education. E is not.” The inference was that I had given E and her ideas too much attention. I replied by saying that it was up to those of us with some educational knowledge and expertise to judge ideas that emerged from any source and that I thought E’s ideas were sound. My stance helped E to find her place in the work and to participate with new confidence. I discovered some years later that she had been attending the meeting for twenty years and that was the first time she had spoken! (She became a significant voluntary youth worker, for instance, and made notable contributions to the analysis of aggressive behaviour in the youth centre described in *The Parchmore Partnership*, pp53-61).

These are but snippets of a rich pattern of extensive personal and working relationships with the people of Parchmore that come to mind at this moment. I have simply not the energy to do a comprehensive piece on these relationships.

Then there were the youth and community workers: Penny Thatcher, Colin Grant and Jim Jones. Colin Grant was a Parchmore boy who had grown up in the BB. He had an exceptionally acute and perceptive analytical mind and made outstanding contributions to the work at Parchmore. Subsequently he trained as a professional youth worker and had a distinguished career. Dan Rodney was a very important person. (See *The Parchmore Partnership*, pp54, 58-59).

Jim Jones was the most religious of the leaders; he was a devout Roman Catholic. An anecdote comes to mind. The RC Church used the hall to say mass whilst their church was being re-built. One morning during a staff meeting we were discussing this arrangement. Jim said that he was never entirely comfortable during the services and he didn’t know why. Whilst looking at various possible explanations he suddenly said that he knew why – the centre was painted orange which, as an Irish Catholic, he was unconsciously reacting to!

Like the pastoral work in Sydenham and Penge, some of it was extraordinarily disturbing and difficult: a girl being sexually abused by her father long before this was an open issue; people in desperate circumstances who invariably turned up on my doorstep on a Friday evening begging for money after the social services office had closed! Two quite different incidents come to mind. One is about a very fine Christian lady a very prominent leader of the church with many offices. She asked me to visit

her. I found her very disturbed. Her opening words were to say that she was going to have to resign all her offices and possibly her church membership because her daughter in her late 20's or early thirties had decided to go and live with a man without any intention or marrying him. Now it would be common place but for her it was a terrible disgrace. My immediate response was that I understood her feelings, but it was not a resigning matter and I felt certain that the Leaders' Meeting would feel the same. Personally I could not accept her resignation but respected the morality that she embraced. My regard and respect for her was in no way diminished. Her relief was immediate.

The other incident was different. I responded immediately to a call from the hospital to visit a patient who had said he wished to see a Methodist Minister. He was a recent immigrant from the West Indies. At the time Parchmore's congregation was white. He was so impressed by the promptness of my visit that he and his family became members of the Church. The church is now mostly black!

⁴⁴During the second half of my Parchmore ministry I encountered what for me was a new genre of pastoral problems. It was through our part-time secretary at the time. She was a very attractive, intelligent, personable and energetic lady in her twenties who was married to a much less intelligent man who was a few years older than she was employed as driver; she had two boys of 7 – 9 years old. Neither of them were church people. (I recruited her through advertising locally). Through typing papers I wrote she become very interested in the praxis of youth and community work, started to read on the subject and became a voluntary member of the youth centre staff. As a direct consequence she became intellectually alive and excited in a way she had not previously known. Her appetite for this kind of study and work was enormous; she saw her potential and wanted to realize it. Her husband became very angry: he wanted his wife of former years back; he accused Jim Jones and me of alienating her from him and suspected she was becoming besotted with us if not having an affair.

On one occasion she did make a pass at me. On another, Jim took her home in his van after a late night youth club session which had been somewhat problematic. They sat in the van in animated discussion about the session for some time until the husband, understandably, rushed out and very angrily demanded to know what was going on. She continued working for/with us for some time, but her marriage was damaged and eventually they divorced and she got an interesting executive job. We did

all we could to help them to work at the issues, but without success.

I was aware that this was happening to others in much less dramatic ways and without the same consequences. My experience suggests that it is more likely to strain and damage relationships when it is the wife or female partner who becomes intellectually alive. I have read about others encountering similar problems and how they tried to work through them with both spouses, separately and together. It presents development workers with real difficulties, particularly as women seem to be more attracted to community work than men and often have time to become deeply involved.

At what point and in what way do workers respond to this danger? A tricky question. What responsibility do they have? Is there a time/situation when they should decline to stimulate and facilitate a person's development to avoid the possibility of fractured relationships? Questions which I am not going to pursue here except to say that I have raised the issues with people when I think there is a danger of strained relationships and encouraged and helped them to look at the consequences and their implications.

Early in my time at Parchmore I introduced the idea of a time when I was available for people to come to me about anything personal, pastoral or business. I was at pains to avoid the idea that it was only a pastoral or psychological counselling surgery. Officers and leaders could come to discuss matters; people could come to get passports signed, request references, arrange baptisms, weddings, challenge me about a sermon etc. And they did. The arrangement established two-way flow: I went to people in their homes and hospital; they came to me privately and confidentially. I remember a complete stranger coming one evening saying that he had heard some years ago that I was here on a Thursday evening at a point when he was in need of some advice.

An amusing incident occurred one evening. The church owned the house next door. People waited in the front room to see me in the next one. One week a young married woman discussed with me her anguish that they were not having any success in starting a family and her husband refused to seek advice. I helped her to see how she might get him to do so. A month or two later she came again. The waiting room was quite full as it happened (there were weeks when no one came). When her time to see me came she could not contain herself and stood at my door saying, "Mr Lovell, Mr Lovell, I only needed to see you once and I am pregnant with twins!" People in the waiting room could not contain themselves; the poor woman was very embarrassed; I was amused.

Extramural Training⁴⁵

During my ministry at Parchmore I became involved in a wide and varied programme of training, in addition, that is, to the training of Parchmore people and the in-service training of youth workers and those engaged in Christian education. Variously this evolved from my work in Parchmore and contacts I made. Some of this I have mentioned already:

- In-service training for teachers in the London Borough of Croydon;
- Sixth form secular retreats for a school in Harrow Weald;
- The staff of the ten-centres;
- Ministers and lay people in the Shirley and Methodist Churches in the Croydon Circuit;
- BB national and regional staff.

There were also other training commissions:

- Youth leadership training in the London Borough of Croydon. This led to the publication of the first edition of *The Youth Worker as a First Aid Counsellor*.
- Character training for junior operatives and clerks in industry and business in Croydon.
- Church and community development conference at the Grail which I led in 1969. (The papers are in the Avec Archives, see *Catalogue*, p20). A large number of people attended this most exciting and stimulating conference. Catherine said that she and the community could not recall when the place was so alive and pulsing with enthusiasm at what were for the participants thrilling new ideas.
- Connexional in-service training programme which is described in the next section, 'A National Ecumenical Ministry Evolves.....'

It is not possible to describe in detail these programmes here not least because much of the detail I have long forgotten. I considered myself greatly privileged to be deeply involved in what was very interesting, stimulating and exciting work carried forward by waves of enthusiasm and the feeling that we were breaking new ground and moving into a new era of working with people for development. Nonetheless, it was demanding and taxing. For me it was a steep learning curve about the use of the nda in promoting the training of very different groups of people and the

application to and the deployment of different areas of work: teachers and education; secular retreats for sixth formers; church and community development workers (ordained and lay, full time and voluntary) and work; BB officers and Christian education; industrial and commercial operatives; youth leaders and youth work in secular and religious contexts.

I was hungry to explore the relevance of the nda in as many different kinds of work with people as I could. In turn this was increasing my knowledge of and Batten told me that when he had ‘discovered’ the nda he sought and took every opportunity he could to try it out in different areas of work and to get people to assess its value and potential.

A National Ecumenical Ministry Evolves from a Local One

In this section I reflect on some events and developments which brought into Connexional prominence: Parchmore; the non-directive approach to church and community development; and me and led to me becoming actively engaged connexionally and ecumenically in promoting and facilitating this approach to ministry and mission and being seen as an authority in this field.

Connexional Recognition

The origin of one of these developments was a conversation with the Rev Thomas Allan Beetham ⁴⁶ who was a fellow passenger on a car journey as we returned from Synod in Folkestone in May 1967.

At the time I was in the middle of the Battens’ three months course on community development. Full of enthusiasm about it I described it to and discussed it at some length with him. Beetham was very interested, not least because he had spent eleven years (1928-36 and 1939-50) as a missionary in the ‘Gold Coast’, West Africa. He must have discussed this with a colleague, The Rev Harry O. Morton ⁴⁷, because over a year later

⁴⁶ Beetham was a very distinguished Methodist minister. On returning from 19 years as a missionary to the Gold Coast, he became a connexional missionary secretary for ten years, secretary of the Conference of Missionary Societies of seven years and then Warden of Kingsmead College for Missionaries for three years – the post he held at the time of our conversation. Years later Avec worked for some 20 years with Methodist Church Overseas Division.

⁴⁷ Morton was also a very distinguished minister who had served in India, the WCC at Geneva, MCOB, Secretary of MMS and then the General Secretary of the British Council of Churches.

I had a letter from him asking for information about and my assessment of the course and referring to my conversation with Beetham. I sent him a carefully considered reply dated 24 July 1968 which is reproduced as an Appendix in my Ph D thesis (pp 550-55). What followed is greatly treasured as it impacted me emotionally and vocationally deeply but the chronology of events is not clear. (My memory is that it was in the spring/early summer and in Morton's presidential year or in the year before he was inaugurated as president. That would make it 1971 or 72. I cannot find any reference to it in my appointments diary and the papers are in the Avec Archives. But that is later than I thought the subsequent events were).

What I do remember that some time after he had received my letter be rediscovered it and was very angry that those organizing a consultation he had called of senior church leaders and executives had not invited me to address the gathering as he had instructed them in no uncertain terms to arrange for me to be there and for my letter to be made available as he intended to make the contents and their implications a central theme of the consultation. So I went along with Brian Frost to the consultation held in the conference room of Chester House which I knew well on a Saturday. Morton was in the chair; a highly intelligent and intense man with a commanding presence. When he summoned me to speak I was tense and nervous in a room of such senior and distinguished people not least because I knew how important the occasion was in relation to things about which I was passionate. As an unknown, ordinary, young circuit minister imposed upon the group by Morton, I experienced difficulty in being taken seriously in relation to an approach to working with people which they regarded as very questionable in relation to long established practices and accepted wisdom about Christian ministerial authority and leadership and getting a fair hearing. Sensing what was happening, Harry Morton, brought the meeting up with a start by saying with great gravitas and authority, that this man must be heard because what he is about is of enormous importance to ministry and mission in the contemporary and future church. The effect was stunning, the atmosphere changed dramatically, it was electric with rapt attention. I was taken seriously. I was heard. I travelled home in Brian's car. The effect of the tension overcame me and he had to stop a couple of times to allow me to get out and be violently sick. When I arrived home I had to take to my bed suffering an awful bilious attack which made it impossible for me to take my appointments on the Sunday at Parchmore. But, thank God, I had been heard.

Associated Developments⁴⁸

Parchmore was pivotal to the whole of my subsequent ministry. Subsequent sections of these *Notes from Retirement* will demonstrate that. In a postscript to my section in *The Parchmore Partnership* I attempted to set 'Parchmore in Context' (pp81-88). In fact I was energetically engaged as the key player worker in:

- Providing in-service training for ordained and lay members of the other Ten Centres as well as for those of Parchmore; (c 1968-72)
- Servicing the Greater London Youth and Community Service;
- The inauguration and development of the Community Development Group of the Methodist Board for Lay Training;
- Supporting and briefing Douglas Hubery in getting the Methodist Conference to promote community development.⁴⁹

My ability to contribute creatively to these movements derived directly from my ministry in Parchmore, developments occurring and my research. Combined these gave me the achieved status in the field of work and the discipline to be heard and taken seriously. Also Parchmore and each and all of these movements facilitated each other, they were, in fact, reciprocally creative.

As a consequence the Parchmore project became well-known and it attracted much interest. I was invited to lecture and give talks. People visited. From 1968 onwards the Battens and the members of the annual courses visited and I led seminars for them. Groups of people from various churches contemplating community development work course visited. I got lay people involved in describing the work. The late Alan Dale of *New World* fame visited. (It is little known that in 1943 he published a book, *Rediscovering the Local Church*. After the visit he sent me some hand written notes on six local church strategies. He suggested we write a book together but he died before we could do so. Subsequently in 1977 we lectured together at the Annual Conference of the Fellowship of the Kingdom – a Methodist fraternal meeting.

It also led to me leading a very exciting ecumenical conference on church and community development at the Grail organized by Catherine Widdicombe. That was the first time we worked together, it was in 1969.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ 17.5.13

⁴⁹ These movements were well documented. The papers are in the Avec Archives.

⁵⁰ Papers in the Avec Archives

Connexional In-Service Ministerial Training

A sequence of events initiated by the Rev Michael Newman who was inaugurating on behalf of (under the aegis of the Division of Ministries ⁵¹) an in-service training programme led to my involvement in that programme. I think it all started through a conversation he had with me about my work at Parchmore and my future ministry. (He was Assistant Tutor at Richmond during my final year or was it two years so we knew each other). He thought what I was doing had implications for our ministry generally and of some considerable importance and he was concerned that it was not lost to the Church, 'I have seen too many pieces of pioneering work not taken up by the Church'. To test out the potential for ministry and training he asked me to write a short paper for him setting out the essentials of the non-directive approach to church and community development. On finding that acceptable he arranged for me to take sessions on the approach at one of his in-service training courses. He got the participants to critically evaluate the value of the approach for circuit ministry. (At that stage the courses were exclusively for Methodist ministers). His own evaluation and theirs being encouraging, he arranged for me to demonstrate the approach in groups at a subsequent course at which he acted as an observer.

Again, his assessment to the feasibility of inducting ministry to this way of working through a two-week residential in-service training course dedicated to that task. He was working on the assumption that most ministers would not study the approach in the thorough going way that I had and so if they were to learn how to begin to practise it had to be through short courses. So he asked me to design a programme and write a short paper describing it and how it would be staffed for him to consider. I did and suggested it be staffed by me, Catherine Widdicombe and a fellow minister who had done Batten's course and was the minister of one of the Ten Centres. It met with his approval but it had to be endorsed by the Division of Ministries Committee ⁵² to which he arranged for me to present it. The Rev Allen Birtwhistle, secretary of Ministries Committee, chaired the meeting, seated behind his impressive desk in his office with the members of the Committee seated around the opposite wall. When it came time to consider my course proposal, I was summoned to sit on the opposite side of the desk facing him! Birtwhistle was critical of the proposal, too 'work' centred; he was concerned about the spiritual development of ministers rather than their skills at working with people in groups and communities. I said that

⁵¹ It was the Ministries Committee, I think, Div of Ministries formed in 1973

⁵² It was in fact the Ministerial Training Committee, The Division was formed in 1972

how we approach and engage with people are spiritual matters, part of the spirituality of work but that did not impress him at all. Suddenly, I said that there would be a chaplain to the course. That made it all right; without any further questions he accepted the course and dismissed me with the charge that it had to be spiritual. The first course was thoroughly evaluated; I had to submit a report to Michael. It proved to be a great success and became a regular part of the in-service programme.

The first two were held at Windermere House, Upper Norwood and was self catering. Ladies from the Circuit cooked for us daily in 1971-72, i.e. during my ministry at Parchmore.

Windermere House was purpose built for training courses in piano tuning for blind people. These courses became the basic consultancy courses of Avec for more than twenty years. Whilst they were developed and refined, the essential design remained as in my original paper. (These courses are described in my book, *Consultancy Ministry and Mission*, pp 357-360.) Dorothy Household led a local team who recorded all the sessions. (Documents are in the Avec Archives).

There was also a course on Mission & Community Development at the Kings Cross Centre, 1971-2.

My First Book on Church & Community Development⁵³

During my final year at Parchmore it became clear that a book about church and community development would be a great asset as it would meet several emerging needs. This was the time to produce one which would serve as a text book to the increasing number of people who wanted to learn of our approach and those attending courses; help to meet the growing demand for information about church and community development; generally promote it. I raised the matter with the superintendent. He agreed as did the other members of staff and the circuit stewards as did the leaders at Parchmore. Generously they arranged for me to have a two month sabbatical to write it. Grail Publications and Chester House Publications agreed to publish it as a joint Roman Catholic and Methodist publications. T.R. Batten wrote a foreword; The Rev Douglas Hubery, Canon, later Bishop, Stephen Verney and Bishop Gerald Mahon commended it on behalf of the Methodist,

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Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches. So it was launched as an ecumenical venture. Another forerunner of ecumenical cooperation in this field for 2-3 decades which made vital contributions to Project 70-75 and *Avec* and still continues some forty two years later through the collegueship between Catherine Widdicombe and me! Dorothy Household, Philipa Craig and Jackie Rollo made important editorial contributions towards making the text plain and non-technical. The aim was to make the book an attractive, short introduction to church and community development, selling for less than £1. Incredibly its first published edition sold for 75p as an 80 page book in 1972 a few months before I left Parchmore under the title *The Church and Community Development: An Introduction*. It sold well and went through several editions and reprints. Malcolm Grundy thought it was the best thing I wrote. The diagrammatic designs of the different models for church involvement in community development and work were widely used: see for instance Dave Andrew's book, *Compassionate Community Work: An Introductory Course for Christians*, an Australian publication, 2006, pp22-23.

Catherine Widdicombe Active in the Field

Independently, Catherine Widdicombe assisted by John V Budd (an Anglican priest) and Patrick Fitzgerald (a Roman Catholic priest and a White Father) had been conducting courses on non-directive group work and living in community from 1969-72. (See, *Our Church and Community Development Stories*, pp 3-4 and *Avec Archives Annotated Catalogue*, pp 19-20). Also, from 1967 to 1972, Catherine was involved in the Church of England Board of Education, Sensitivity training (op cit p3).

A New Discipline and Movement is Born

Consequently the *nda* to church and community development was being extensively and enthusiastically promoted through courses and conferences, regionally and nationally in the Methodist Church (by me) and Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches (by Catherine, John and Patrick) during the period 1969-72. This general and introductory promotion of this field of work was carried out in parallel to the intensive, researched extended programme of local church and community development work in and through a Methodist Church in an urban setting from 1966-72. All of this promotional and training work derived directly from and drew upon Batten's work, writings and extensive field work and courses. Additionally, some of it was related to my work at Parchmore, in part it was an outworking of it. Catherine's work and mine came together creatively through our collegueship.

The combined and overall effect was that a new discipline, church and community development, was evolving and a church and community development movement was being formed. Discipline and movement were speedily attracting attention, interest and some opposition, rapidly gaining momentum and acquiring prestige. Discipline and movement were firmly based on:

- Batten's work – his pioneering discovery and the nda and his learned published accounts of its praxis and his widespread testing of it through worldwide work over many years;
- my work at Parchmore and in the University and that of others in the Ten Centres;
- assessments by independent bodies and by people on courses;
- courses designed to introduce practitioners to the praxis of the nda to church and community and to provide elementary training in it proved to be effective in a comparatively short period of time, 3 to 14 days;
- a growing cadre of people who had been on the Battens' three months course – Terry Walton, George Lovell, Catherine Widdicombe, John V Budd, Patrick Fitzgerald, Barrie Heafford;
- my book;
- Catherine Widdicombe's work inspired by her personal experience of Vatican II.

Achieved Status in and through Local Methodist and National Ecumenical Work

Much followed from these developments. Parchmore became quite widely known. I was becoming prominent as a pioneer in the field and something of an 'expert'. Without aiming for it, my achieved status and the authority that went with it was taking shape. And that we enhanced in 1973 when I was awarded a PhD. This was important because it equipped me for my future ministry. Little did I realize the time that my entire subsequent ministry would be based on my achieved, rather than ascribed status.

These developments justified my decision to commit myself to local work painfully made in faith at the outset of my Parchmore ministry. By doing so some six years later I found myself with the status, authority and opportunities to contribute nationally and internationally and in an infinite number of local situations, ecumenically as well as in my own denomination as a "technician", not a church leader / bureaucrat / administrator; a

role and position that I had not thought of when I made the decision to focus on the local. At the point I was contrasting local circuit ministry with ministry in and through regional and national connexional roles in the structures of the church. The role that was emerging allowed me to make significant contributions to the structured church without being in an appointment within them except, that is, as a presbyter in good standing and therefore under the discipline of the Conference. This proved to be a strategic position to make creative contributions holistically in churches of different denominations in Christianity and secular organizations. In a sense, I had spiralled – or been spiralled – from the local to a position from which I could work independently at any and all levels. And that I/we did through Project 70 – 75 and Avec. Engineering such a radical change in my vocational deployment was quite beyond me because no such possibility entered my mind during my Parchmore days. Indeed it is only now that I have conceptualized just what happened. Just how it transpired, I do not know: I think God's hand was in it because I do not think it happened by chance. It was, I believe, the result of providential guidance, prompting and provision and prevenient grace.

However that might be, the stage was set for a new and exciting phase in the development discipline and movement. And, providentially, Catherine Widdicombe and I were destined and equipped to lead and facilitate it. And that is what happened, thanks to God.

Seven Aspects of my Parchmore Ministry

Reflecting on these underlying and underpinning features of what was happening it became clearer to me that there were seven aspects to my Parchmore ministry:

- i. Establishing and developing Parchmore as a church youth and community centre operating as an non-directive approach to working with people;
- ii. Studying community development praxis and researching what I was doing as I was doing it by pursuing it thoroughly as an action research project at the University of London;
- iii. Reporting back to the Methodist Church about the Parchmore project and stimulating and facilitating those in authority to evaluate it and to consider and act upon its implications for the work and mission of the Church generally;

- iv. Promoting Parchmore and the non-directive approach to church and community development;
- v. Training others in the praxis of this approach;
- vi. Developing collegial working relationships with others in this field and discipline in the connexion and most importantly with Catherine Widdicombe;
- vii. Discovering and exploring my vocation this field and disciplines as that of a ‘technician’.

Throughout my ministry at Parchmore, 1962 – 72, I worked assiduously at (i) and (ii). In fact beyond that six-year ministry: I completed my PhD thesis in 1973; both of my successors, Gareth Rogers and Peter Sharrocks, consulted me occasionally and Peter was a member of a two-year post-graduate diploma course I conducted during which he wrote a dissertation on his work. Whereas, it was from 1969 onwards that I was engaged seriously in (ii) to (vi), that is they demanded increasingly more of my time during the second half of my Parchmore ministry.

Aspects (i) to (vi) influenced each other complexly; their overall effect was dynamically creative and exciting; but there was no simple discernible thread of causation, it was complex.

After writing this section I came across the following notes that I wrote in preparation for a meeting of the ‘Appointments Committee’ convened to discuss the appointment of a minister to succeed me in 1972. They show how I viewed my ministry at the end of my fifth year at Parchmore.

APPOINTMENT COMMITTEE 20.7.71

What follows is copied verbatim from my rough notes.

When Mr. Gibbs asked me to sit in this committee as a full voting member, I thought it was not the right thing to do. But I thought I had a contribution to make namely:

To tell you something about what I have found the job to be; (this does not mean that the next man will find it just so, every man makes his own job.)

To be prepared to give any information I might have about the technical competence vis a vis church and community development in that any candidate you are considering might have.

As I have done this job my ministry has evolved into a shape and pattern quite different from that which it took in other places. Obviously there have been the normal ministerial duties of preaching, pastoral visiting and counselling, conducting marriages, funerals etc., and attending the round of circuit and district meetings. What I wish to tell you about are the things additional to these under several direct headings. I have avoided mentioning those jobs that have grown out of this work and to do with the wider church.

1) The new jobs I have had to do.

Some of these are transitory and temporary other are permanent.

- i. I have become responsible for the employment and work of two other people – a youth worker and a community worker. This involves regular discussions with them about the practical and theoretical aspects of their work in addition to the admin that goes with employing people. To do this requires knowledge of their skills and how to head up a multi-discipline team. (The team in one centre is disintegrating because the leader can't integrate people from different disciplines into a team.). This takes time. It means that I am helping other professionals to do their work, not just doing my own professional work, i.e. facilitator to others.
- ii. I have had primary responsibility for working out what this approach means for Christians, helping people to work through the ideas involved and training workers especially youth workers.
- iii. I have had to spend a lot of time thinking and working out what is happening and ways to put this picture to leaders and trustees. Scene is ever changing.
- iv. I have spent a lot of time in helping Parchmore people to work out an adequate committee structure, e.g. PCYCC.
- v. I have spent time on the contract and rebuilding!

2) The People with whom I work

- i. Every Methodist ministers works with a variety of groups of people. I have found myself under one roof working with a very wide spectrum of people and cultures. This involves learning about their ways of life ... finding ways of bringing them into harmonious relationships. It involves working with more non-Christians than Christians (ratio 10 : 1). It involves also a lot more administrative and pastoral work.
- ii. Involved working closely with other bodies, e.g. CEA, social workers → more so in future because of Seebohm – local area teams. – Kings Cross → other centres

Other churches in Thornton Heath

3) The way in which I have worked

I have worked to try and help all groups and all people. Leaders of Parchmore say important involvement that be able to work with different people but not to neglect any group or side with any group. I have tried to do this – to help each group to do their own thing but to do it in the light of the needs of other group. I have only been able to do this because of the ways of working that I learnt from Dr Batten on the 3-month course you sent me on. I have used these methods selectively in all my work. In my previous appointment I tried to do this kind of work without this training and I came unstuck. I have worked consistently in this way. It is called the non-directive approach to group and community work. It is important in my mind that there is no radical switch at this stage in the approach to the work. The fruits will only come from consistency in this regard.

4) The help I have had

I have had enormous support from my colleagues and from the Superintendent in particular. But I have had consultancy help which has been of great assistance – without it I would have sunk without trace - Batten and others Murphy etc. but chiefly Batten.

A Ministerial ‘Technician’

Discerning my vocation as a ‘technician’ (vii) probably had an extended gestation. I remember well the first time that I articulated it but not the date but it was, I think, mid-term of my Parchmore ministry. It was in Alan Davies’ office during his ministry as a secretary in the Home Mission Division which started in 1969. (I knew him well. He had a distinguished ministry in Great Harwood at Molly’s sister Kathleen’s church from 1956 – 61.) I am not sure what business took me to his office but I can see myself sitting opposite to him at his desk. Somehow or another conversation turned to how I saw my future ministry. Quite unexpectedly I blurted out that I saw it as a ‘technician’ not a bureaucrat or administrator. (I was so surprised and preoccupied with what I had disclosed to myself and to Alan that I was not aware until later just how tactless and offensive, if not a rebuke, it might/must have seemed. After thirteen years in circuit he had just started a connexional job! He showed no signs of offence; he had a lovely, gracious, kindly, quiet, unassuming disposition; he simply responded pastorally and helped me to reflect on what I had said. What I meant was that, I worked and intended to be, directly involved in one way or another with the practical, theological, theoretical aspects and technicalities of Christian ministry in church and community in practicing

and researching it, training others in it and supporting teams in writing about it with especial reference to the non-directive approach. I did not want to be engaged in organizing and administering the church. In the event that is what happened. (Interestingly Les Griffiths has used the same work to describe his ministry).

Beginnings of the End of My Time at Parchmore

Chronology of events discussed in this section

I found it quite difficult to establish with certainty the chronology of the events discussed in this section because, to my surprise, I did not have adequate notes of them. However, I think the following is reasonably correct.

First quarter of 1970: re-invitation debacle.

January – March 1971: feeling overstretched I discussed the situation with the Chairman and the District and the Superintendent Minister.

Early summer of 1971: I decided to leave Parchmore.

July 1971: Discussions about my successor

Overview

To my surprise I found that I had surprisingly few papers available related to the issues covered by this section; there may well be some in the Avec Archives. However reflecting on the available material and my memory of the incidents I began to see the period it covered, 1970 – 72, in a different way from how I had done previously.

During the preceding four years I had been absorbed in and totally committed to my ministry in Parchmore, the circuit and the extramural activities that had evolved directly from it. It had been a period of ministry which was concentrated, demanding but exciting and fulfilling. I simply gave myself to it assuming that I was going to be at Parchmore for some considerable time and with no thought about what might follow. Indeed I floated ideas about Parchmore becoming a teaching/ researching centre for non-directive developmental ministry in church and community as an interrelated part of the ongoing work of the Church Youth and Community Centre. But this idea never got a fair hearing mainly because of the negative responses of one or two members.

What I began to glimmer was that this concentrated phase of my ministry was disrupted by the inept and incompetent way in which my re-invitation process was handled. That would be, I think, in the first quarter of 1970. (Unfortunately I do not have any papers for the period to hand which could prove that.) In the event I was invited to remain as the minister of Parchmore for a further three years i.e. up to 1974, as was customary. I accepted this invitation because I felt under God that it was right for me to continue at Parchmore.

Towards the end of that year I was feeling overstretched and discussed my situation with the Chairman of the District, Norman Dawson, and with my Superintendent, John Gibbs. They could not have been more sympathetic and helpful. Immediate help was forthcoming but not a long-term solution.

At some point in 1971 I decided that it would be circumspect for me to leave in 1972. (Again I am not absolutely certain about the chronology because of the few papers I can find.) As I recall it I came to feel that a major fundamental phase was coming to its rightful conclusion and that a new phase was about to open. My own conclusion and that of Molly and Dorothy with whom I discussed the matter thoroughly was that I had either to leave in 1972 or to commit myself to seven more years providing, that is that I had the informed backing of Parchmore, the Circuit, the District and the Connexion to do so. After very careful and prayerful consideration and consultation I (we) decided that it would be right for me and the church for me to leave in 1972. Several considerations led us to that conclusion:

- I felt exhausted through giving myself unreservedly and willingly to all that was involved in establishing the project and contributing to the inauguration of the newly formed church and community development discipline and movement;
- my confidence had been undermined by the re-invitation foul up;
- I did not feel confident that the church would make the arrangements necessary for the kind of ministry that I envisaged to be necessary;
- I was weary of the difficulties of getting committed competent full time youth and community workers;
- I felt that it was time for someone else to take up the work.

For the first time I saw that there was a connection which I had not seen before, between how I was feeling and how the Leaders of the church were also feeling. They too were feeling exhausted as the description below of a

Copy of extract of letter to Linda Castle

This is our sixth and final year at Parchmore. They have been very happy years in many ways but also very demanding years. We have both given about as much as we could give in the situation and now as we look forward to the next phase we feel a bit odd withdrawing from all its activity. We were invited to stay on for seven years, that was in March, 1971. ~~Mr~~ George didn't actually say "Yes" as we were a little undecided. The type of work George has been doing at Parchmore i.e. community development work where groups of people decide and act for themselves, has at last become recognised in some of the higher ranks of Methodism. It became obvious that he was very much in demand both as a consultant and a trainer and many demands were being made upon him apart from the actual grass roots work he was doing at Parchmore. We both felt that this kind of two-way stretch could not go on, either he would have to decline some of the consultations or he would have to neglect Parchmore. We also felt that perhaps after six years he would have given Parchmore just about as much as they were prepared to take and perhaps 1972 would be an opportune time to move. But what should he do? To take on another church was not going to ease the problem very much and there didn't seem to be any way of getting into training full-time. However he had been involved with a group of people doing research into the church and community development since 1970. This group consisted of a lady who is a member of a Roman Catholic lay community in Pinner (The Grail), Miss Catherine Widdicombe by name (she was the lady with George in the picture taken at Windermere House as well as Barrie Heafford) a Roman Catholic Priest who is involved in training the White Fathers and an Anglican Priest. These four, including George, had been working on Project '70-'75 for over a year. It was originally Catherine Widdicombe's idea and these other three were contacts she had made and who were working with her. As the months proceeded it became obvious that this Project was too big for any one person and the amount of work that George was having to do in relation to it was growing. So one night over a cup of coffee we talked about this and somehow before we realised it almost we were thinking how he might become involved full-time in this work. That was just over a year ago.

I discovered this after I had written this section. It casts contemporary light upon the decision to leave.

discussion about a ‘mission to the Church’ indicates.

At the point at which I made this decision I do not think that I had any firm idea about what I should do next. I recall that Norman Dawson suggested that I seek a post in one of our theological colleges to develop, research and teach ‘church and community development’ as an aspect of ministry and mission. In the event I was allowed to leave Parchmore two years early to become a full-time worker on the action research programme, Project 70 – 75. Again I am not sure when this decision was made.

So my Parchmore ministry was fractured in 1970/71. Having sketched out the sequence of events and developments I now explore them more fully.

The fouled up re-invitation

The circuit steward who dealt with my re-invitation did not follow the time honoured procedures of his predecessors. They were punctilious: they spent an evening with the minister and his wife at their manse discussing how they saw their future ministry and the needs of their children; met with church stewards; took soundings in the circuit; wrote reasoned statements which they read to the invitation committee. The circuit steward in post at the time when my re-invitation was considered rang me and several other people the evening before he had to make a recommendation to the invitation committee. The senior society steward at Parchmore at the time was Alfred Ward. He was a quiet, inoffensive and devout Methodist of the old school in early retirement. I think he had been the Primitive Methodist and was not entirely in sympathy with the developments that had occurred in Parchmore. When the circuit stewards spoke to him he said that there were some reservations about my being re-invited. Someone had suggested to him that the Circuit consider appointing a more traditional minister. (Some considerable time later I discovered that it was the same person who opposed my idea about Parchmore becoming a teaching/ researching centre.) When this was reported to the invitation committee it came as a bolt out of the blue to me and everyone else. All the other members of the committee had assumed that there would be a unanimous and enthusiastic request from Parchmore that I’d be invited to stay as long as possible. The other members of the committee were enthusiastically in favour of my ministry continuing and hope that I would agree to stay for an extended period. The Parchmore steward’s statement was followed by a stunned silence of unbelief. No one spoke for what seemed to be an eternity. They asked the Parchmore steward to explain the situation more fully which he entirely failed to do. The committee said that further enquiries ought to

be made to discover the mind of Parchmore people generally and put the matter in abeyance.

When Parchmore people heard what had happened – it spread rapidly on the grapevines – there was an outcry of disbelief at what had happened and enormous concern that I had been abused and hurt quite unnecessarily because they wished me to stay. I will never forget the Sunday morning following this debacle. I had the daunting task of taking the morning service at Parchmore. The atmosphere in the vestry before the service was subdued, charged with and deep emotion and tension. During the prayers four or five of us stood round table deeply moved. The stewards, men and women, wept openly. I felt wrapped around with sympathy, love and concern. I felt so privileged to have such support and Christian friends and colleagues. I could scarcely contain my emotions and struggled to find the composure necessary to enter the church and start the service.

Meetings that afternoon at which I tried to get to the bottom of what had happened were abortive and possibly mistaken. The man who had made the suggestion to the society steward that I should not be re-invited simply faded into the background and left the steward to cope as best he could. He simply couldn't take the comeback and sadly crumpled, resigned all his offices, ceased coming to the church as did his wife, and became very ill. I visited them several times but I did not feel I got very far. It was tragic for them because Parchmore had been their spiritual home for many years and they had been in many, many ways good members and workers in the church. I felt very sorry for them and angry with the man, unknown to me at the time, who had prompted the steward to say what he did and then left him isolated, high and dry to take all the flak.

Subsequently, a unanimous invitation to continue my ministry was extended to me with apologies for what had happened, both of which I have accepted.

For me and for Molly and Dorothy it was a very painful experience. I felt wounded and vulnerable. In retrospect I can see that I never fully recovered from it during my time at Parchmore even though the Leaders and Trustees of Parchmore made it clear that they wished me to continue indefinitely at a combined meeting a year later on, 8th February 1971, convened to discuss the possibility of my having a two-month sabbatical (see next section). At that meeting it was said, with regret, that they felt that I was now 'on my way out', that 'they did not want me to leave but feared that I would be 'pulled out' (directed by Conference to some other appointment), and that they 'would not like to take responsibility for not allowing me to go'. At this

point I had no intention of leaving and said so. (Notes I made at the time are in some background papers with some correspondence in Part 9:1.)

Overstretched

During the latter part of 1971 feeling overstretched I sought the help of my superintendent, the Rev John Gibbs, and the chairman of the district, the Rev Norman Dawson. A letter I wrote to Norman Dawson on 23 January 1971 and a statement drafted by John Gibbs describe my situation, the ideas that emerged to alleviate it and the action taken. They are reproduced in Appendix II. (The flat referred to belong to Dorothy household.) Sadly a probationer was not appointed but magnanimously the Circuit, the Staff and the Leaders and Trustees of Parchmore granted me a two-month sabbatical which I took towards the end of the Connexional year 1970 – 71.

In the private notes I made of the discussion in the staff meeting I noted that I sensed that two of my colleagues felt that too much attention was being given to Parchmore and to me. I understood their feelings because both of their churches were involved in social outreach work. Nonetheless they agreed with my other colleagues to the suggestions about a probationer and sabbatical.

A mission to the church?

At quarterly meeting towards the end of April 1971 the leaders were so concerned about the life of the church in contradistinction to the life of the whole enterprise that they arranged a special meeting early in May to discuss suggestions about ‘a mission to the church’. They asked me to prepare a briefing paper which I did. It proved to be a difficult meeting for two reasons: the intrusion of other business related to tricky financial matters that should have been dealt with at the previous meeting; difficulties in getting people to examine and clarify some of their feelings and thoughts. Two major topics were the feelings of being ‘overtaxed’ and that the church had become like a ‘business’. The discussion reveals much about how the Leaders were feeling at that particular time. So, my briefing paper, notes of the meeting, and my private reflections on it are reproduced in Appendix III. Undoubtedly the meeting met the Leaders’ deeply felt need to express and explore their feelings. In the event these were not adequately analysed and the decisions reached - to put on hold the question of a mission to the church, to suggest a prayer meeting, to encourage the members to be more diligent in their private devotions and to encourage people to be more faithful in worship - were a somewhat pathetic response to the needs and

problems that had been identified. In fact, they were traditional spiritual responses when people did not know what to do and to be expected of people who were over taxed and somewhat exhausted.

What strikes me very forcibly is the relationship and interaction between the Leaders feelings of 'tiredness, exhaustion and flatness' which perceptively Peggy Rush thought came not from the amount of work done but from having to 'think through the theory of all this work and all the lies behind it' (see point 4 of my reflections in Appendix III) and my own feelings of being overstretched. But the causes of their being tired and my being overstretched were different. It would seem that, in part, their tiredness came from working hard at a changing and expanding programme of work and struggling to come to terms with/adjust to a quite different ecclesiastical, theological and spiritual identity related to the non-directive church and community development work and unresolved friction and tension generated by the new approach. I had made that adjustment as had many of the people working in the youth and community development programme. I was overstretched by the sheer amount of effort involved in working out the practical, theoretical and theological implications of the approach to which I was now totally committed and helping increasing numbers of other people to do so. The Leaders and I, both somewhat exhausted by the efforts of the past few years and feeling 'overtaxed' and 'overstretched', were in the extraordinarily difficult position of trying to help each other with what appeared to us to be similar difficulties with common causes when the reality was that in relation to the substantive issues we were in very different positions and relationships. Had I realized this at the time I might have been able to be more helpful and if I could not have been so I might have identified the need for skilled facilitators to help us both.

In July 1971 Parchmore and the Circuit had started to search for someone to succeed me. *The Parchmore Partnership* shows that there were successful and that there was a goodly succession over a period of some 25 years which providentially has continued to this day unbroken. Thanks be to God.

Reflective Assessments, 1969 – 2008

This section consists of a series of assessments of the time I spent at Parchmore written for various events. They are:

- A letter I wrote for the *Parchmore Bulletin* mid-way through my ministry in 1969.
- The 90th Anniversary of the Parchmore Church, November '90, a short speech I made in the Centre on the Open Day, Saturday 3rd November. On the Sunday, 4th November, I preached on 'Self-Differentiation' using the parable of the Prodigal Son as my text (Sermon 330) and in the evening on 'Hope' including 'disappointed hope'. (Sermon 320)
- Notes of a paper I read to the Methodist Social Work Forum on the 22nd April 1996 and the Minutes.
- A talk I gave at the 108th Chapel Anniversary Service and the Inauguration of the Friends of Parchmore Scheme, 2nd November 2008 at a meeting at which *The Parchmore Partnership* was discussed.

PARCHMORE BULLETIN, 1969

February 1969

Dear Friend of Parchmore,

When I first contemplated the letter I wrote for the first issue of this Bulletin I did not know where to begin. At the time I encouraged myself with the thought that it would be easier to write for the second and subsequent issues. Now I know my optimism, to be ill-founded because I have the same feelings now that I had when I commenced to write for issue one.

During the period since last I wrote the Youth Centre has taken up a lot of our time, energy and thought. At the beginning of the autumn session things went reasonably well. Gradually, however, there was an increase in the aggressive behaviour of some of the young people attending the Centre. At first it was only against property, but towards Christmas it was towards people. Saturday night was the worst night. Some of the damage was minor and irritating, but some was costly disturbing. Waste bins were fair game, as is seen by their present varied and distorted shapes. Chairs, walls, toilets and equipment still carry the marks of that period of aggressive behaviour. The main church window did not escape. On two or three occasions billiard balls were thrown through it late on Saturday night. How vividly I remember an 8 a.m. communion service on one of the Sunday mornings after the night before. Splinters of glass were swept up but inadvertently some small pieces were left on the base of the Cross which stands on the

communion table. The light of the early morning sun fell upon it and the glistening reflected light caught my eye as I read, "This is my body which is given for you". It was a moment when the experiences were seen in a new perspective. Parchmore people reacted commendably, demonstrating that people matter more than things - even things which are treasured.

Fireworks were a major problem. It became a season of no less than six weeks instead of an evening's event. Fortunately no one was hurt but many were frightened. After this the aggression was directed towards people as well as property. Saturday nights became impossible and we had to close down. Our worst fears were realized when we experienced violence on Mondays and Tuesdays. Knives were produced, dangerous staples were projected at people, a club leader's hair was fired..... The inevitable end was a period of temporary closure. But this is not a story of failure or defeat as those who read to the end will discover.

If we had been building up satisfactory relationships with the young people, we could have continued in spite of the damage. This was unfortunately not the case. In the end, we realized we were not meeting the needs of any of the young people. Out of all that happened, we have learnt a lot and developed a new strategy for our Youth Work.

After considerable thought, we were able to identify several different groups of young people using the Centre. One group we called the 'co-operative' group. It was possible to establish meaningful relationships with these people. They wished to have an interesting club without violence. Another group we called the 'hostile group'. It was difficult to establish relationships with them but on their own they did not normally do any damage to property or people. The third group, the 'aggressive group' did damage property or people and promote the hostile group to aggressive behaviour. Once they were in action, a vicious circle of reactions and counteractions followed. They provoked the hostile group into violent action and the co-operative people looked to the leaders to prevent the break-up of the club night. The leaders were not always able to contain the situation with the consequence that the co-operative members were frustrated and left the club for the night - or for good! On several occasions, the Centre had to be closed early.

Strange to relate our leaders were able to establish relationships with the hostile and the aggressive groups outside of the Centre on the streets, by the 'rec' (a favourite meeting spot), in the commercial coffee bars or in the pubs. This was a clue to the thing we should do - unattached work. Work in the Centre must be restricted to the co-operative members for the immediate future in order that we might build up a self-programming club. At the same time, we could work outside with the others either to bring them into the club when they request membership on agreed rules or to help them get the sort of 'club' or associations that they want. Two clubs are now working - Church Club (see separate report on P.Y.E.O and a Centre Club) both run by members. The Church Club chose its own leader and the Centre Club its own helpers!

New forms of partnerships are already established and are stimulating new "we" rather than "us"/ "them" relationships. A Youth Centre Jumble Sale last Saturday was a large success. Over £44 was raised but even more important, adults worked for and with young people who spent hours in organizing the event. We have of course tried to achieve this sort of working arrangement with the larger group but it proved impossible. We see a new era before us. The most difficult task is the unattached work with the aggressive and hostile group. Miss Penny Thatcher is hoping to continue with that after her marriage. That is another saga. Miss Thatcher is to be married next week (25th January 1969) to Mr. Michael Longhurst, a Parchmore boy! She decided in October (?) that marriage and the Youth Leader's job wouldn't go together very easily and consequently tendered her resignation. We received it with regret. Although we advertised the post widely, we were not able to make an appointment. One interested applicant will be available in August, we will interview him when we shortlist after re-advertising in March. Mr. Colin Grant, one of our workers offered to take leave of absence from his job if we would employ him on a full-time but temporary basis. This has been possible through the co-operation of the Chief Education Officer and the Croydon Youth Organizer. We are indebted to these people and to Colin for making this arrangement possible. It means that our work can continue along the new policy lines until we can make a new appointment. Mr. Grant's appointment is for 3 or 6 months. There we must leave the Youth Centre but not before saying that we have a grand group of helpers. Some fifteen of them attend monthly in-service training sessions. These were instituted at their request.

Training for Community Development work has been a subject of concern to us. Alongside this, we have been considering the organizational structure of the church and centre. A separate report on this is reprinted in this Bulletin. What we wish to do is to find a structure which will give us the greatest flexibility and freedom in our work, the organizational work consonant with efficiency and the participation of the greatest number of people in the running and organizing of the Centre. The proper organization of our own Parchmore community life could stimulate processes of community development and teach us a lot about community organization and development. Training for community work is a must if we are to achieve our purposes. A way of pooling our resources to solve our problems is greatly needed.

Axis is going strong; the Retired Peoples' group is better established than it was; the principles worked out by the Mental Rehabilitation group have been applied in one case with great success; (see separate report). The Homework Club did not function, but more of this anon. I have used up more space than I ought. In the next issue I will try to spotlight other side of our work and give a more balanced report.

Every good wish,

Yours sincerely,

George Lovell

The 90th Anniversary of the Church:
Speech in the Centre on the Open Day, 04.11.90

Notes from which I spoke.

PARCHMORE

Saturday @ 5pm 3rd November 1990

I am very pleased and privileged to be here, thank you for inviting me.

I have been asked to say a few words.

This church has changed my life. Coming here radically changed the course of my ministry and my studies. My doctoral thesis is on the work I did here. What happened here has informed work I and my colleagues in Avec have done with no less than 6,000 people almost equally from the Methodist and Free churches, the Anglicans and the RC's in the UK, in Ireland, in Africa and missionaries from 20 countries. Parchmore is written through that work like Brighton is through a stick of rock. The worldwide influence of this church is enormous because its local influence is tremendous. Thanks to God.

The last services in the old church – it was beautiful – were held on Easter Sunday 1967, 26th March. I took both services. In the morning, I preached on the need for Christians to undergo 3 conversions: to Christianity, to the church and to the world. I remember because I keep records and because I have spoken on that many times. In the evening, I preached on I Corinthians 15: 42 – 46 about the body being sown in weakness and raised in power. I talked about the way in which people have developed ever more sophisticated tools and means of communication. About the way in which this church would be raised a spiritual body with power as a life giving spirit.

Six years later, on the 30th July 1972, for my last Sermon as Minister here, I have preached again on the need of 3 conversions, the need to love Christianity, church and world. Afterwards George Reeves came to me and said, "I now understand what you have been on about for the past 6 years".

I too understood through experience what I had known through faith at the beginning. I knew the pain of those conversions as well as the joy. I knew what God could raise up from what we had pulled down.

That understanding has grown as I have followed carefully developments since. And today I have a new insight into:

- the conversion of buildings and people
- the resurrection of the church and community

(John Wesley, window facing preacher before remodelling, facing congregation afterwards). What Derrick Greaves said at opening: He spoke of project as an experiment in establishing bridgeheads between inside and outside the church. He thought it would enable people to serve the community. He saw Parchmore as a place where sacred and secular would mingle. He warned people against trying to communicate Christianity by 'ostentatiously talking about it.

Thanks be to God and to the labour of a lot of people. Let us continue to have a happy and blessed anniversary.

ON PARCHMORE EXPERIENCE

Social Work Forum, 22nd April 1996: Extracts from: notes of the Methodist Social and Community Work Forum held at NCH Action For Children, Comment April 1996

Present: David Deeks (Chair), John Kennedy, Albert Jewell, David Cruise, David Gamble, David Halstead, Peter Sharrocks, David Copley, Helen Martyn, David Seddon, Deborah Rees, Alfred Salami, Garth Rogers, George Lovell, Ms Diana Morrison, Andy Lyons, Lynda St. Louis, Bill Lynn and Helen Dent

Apologies: Judy Jarvis, Paul Goggins, Catherine Shelley, June Harrison, Brian Duckworth, Tony Holden, Malcolm Braddy, Michele Rigby, Tony Kinch, Carole Helme, Chris Wood, Peter Sutcliffe, Dick Jones and Tom White

David Deeks, Chairman of the meeting, welcomed everyone to the Forum, particularly our special guests, Rev. Dr. George Lovell, Rev. Garth Rogers, Diana Morrison and Andy Lyons, who had come to facilitate the day, the theme of which was Community Development Issues, focusing on the book *The Parchmore Partnership*.

2.0 The Parchmore Partnership

- 2.1** The afternoon was devoted to looking at the book *The Parchmore Partnership*, which tells the unique story of the Methodist Church in Parchmore sustaining community development models over an extensive period covering the three ministries of Dr. George Lovell, Garth Rogers and Peter Sharrocks. David Deeks commended the

book warmly, saying that each contributor was himself and the story comes together in a most interesting and readable way.

2.2 George Lovell introduced the story of three ministries spanning 1966 to 1989 and radical changes in people, work and programme, and how the work challenged common assumptions at that time that “people needed guidance”. He told the story of the conversion of the buildings, the conversion in the approach from working “for” people to working “with” them and the conversion in the work programme to Church and community. People in the Church were converted into new ways of seeing the community and people in the community were looking at new ways of seeing the Church. The strategic importance of the “local” and potential for far-reaching change is the key to the story. It represented the local creative nexus of several creative approaches to community/spiritual development, balancing emphasis on the practical versus research demands. In context:

- new theological understanding of the mission of the Church
- new approaches to open youth and community work
- new methods: non-directive approach, action research
- “scientific” approach, integrated into the practice of ministry

At Parchmore, the question always was, “Why is this not working; what changes are necessary”. George Lovell, in questions and discussion, told how working in this way in the present context would require the opportunity for an external reflective consultant group for effective practice.

2.3 Garth Rogers spoke about the focus on action, given the demands of the community, particularly in relation to the work at youth and community centres. It is important to realise that the process is not the message and there needs to be theological reflection:

- to realise the importance of pastoral care/networking
- no one person can do everything, be everything to everyone

2.4 Peter Sharrocks made the third contribution in relation to the Parchmore story. He spoke about the desire to see the Gospel effect local change and the importance of learning and growth in a mutual experience for those who are open to one another. Peter spoke about how the authority had been transferred and taken up by the people or

the Church and the community- empowerment.

The benefits of living and working in the world:

- how it authenticates your faith and refines discovery of the world as a resource
 - the Church is an enabler not a sole resource
 - training policy was recognised as a need
 - vulnerability; sharing pain, being open, the “stories” which Churches relive in their history
 - relate sufferings to that of Christ and the resolution of their problems
 - maintaining diversity and unity
 - the importance of working in all areas of life according to the same principles and values
 - finding somebody in whom you have confidence and who knows your work and can be a support/supervisor
 - learning how to survive in stressful situations
 -
- 2.5** Further contributions: Community Worker, **Diana Morrison**, who worked with all three ministers, underlined the importance of the empowering of the people, which made working for change possible. Diana emphasized how “commitment” was central to carrying the project along.

Questions arising in discussion were:

- How far do we need to respond to the loudest expressed need?
- How do we make most impact with limited resources?

Comment:

- non-directive approach a means of putting ideas in for consideration without imposing them (George Lovell)

2.5 Andy Lyons, Youth Worker, spoke of Parchmore being a story of “valuing” human beings and providing an environment which offered reflection/development of human values. He spoke of the importance of evaluation and ways of resolving conflict and handling tension.

2.6 A common theme from all contributors: “It’s person-centered as well as process-driven”.

2.7 In conclusion, **David Deeks** thanked our guests who had contributed to an extremely stimulating afternoon.

Notes from which I spoke

Thank you for this opportunity, I greatly appreciate the invitation. In a section entitled “Overview and Reflection”, I stress the:

- radical and dramatic changes that had taken place.
- the way in which the work challenged the common assumption amongst ministry that people needed guidance and their job was to give it to them.
- the way in which the approach was:
 - Systemic and holistic
 - Systematic
- the conversions that had taken place in:
 - Buildings
 - Appointments
 - Work progress – church and community development
 - People – in the church to community and in community to church. pp 72 – 80

I do not intend to go over this ground again this morning. There are two other things that I wish to highlight as a basis of discussion.

The strategic importance of the local and its incredible potential for fundamental, holistic and far-reaching change

When I arrived at Parchmore, I was deeply engaged in District work and the District Youth Section and connexionally through the Youth Department. Douglas Hubery had campaigned strongly against my wishes to go to the Youth Department. One of my assumptions was that radical and profound change is achieved through involvement at the centre of things nationally and regionally. I really believed this. But as I was settling in at Parchmore, the feeling grew that I had to give everything I had to this Parchmore project if I was going to make anything of it and if it was going to make anything of me. So these two things were in conflict: power at the centre; dedication to and focus upon the local.

How well I remember the morning of decision. Molly, my wife, was doing the washing in the old fashioned way, it was 1966! For a couple of hours I walked from room to room blurting out my latest thoughts each

time I arrived in the kitchen. At last I decided. Parchmore would have my all. I rang and resigned all offices in the District and Connexional committed even though I was not fully assured I was right about the local.

Everything that has happened since has vindicated that decision. And God was kind. Within a few days I received an invitation from Pauline Webb to join the board of lay training – only 2 local people were on it!! The invitation was to work on some of the community development issues. That gave me the national dimension in a technical capacity – The Community Development Group came out of that, project 70 – 75 and Avec.

That decision was vindicated by:

- The ways in which Parchmore has been a continual reference point; a touchstone of all subsequent work.
- The sequence of developments – demonstrate by describing periods and the books.

Parchmore proves the creative power and potential of the local. It is an outworking of the incarnation. All my subsequent work has been on the local or oriented to it through work with bishops, provincials and national organizations.

Parchmore Became A Local Creative Nexus Of Several New Secular And Theological Approaches To Human And Spiritual Development

A year or so before I went to Parchmore, through TRB I became connected with The Institute of Education, London University. Then another big decision that caused great tension: should I concentrate on the practical work with TRB's consultancy help or do that and make it into a research project. To do the latter, I would have to take a PGCE and an Academic Diploma in Education to get into the Institute of Education and into the Sociology of Education Section with Professor Basil Bernstein.

Once or twice I decided against making it a research project. Batten opened up the issue each time. Eventually I went for it and have never regretted doing so even though it was punishing. It transformed my practical work.

The main thing in my mind is that I must not only do this community development project but I must demonstrate the validity of what I/we were doing through submitting it to academic scrutiny.

What happened was that several “new” things came together and interacted powerfully in relation to:

- new theological understandings of the mission of the church to society (see my *Avec* appendix).
- new approaches to open youth work and community work.
- new methods:
 - nda
 - action-research there was hardly work done on at the time. Fortunately the SSRC had a conference on it and I got a copy of the papers.
 - Community studies had reached its zenith the work of people like Frankenberg, Bell, Newby and later Warren gave me some understanding of the skills of an active participant observer and the way of correcting observations and data.
 - New emphases upon evaluation and I developed the way of using behavioural indications for the directional analysis of change.

Much of this is now common place, then, for me, it was new, mind-blowing and exciting.

In retrospect, I discern something of what happened. It could be described in several ways:

- I was being tooled up for the job of ministry in church and community in ways I had never been before.
- A scientific approach was being integrated into my theory, theology, spirituality and practice of ministry.

Before I came into the ministry I was an engineer in a section at Farnborough Aircraft Establishment working on problems related to escape from aircraft under crash conditions.

Entering Theological College was a cultural shock. I felt I had to learn a new discipline and I had. I value much of it. I struggled with languages because I had no academic basis on which to draw. I realize now that, following the college lead, I sublimated my previous experience. I even regretted it for the first time because I felt I would have been a much

better minister had I not left school at 15 and go into industry and had an education in the arts and humanities. That is what seemed to matter. That continued for ten years.

Parchmore transformed all that. It brought into play my scientific instincts and experience howbeit it in a social rather than physical science. It also brought into play all my engineering instincts and training which resolve around the questions:

- How can this be made to work?
- Why is it not working?
- What change (s) would make it work?
- How can they be made to work?
- What can we do?

That is what Parchmore was all about for me. How can we make this church work for the Kingdom?

Maybe I should have written this in the book!

Parchmore – Sunday, 2nd November 2008

108th Chapel Anniversary and Inauguration of the Friends of
Parchmore Scheme:

Notes from which I spoke

Thank you for inviting Molly and me to this service and for honouring me by inviting me to be the first president of the Friends of Parchmore Scheme.

Reading your last year's report was moving, exciting and thrilling. What a programme! How do you even keep up with it? I rejoice in it and all you how minister has done and is doing.

I come with a full and thankful hearts and in great humility in this my 80th year of my life and the 50th year of my active ministry.

A couple of years ago, I was at the dedication of a new church. As an introduction to her sermon the lady preacher kicked off her shoes with great ease saying that she had to do that because she was standing on holy ground. Well, it would be a bit of a performance for me to take off my shoes and even more so to put them on again, but I know and respect that I am on holy ground.

As I stand here I can see a sea of faces from the past, many long dead but not forgotten, I am reminded of an apocryphal but telling story about Jesus told by a Muslim. The first part is in the New Testament. (Matthew 12:1; Mark 2: 23; Luke 6:1) Jesus was walking with his disciples in a corn field and his disciples were plucking or eating some ears of corn. The owner of the field appeared running and shouting, “Stop. This is my field”. Jesus, held up his hand, transfixed the man and immediately beside every stalk stood a person. They covered the history of the field. Some were old and bent and had first cleared the ground of stones, some were young and strong. These were women and men and children of every age and they all cried out in unison. This is my field! That is the cry of the Friends of Parchmore. If I could do what Jesus is reputed to have done this place would not contain the vast number of friends of Parchmore who would cry “This is my church”.

This my church and I will always be a friend of it for many reasons.

I was once its minister.

It is and stands for what I believe the church is all about.

And it is my church because it radically changed my life and my ministry and my way of going about my ministry. What I learnt here goes through all that I have done since like Brighton used to be written through sticks of rock!

- I wrote my doctoral thesis on its life from 1966 –1972.
- It inspired and informed all the work I have done with thousands of people from the Methodist, Anglican and Catholic churches in all parts of Britain and in Africa and with missionary from 20 countries. They were all told about Parchmore.
- It has taken some 13 books to work out the implications on some of them.

So in all kinds of ways, Parchmore is, has been and always will be “my

church” and I will be a friend of it because it was and is a friend to me. And I pray that the Friends of Parchmore will flourish and be a blessing to everyone and not least to the present active Friends of Parchmore.

Your minister has graciously invited me to preside at the communion service. I deeply appreciate that. As I do so an incident will remind me of the cost and promise of this work. There was a time of aggressive behaviour in the Centre, especially on a Saturday night. Occasional – billiard balls – 8 am – glass splinters on communion table – swept up – some left or cross – it glistened in the light of early morning sun as I read, This is my body which is given for you”. And I knew then the promise implicit in 1 Corinthians 15:58 that not only will we be raised in glory but our work will too be because that cannot be lost.

God bless you and keep you.

Conclusion⁵⁴

Having yearned to reach this point and at times despairing that I ever would, I found it something of an anti-climax. A deep sense of quietness suffuses me combined with a feeling that I have emptied myself of what I wanted to get on paper about Parchmore. At this juncture, there is nothing more I need to say – although I am sure there is much that could be said. Except, that is, one thing. A thought that has accompanied me as I have written this section is, “How on earth did I do all that work?” By any standard it was phenomenal requiring and devouring enormous energy. Where did I find the resources and stamina? I was helped enormously not least by Molly, Dorothy and Reg Batten and a small army of others far too numerous to name. I drew upon enormous reservoirs of spiritual energy and felt I was being empowered and resourced by God through Christ and the Holy Spirit. I had a deep sense and conviction that I was called by God, no less, to this work and experienced the amazing assurance that I found my vocation, my mission, my destiny. By providence and grace, I was doing what God wanted me to do and in ways beyond my ken. He had organized it, arranged it. The enabling and tractive power of such convictions, deep inner spiritual knowing, are incredible. It settled me, focused me, and contained me: I was not looking for or pining after anything other; this was my ministry; I had no ambitious beyond it but many within it. A recurring feeling was that I was ‘held’ by God in this work – until that is the disturbance about which I have written. But even then the substratum of conviction about God’s vocation for me was undisturbed: it was in the

field of the non-directive approach to church and community development. Also, I was caught up in the exciting ethos of this newly evolving field and the wonder of my position in it. How fortunate and blessed I was to have found and been found by and secured in such a holy calling. I find myself using Charles Wesley's words in relation to this precious vocational discovery:

‘Now I have found the ground wherein
Sure my soul's anchor may remain’

– my God given ministry

Thanks be to God.

[Three months after I started writing it!]

An Unexpected Experience of Pain⁵⁵

Checking Dorothy's paper against the back-up photocopies this afternoon, I became somewhat emotional. First of all I realized or was reminded first how closely we were separately and together: we were working in the Centre with the people; we were researching the work in which we were engaged and writing it up for different theses; we were studying and drawing upon some of the same texts and bodies of research. It was a very intimate and rewarding partnership from which and through which I learned so much and gained so much support. Then I realized yet again for the thousandth time how much I had lost/been deprived of, and how much the church and the church and community development movement had lost, and how much Dorothy had missed out on through her untimely death through a mindless murderous act. The pain is still felt after 39 years very deep and acute. It is the anniversary on Wednesday, the 17th. Of those tower bomb I thank God for her over and again. She was what her name means, a gift of God, a very precious one.

APPENDICES

- I Parchmore Church, Youth and Community Project: An account of the development and progress of the Youth Centre work by Dorothy May Household
- II Suggestions about a probationer and a sabbatical
- III A mission to the Church?
- IV Six Local Church Strategies by Alan T. Dale (of *New World* fame)
- V The text of a letter to Harry Morton about Batten's course, 24th of July 1968

Appendix I: Parchmore Church Youth and Community Project

An account of the development and progress of the Youth Centre work⁵⁶

By Dorothy May Household

[This is a typed copy of an excellent essay which Dorothy wrote by hand in the late 1960s/early 70s s. It is sexist in style, an accepted way of writing at the time but now quite unacceptable. However, I have left it entirely as it was written. Dorothy was anything but a sexist!]

Aims

Sir John Maud defined the purposes of the Youth Service thus: "To offer individual young people in their leisure time, opportunities of various kinds, complementary to those of home, formal education and work, to discover and develop their personal resources of body, mind and spirit and thus better equip themselves to live the life of mature, creative and responsible members of a free society."⁵⁷ In the Albemarle Report this aim, which emphasises the importance of individual development, is balanced by a concern for social development. "The Service should seek first to provide

⁵⁶ A vacation essay c 1969 as part of the requirements for a Certificate in Education, Stockwell College of Education. University of London Institute of Education. Main course Divinity work was awarded "with merit".

⁵⁷ *Albemarle Report*, p.36

places of association in which young people may maintain and develop, in the face of a disparate society, their sense of fellowship, of mutual respect and tolerance ... Such centres may also help to counteract the increasing educational and professional stratification of society by providing opportunities for ‘fellowship’ between young people from different classes of society.”⁵⁸

Why should the Church be concerned about the Youth Service?

For most of the twentieth century many religious denominations have initiated programmes intended to meet the social as well as the religious and educational needs of young people. There is a natural inclination amongst people sharing the same ethos and culture to look for social contacts with each other. But in the late nineteenth century such movements as the Boys’ Brigade and the Salvation Army junior groups came into being, designed to attract young ‘outsiders’ who would it was hoped, by their association with the group, be influenced to accept its beliefs and values. Between the two world wars, most Churches were sponsoring and supporting some kind of youth work: Youth Clubs, Scout and Guide Troops, Brigade Companies etc. Many of these fulfilled to a great degree the aims of the Youth Service as defined above, though the motivation for giving this voluntary service was not always clearly understood by the people involved in it. It was felt to be “a good thing” that young people should associate themselves with the Church even if their connections were as tenuous as membership of the Drama Club or the Scouts. By this means there was a chance of “communicating Christian values”⁵⁹ to such youngsters. The Albemarle Report concedes that “denominational or specifically committed organisations must remain free to give expression to their spiritual ideals in their youth work” although the secular “youth service should not be a disguised backdoor to religious beliefs or a form of moral exploitation.”

When a church decides to take some responsibility for youth work or any other concern of secular life and society, there must be some hard and precise thinking about why it should do so. If its offer of something which people need, i.e. the opportunity for social intercourse, is accompanied by an attempt to “sell” them beliefs and ideals of which they have no conscious need, there is an element of underhandedness and dishonesty, however high-minded and dedicated may be the intentions of those providing the opportunity. If such motives are implicit, they will affect attitudes to the work and also the evaluation of it. This has been seen in the past. A

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* p.37

⁵⁹ *Albemarle Report*, p.38

proportion of those joining such Churches and organisations do come to accept the ideas of the sponsoring body; others, unable to accept these, eventually disconnect themselves, disappointed because the cost of satisfying their very real social need was, for them, intellectual dishonesty. Amongst those who remain there may be those who feel to some degree compromised but think that the benefits to themselves and others of continued association outweigh, on balance, the difficulties of conformity. Such work, therefore, seems fully successful only with those who come to accept the given beliefs; but in regard to those who prefer to remain outside “the cordon of conviction” there is a sense of failure and disillusionment both for the sponsoring body and for the non-conformists. Whatever the latter may have learned or enjoyed, however he may have developed, in them the object of the enterprise was not realised.

The Albemarle Report pays tribute to the work of such bodies as the Churches: “The voluntary organisations occupy a proud position in the history of youth work. British youth organisations pioneered new forms of association ... which were adopted or copied in many parts of the world ... We hope that this pioneering ... will continue and that, in the years of expansion ... the national voluntary youth organisations will play a constructive part.”⁶⁰

The Church need not reach an impasse in its thinking about its service to the community if the full implications of Christian belief are taken seriously. The Christian’s conviction that “God so loved the world,”⁶¹ and not exclusively the Church, means that there is a Christian responsibility to society which accompanies the very real one of clearly proclaiming specific Christian belief and is, in fact, an aspect of the Gospel. The World Council of Churches looked at Christian involvement in the world and asserted that “The Christian lives in the world by the hope of the final victory of Christ over the powers of this age. He therefore sees the struggle for justice and true humanity in our time under the sign of this hope. In the fulfilment of time all nature, all the forces of human society and human life will be transformed in a way...symbolized in the Bible by the expression “a new heaven and a new earth” ... This transformation always brings a new perspective and insight into human relations ... ” While the Report points out that “the world faces judgement” it declares that “Christians are called to work to transform human society at every point in the hope that God will use their work whether they succeed or fail.”⁶²

60 Albemarle Report, P.47

61 St. John’s Gospel, ch. 3 v. 16

62 World Council of Churches Report, 1966, p. 201

The Church is theologically called to help people find maturity both as individuals and as communities. While the Christian is certain that there is no ultimate maturity unless Man is “in Christ”⁶³ this does not mean that he can put aside his concern that each person should reach the measure of maturity when it is within him to attain.

If the Church is seriously committed to this kind of concern then she must have done with the good-natured amateurism which has marked and marred some of her contribution and prepare herself to bring to the human situation not only Christian insights and compassion but also technical knowledge and professional skills. The former, in fact, will more effectively be expressed by the disciplines of the letter.

The World Council of Churches (WCC) Report further recommends that “the Churches, In all forms of mission and ministry, make full and effective use of the insights and data of the social and behavioural sciences.” “High priority” must be given to the selective and relevant training and deployment of laity and clergy and “competent full-time professionals in such fields as social work, community organization etc. should be employed by the Church ... as an integral part of its essential staff.”⁶⁴

“Co-operation should be established with other groups in the community in building programmes of action which have human need ... as their priority concern.”⁶⁵

The involvement of the Methodist Church in youth and community work is motivated by such ideas as these. The London Mission Department of the Church which was instrumental in initiating ten youth centre programmes in various parts of London set out its position thus: “Man is involved incarnationally in Christ in the agonising process of community creation ... This means action, involvement, earthly participation ... This pattern of activity will involve ... entering into consultation with local authority officials, other churches and with a wide range of people and groups of people with whom they are associated.”⁶⁶

Working out Ideas in a Local Situation

The Thornton Heath area of Croydon is typical of a particular kind of century-old urban development, with its decaying evidences of Victorian

63 Ephesians Ch. 4 v. 12

64 World Council of Churches Report 1966, pp 180-181

65 Ibid p.208

66 Walton: Serving Greater London, New Directions, Winter 1965 p. 23

grandeur, its Edwardian artisan terraces, the pre-war housing estate and the blocks of modern flats. Semi-detached suburbia washes against it at the Norbury end. Saturday morning in the High Street reveals the diversity of its population: shoppers representing a wide spectrum of society, varied races and all age-groups rub shoulders in its supermarkets. While these diverse people encounter one another in casual and rather impersonal situations like this, they need increased opportunity to meet in a more personal way across the barriers of circumstance, race and class. The young people, of course, have been drawn together at school or work, as members of neighbourhood groups, and later in the pubs, clubs and coffee bars. By these encounters, they build up strong group loyalties to give them confidence to confront rival groups.

If people are satisfied with their place in it, is there any reason why attempts should be made to give this fragmented society greater cohesion and a sense of community? The theological premise that Man is only fully himself when he is living in a meaningful relationship with his neighbours is confirmed by the objective observation of the results of fragmentation. Isolated, exclusive groups generate that prejudice which is rooted in ignorance and which may lead to arrogance, suspicion and fear. Events in Northern Ireland and in other unhappy parts of the world show that the end product of this process can be violence and bloodshed. But even if the process does not come to so tragic a conclusion, there can be limited outbreaks of aggressive behaviour, repressive attitudes and action, together with the loss of the very real mutual advantages of co-operation, the narrowing of opportunity and interest and, for the unfortunate isolates rejected by the close-knit groups, exclusion and neglect.

In the early 1950s there was dramatic evidence that the situation in this area was becoming serious. When the two youths, Craig and Bentley brutally murdered a policeman the case became headline news. They originated from this locality. Local people were aware that this tragic affair was a symptom of the hostility and violence which were finding frequent expression amongst younger people, though, fortunately, with less terrible results.

As a result of concern over the affair, the local Churches in association with the Borough authority co-operated in setting up a Management Committee to organise youth club work to be centred in one of the local schools. They felt that if only there were opportunities for young people to find satisfying outlets for their energy, they would not so readily engage in acts of violence and destruction. But it was not easy to work out the answer. The damage which the Club's accommodation suffered finally

made it impossible to continue in this setting.

At this point one of the Churches within the groups, the Parchmore Road Methodist Church, which was set near to the main shopping centre and in the neighbourhood of the housing estate, offered its premises as a base for a new and more determined effort to meet the demands of the area. The Greater London Youth and Community Service of the Methodist Church was offering to recognise Parchmore Road Church as one of the Centres in its 'Ten Centre' programme of youth and community work. Some financial and technical help would be forthcoming from the Methodist Connexion if a Centre came into being. The local Churches' group approved the ideas in principle and agreed to co-operate in whatever was planned to work them out. Therefore proposals in regard to remodelling and equipping the building for an extended use were put before the Department of Education and Science who eventually allocated a considerable grant to assist fulfilment of this purpose. The Croydon Borough Council agreed to pay the salary of a full-time youth worker to be based at the new Centre.

By its very title the Greater London Youth and Community Service was giving evidence of new thinking in regard to youth work: it should not be a separate enterprise but is likely to be of greatest value when it is part of a comprehensive programme of community development covering other age-groups besides adolescents. Among the 'Interim Proposals of the Survey Sub-Committee' was the recommendation that "Each centre would be designed to serve the required *community* needs of a given neighbourhood"⁶⁷ The Inner London Education Authority's Report of a Study Group on the Youth Service in London", 1967, confirms the validity of this approach. "Personal growth ... depends to a significant extent upon ... fruitful involvement with the adult generation. We believe that a greater awareness and commitment to others, as well as a greater sense of wholeness and purpose and delight, are achieved when ... young people are engaged in a deepening exploration of relationships ... Much unused ... potential remains to be realised in ... the more varied involvement with each other [of people] of different modes of experience."⁶⁸ In most of their encounters with the more senior generation, young people discover adults in roles such as parents, teachers, bosses, leaders which, by the very nature of the relationships, give the adolescent a sense of subordination and inferiority. If people are to grow up into adult society, there must be some arena where they can meet adults on terms of equality and status.

67 Walton, T.: Saving Greater London; New Direction, Winter 1965, p. 24

68 ILEA Report, 1967, p. 9

The key person in the proposed enterprise would obviously be the Minister of the Parchmore Church for his responsibilities would necessarily extend beyond normal pastoral concerns and accepted Church activities. The affairs of the proposed Centre could not be, nor was it desired that they should be, divorced from the active life of the Church. The minister would be the first executive of it and have responsibility for the overall direction of the whole Project.

The man invited to take charge, George Lovell, had already been engaged in a similar but more limited scheme in Lewisham. The main conclusion, to which he had come, as a result of this experience, was that far more technical knowledge than he had should be brought to this kind of work before it could be worthily attempted. The Parchmore members agreed that he would be released from most of his pastoral duties for a period of three months in order to attend a London University course on 'Community Development' under the tutelage of Dr T R Batten, the University's Reader in this discipline.

Dr Batten's influence has extended to many parts of the world and particularly to the developing areas. By personal visits to such areas and by training people who, having leadership roles in their societies, have come to London to train under his guidance, he has been instrumental in enabling under-privileged communities to improve their environmental circumstances and to discover their personal and corporate capabilities by means of the "non-directive" approach to community enterprise.

This he defines thus: "The worker who used the non-directive approach does not attempt to decide for people, or to lead, guide or persuade them to accept any of his own specific conclusions about what is good for them. He tries to get them to decide for themselves what their needs are: what, if anything, they are willing to do to meet them; and how they can best organize, plan and act to carry their project through. Thus he aims at stimulating a process of self-determination and self-help and he values it for all the potential learning experiences which participation in this process provides. He aims to encourage people to develop themselves and it is by thinking and acting for themselves, he believes, that they are most likely to do so."⁶⁹

Having closely studied this method, George Lovell had to decide whether he could sincerely advise his people to adopt it as the fundamental working policy for the proposed Project. Three considerations commended it to

69 Batten, *The Non-Directive Approach* p. 11

him as an eminently valuable way of working:

1. That modern thinking about educational theory and practice recommends a similar approach to be applied, whenever possible, in learning situations:
 - a. “Growth in judgement and understanding is essentially growth in ability to form purposes and to select and arrange means for their realisation.”⁷⁰
 - b. “The learner [may be given] opportunity to make his own discoveries through trial and error ... when it is safe and practicable, children should be allowed to experiment and find out for themselves how to do things ... But if these experiments are to be profitable, pupils should be helped to analyse their results and encouraged to try new methods when they are not making progress. This can be done by such questions as “What happened when you did that?” or “What difference did it make when you did this?” (These questions are of the kind which might be put by a non-directive worker helping people to analyse and to evaluate their work.)

“It is certainly quicker to tell children what to do than to let them find out for themselves ... We should realize that the things which people discover for themselves are, as a rule, remembered longer than the things which they have been told.”⁷¹

The ILEA Report referred to “real decision-making” as one of the elements necessary for young people in the process of “arriving at a view of life which attempts to make sense of their ... experience.”⁷²

Educational theory suggests that allowing people to define their objectives, to plan and decide the means of achieving them, to carry through their plans and to evaluate the results is an educational experience in the most profound sense.

2. The method of working has achieved practical success in the most diverse situations. Primitive villagers have learned how to think, plan and work together to sink wells or practise improved agricultural

70 Dewey: *Experience and Education*, p. 84

71 Derville: *The use of psychology in teaching*, p. 35

72 ILEA Report...on the Youth Service in London, p.9

methods. Tenants Associations, in London and elsewhere, had improved social amenities of their neighbourhood, confronted local authorities with such problems as that of “the second generation,” organised practical systems of help for people in need, e.g. cleaning windows, provided meals, transport for medical attention.⁷³

3. The philosophical premises of the method accord with the Biblical concepts of Man and his activity in the world: Man has power and freedom to organise and modify aspects of his environment; he is intended to live in community and work in co-operation with his fellows he is fully responsible for his action and must live with the consequences of them. It is through the responsible use of freedom that Man demonstrates his pre-eminence over the rest of created things. Christians would have more to say about his capability to act responsibly when he breaks his relationship with God. But indivisible ideas of freedom and responsibility inform the whole of Biblical thought. The non-directive way of working origin dates from the premise that people should be allowed, indeed assisted and enabled, to act together in freedom and to take responsibility for the results of their actions. Decision-making is a recurring Biblical theme.

Preliminary Thinking and Planning

During the year that the building was in the process of being altered for its extended use, church members and other interested people, began to meet to consider the possibilities of “The Parchmore Project”. The first of these meetings was a ‘Teach-In’ attended by about seventy people, with experienced professionals in various fields visiting to feed in information and advice. It is easy to see from the record of this, with its small discussion groups working on such questions as “What is the Church’s role and how can we determine it?”, “What are the community’s needs and how can we determine them?”, “What plans are there for starting and for running the Centre?”⁷⁴ (It was very important) that the shaping of the Project was very much in the hands of those who were to work in it.

The copious records of subsequent ‘Workshops’⁷⁵ show how plans were formulated, by “working through” ideas and suggestions to discover advantages, disadvantages, measures of practicability and advisability. At

⁷³ Association of London Housing Estates: *Conquering the Concrete Jungle*, pp. 22-23

⁷⁴ Parchmore Community Development Project: Interim Report, “Teach In”

⁷⁵ See Kelley: *The workshop way of learning*

an early stage, some basic purposes were defined which included:

1. "Being involved in the life of the neighbourhood and the community and to involved them with us in the Project.
2. To help people ... to develop their lives to the full whether or not they become Christians in the process."⁷⁶

In these "Workshops" other 'concerns' for community work were realised besides that of providing a youth centre. These included work with Retired People, Handicapped People, the Rehabilitation of ex-Mental Health patients, a Counselling Service. A Community Club catering for people of all age-groups was launched. While it would be fascinating to trace the progress of each of these aspects of the Project, it is sufficient to say here that the processes by which each came into being and its subsequent development demonstrated the implementation of non-directive methods of working. This is not to say that everyone in the Church or who was giving service in the Centre was fully convinced of the practicality of the method or even its enthusiasts fully understood its implications and could foresee the problems to which it would give rise. Let it be said, though, that every method of working will yield up its own peculiar harvest of problems.

At this time, the Management Committee which was to administer the Youth Work was re-formed. It was representative of Parchmore, the ecumenical group, the Croydon Borough Youth Service, the Probation Service and other interests and was under the Chairmanship of the Minister of the Parchmore Church. Like the other people who were workers in the Project, this committee had to consider its policies. After much discussion which included full definitions of the terms employed, the Committee agreed the following statement: "We commit ourselves to make arrangements for our leader and staff to work non-directively with young people both individually and in groups."⁷⁷

The Youth Worker who was appointed was also committed to this method. She was co-author of an article published in Youth Service in which the Leader's role was explained as 'helping without directing': "It may not be clear how one helps without directing for even by subtly persuading the members to take a particular course of action is still, in effect, direction. If we believe that the decision must be theirs, then our task would be to help them sort out the advantages and disadvantages of

⁷⁶ Parchmore Community Development Project: Interim Report: Workshop No.

1

⁷⁷ Parchmore Youth and Community Centre Management Committee Report, January 1968

alternative suggestions, examine all the points of view ... discuss the likely outcome of any action ... The members involved would then make their own decision. From that point, our job would be to help them bring it about.”⁷⁸ The article goes on to point out that a most important advantage is that this method of working is as educative for the leaders as for the young people. “This kind of approach naturally creates difficulties for both members and staff, but it is out of such problems that understanding and good relationships can grow.”

The basic principles on which the Project was to be run were therefore:

1. The application of non-directive methods to all aspects of the Project;
2. The Youth work to be part of a scheme of community development which included all age-groups and sections of the local community.

From Theory to Practice

The physical accommodation of the Centre comprised a large hall, adjacent lounge, Club Leader's office and well-equipped canteen. The doors were opened in May 1968. For most of its career this Club was open Monday, Tuesday and Saturday evenings to any and all young people, over fourteen years, who wanted to come. Thursday was reserved for 'Axis', the community club. This built up to more than seventy members about a quarter of whom were twenty-five years old. The subscription for each night was 1/-.

Apart from Wednesdays, the same equipment was available for all these sessions: table tennis, darts, snooker, electric pin-tables and some board and card games. The youth club people enjoyed themselves to a background of deafening 'pop' music emitted from the amplifiers of the high-power record player.

Quite soon the numbers attending the Club each night went up to fifty, sixty or more on a busy night. The Club was a representative cross-section of the youth of the areas. Some had belonged to the Parchmore Church Youth Club in the past; others were frequenters of local coffee bars and pubs; there were grammar candidates for 'O' level and 'A' level and secondary modern people working towards public examinations and specialist skills. Others were school-leaving age workers or people looking forward to release. There were West Indians, Indians and other immigrants. Some of the youngsters regularly attended Boys' Brigade or Church; others

⁷⁸ Youth Services 1.1.68

were on probation or well-known to the police. There was, of course, a great preponderance of boys and the largest age group must have been between 15 and 17 years old.

The youth leader had a staff of two assistant leaders and a team of about two dozen voluntary helpers of whom half a dozen or so were on duty each Club night. These people varied widely in the amount of training and experience they could bring to the work. Their corporate training was in the hands of the Minister who led a monthly Helpers' meeting. This meeting in itself constitutes a profitable field of study. It is hoped that a Report on its development will shortly be published.

The whole situation seemed ideally suited to the Albemarle idea of a "mixed fellowship" "counteracting the stratification of society".⁷⁹

The young people took part in the customary activities; the area around the canteen was popular, especially with the girls who sat in groups with their "coke" or coffee and took stock of all that was happening in the arena of activity. The lounge, intended for conversation in quieter surroundings and for television viewing, after a set had been hired, became popular with co-educational groups who found its seclusion useful for other interesting purposes.

The leader and helpers moved amongst these youngsters trying to get to know them and establish the kind of relationships which would enable them "to help without directing". Those with an easy-going facility for conversation and skills and interests acceptable to the young people found it fairly easy to be on cheerful and friendly terms with many of them. Some youngsters reached a point of divulging personal problems and anxieties to the adults and some worthwhile dialogue went on between two generations on such topics as personal values, aspects of personal relationships, the motivation of violence, "aggression", the existence of God.

The adults were keen that the Club should develop in the way that its members wanted therefore they tried to resist the temptation to make suggestions and encouraged the members to articulate their own. Ideas were slow in coming since, apart from those who had been member of the Church Club, most of the rest were unused to thinking creatively and expressing themselves coherently to adults. Nevertheless, some Sunday mornings football games against other clubs were organized; the girls play netball on the courts of Lady Edridge School; guitars and drums were sometimes in evidence as a small 'pop group' tried out its skill; motor

⁷⁹ Albemarle Report, p.37

cycles were taken apart, examined and re-assembled in the forecourt and afterwards roared up and down the road; girls set each other's hair in the powder-room and dried it under the electric drier; on Saturdays the canteen was by the young people. The most ambitious enterprise organized largely the Club members was a highly successful dance.

Nevertheless, there were signs that all was not well. The group with the closer B.B. and Church connections did not really attempt to make links with the other people and, after a few weeks, withdrew.

Saturday evenings were lively when members had been watching "the Palace" paly at Selhurst Park. The match was replayed up and down the Centre, if a football was lacking, billiards balls served the purpose. Excitement sometimes overflowed into punch-ups and "bundles" on the floor. At first the helpers coped with the horse-play fairly well but there is nothing more encouraging to the continuance and extension of wild behaviour than a female audience simultaneously nervous and fascinated. The approach of Guy Fawkes' night brought pyrotechnic displays generated in tin waste paper receptacles. There was frequent damage to plumbing and flooding of toilets and washrooms. The Leader, Minister and helpers made attempts to reason with the trouble-makers. Group leaders and instigators were identified and attempts made to discipline them by suspending their right to come to the Club for a few sessions. But, with the help of their gang-members, they did not find illicit entry difficult, or, if kept out, they made everyone aware of their proximity. For a while the premises stood in a tide of broken glass, remains of the windows which had been sacrificed and the beer bottles which had shattered them.

Since most of the trouble seemed to be concentrated upon Saturdays, it was decided not to open on that night.⁸⁰ But after Saturday closure had been effected, aggressive outbreaks were transferred to the week nights, previously fairly peaceful. By this stage, aggression was being vented not only against property but now also against people. Fists had been replaced by knives, small metal chips were catapulted about indiscriminately, an assistant leader's hair was set on fire.

After some particularly difficult nights which ended in the clearance of the premises by the police, in the eighth month of its existence, the Club was closed.

80 The Management Committee made this decision as part of a six-point programme of action.

Post-Mortem Questions

All kinds of questions could be, and indeed were, asked about the unfolding of events:

Why was not “a stronger line” taken when behaviour first showed signs of deterioration?

Why did the Club remain open as long as it did?

What benefits did any-one derive from its continued existence?

What happened to the relationships which the Leaders and helpers tried to establish with the members?

Is it impossible, in some urban areas, to run a reasonable Club?

It should be noted that a number of other clubs had already gone out of business in the same way.

The basic question remains:

Why do some young people behave so aggressively and destructively and, as it seems to the outside observer, contrary to their own best interests?

Where did we go wrong?

The Minister and the leaders set about analyzing the elements of the situation in the light of psychological and sociological considerations. When they did this, they saw how impossible had been the task they had set themselves for there had been inherent in it a number of factors of which each one, by itself, would be only too likely to bring about disasters.

1) The Clash of Cultures⁸¹

It was observable that all of the young people who “made trouble” could be classified as working class. Some had obvious social handicaps, for instance, the most difficult boy was a West Indian.

Lewis Yablonsky in his book “*The Violent Gang*” quotes Albert Cohen’s findings in ‘*Delinquent Boys*’.

Working class children use the delinquent sub-culture (the gang) as a mode of reaction and adjustment to a dominant middle-class society. Working

⁸¹ For a definition of the meaning of “class” see Thompson, *The Making of the Working Class*, p11.

class youth, trained in a different value system, are not adequately socialized to fulfil the status requirements of middle-class society... They are unfairly exposed to middle-class aspirations and judgments they cannot fulfil. This conflict produces in the working-class youth “status frustration”..... In the gang such youths act out their status frustrations in ‘non-utilitarian, malicious, negativistic forms of delinquency.....

In the school and community centre The working-class youth finds himself exposed to generally middle-class agents of society, for example, teachers and social workers. Their efforts to impose such middle-class rules, as orderliness, cleanliness, responsibility and the virtues of ambition upon him are met with sharp negativism. Cohen specifically presents nine cases of middle-class values which are rejected by the working-class child.

1) Ambition.... 2) Responsibility.... 3) Cultivation of skills and tangible achievement... 4) Postponement of immediate satisfaction ... in the interest of long-term goals.... 5) Rationality, in the sense of forethought, planning. 6) Manners, courtesy. 7) Control of physical aggression. 8) Wholesome recreation. 9) Respect for property.

The delinquent sub-culture takes its norms from the larger sub-cultures but turns them upside down The dominant theme ... is the explicit repudiation of middle-class standards and the adoption of their very antithesis The gang provides a legitimate ‘opportunity structure’ for the working-class boy to strike back at a larger society which produces their ‘status-frustration’ problems.

Why working-class children find it difficult to come to terms with the dominant culture is a matter for research. P.W. Musgrave in “The Sociology of Education” quotes B. M. Spinley’s investigations into the development of personality in English children, carried out in 1953. She “found that members of the slum group were basically insecure, since a new born infant is made much of till the next came along or till it grew up to a child and then was almost put on a side. The children rebelled against authority, since it had been weak and inconsistent in their own experience.⁸² The child who is insecure at home will naturally seek the haven of a protecting peer group and will assume hostile and defensive attitudes towards and threats to the group’s cohesion.

J. and E. Newsom in 1963 cast some light on the way in which working class people pass on their requirement for immediate rewards. “The working class mother would give [her child] sweets when he wanted them.... When a child offended, the working class mother tended to use

82 Musgrave: *Society of Education*, p.677-8

smacking immediately though not very consistently.⁸³

While Thornton Heath is by no means a slum area, many young people do come from overcrowded backgrounds where disciplines tends to be a matter of shouting, threats and blows; the life of the street may be preferable to being *under Mum's feet* or "*getting across*" Dad. The immigrant, of course, lives continually under a sense of threat.

In any case, the town child feels the weight of adult disfavour from an early stage. For quite natural and instinctive activity, running, jumping, climbing, exploring, for which the country child would probably be commended on his powers, the town child is always in trouble; for walls and parapets belong to some-one, derelict heaps are forbidden territory, rushing about puts other street users at risk. Whatever you do, some-one will shout "Get out of it!" Attitudes to authority formed by these experiences must lead to resentment and defiance. Teachers, organization leaders and others represent authority use the complicated vocabulary of their cultures. The child recognizes the power they exert over his life but he cannot meet them on their own ground for his culture has neither the words nor concepts!⁸⁴ His only defences are flight or violent defiance. This is an extreme statement of the position for many working class children do grow up to come to terms with a more sophisticated culture⁸⁵ while there is a reciprocal attempt to understand them by some people on the other side. Nevertheless, there is no doubt about the difficulties which result from the insecurity and frustration of young people who grow up in a social class or group which feels continuously threatened and outnumbered.

Within the Club this clash of cultures was not simply between leaders and helpers on the one hand and members on the other; it was represented within the actual membership. Some of the youngsters, studying or training for jobs and careers, showed themselves to be people capable of working towards long-term goals. Others, who had left school as soon as was possible, were mainly concerned with the weekly wage packet and what it would yield up in terms of immediate enjoyment. The first set was as much representative of "the boss class" as were the adults. There is bound to be irritation and friction between two sets of people, one of which will organize, say, a football team and then practise to improve

⁸³ Ibid, p.66

⁸⁴ See: Ottaway: *Education and Society*, p.130 on Bernstein's research on the use of language.

⁸⁵ See: Yablonsky: *The Violent Game*, p.159 on the successfully aspiring lower class

their game, while the other set flit from one thing to another, never to be depended upon, completing nothing, achieving nothing. While these quick changes of interest are a characteristics of all adolescent behaviour, the “middle class” youngsters are more likely to grow beyond it because of the encouragement to do so which their cultural background provides. Nor do such youngsters need to resort so readily to physical force to affirm their position. They have a more developed vocabulary and can communicate ideas easily. They find the forceful non-verbal means of communication of less articulate people unnecessary and annoying. Their group closes up to exclude the others.

2) Failure to meet needs

Maslow has used the findings of research to construct a table setting out the psychological needs of human beings in his ‘Theory of Sequential Development’. He affirms that these needs must be met in sequence; thus, it is useless to provide for the satisfaction of the higher “group” needs if those at a lower level remain unsatisfied.

The Parchmore Club, with its emphasis on self-determination and decision-making gave a chance to those people who had the capacity to “grasp their potentialities and wanted to explore the possibilities of Groups VI and VII”. This is very far up the scale and will be outside the capacities of people who feel, albeit subconsciously, ‘threatened’, who are not sure of “acceptance by others” and whose self-respect and prestige has been undermined by their experience of life. Rather than helping these people, the demand which the Club’s ethos made upon them was likely to increase their awareness of their deficiencies.

3) The Effect of Permissiveness

The control of the Club appeared to the youngsters to be permissive. It was not intended that it should be so. But the Leaders were reluctant to impose arbitrary authoritarian compulsions because they thought that this would hinder the development of self-discipline in both individual and corporate behaviour. People were to find out that respect for other people’s interests would create the best kind of situation for everyone. But this stage in group development, where authority was seen to be a corporate responsibility of the members, was never reached because of the effect upon the community of the insecure people. They looked to where they expected to find authority, i.e. to the Leaders and, failing to see it expressed in terms which they recognized, they did not look anywhere else.

Michael Argyle in his study of “Psychology and Social Problems” has

shown that “in studies of small boys in play situations, it is found that if the adults in charge are permissive and make no attempt to prevent aggression, the level of aggression rises rather than falls... It is progressively discovered that there is permission for aggression and this removes restraints on behaviour, the instigation [for the aggression] may be annoyances outside the situation.”⁸⁶

This last is a salient point. Much that young people may be feeling angry about are experiences outside the Club situation altogether: at work, school or home. That anger is expressed where there is an outlet for it. The question raised “If anger has been aroused, how can it be safely vented without endangering people and property?” and the questions which lie behind it “How can life be so adjusted that people do not feel angry?” or perhaps “Is there a creative and useful ‘anger’?” Argyle says that “in order to achieve positive and constructive changes in society, it is necessary to deal with a great deal of opposition, and a certain amount of rather indirect aggression may be needed.”⁸⁷ What is necessary is that the urgency and energy of aggressive expression should be re-directed into creative, useful and enjoyable channels and that the causes of destructive aggression be mitigated or removed. But the problem is not solved by stating it. Nevertheless, clues to its solution can only be gained by analyzing it.

4) Failure to communicate to members a real sense of participation and responsibility

Although theoretically the method of working emphasized the importance of members’ ideas and opinions, in fact, the machinery of discovering these was inefficient. Not many of the young people were accustomed to expressing their ideas to adults on equal terms in face-to-face relationships; it takes time in which this will happen to develop. There was no regular organized forum for the exchange of ideas. Some “Members Councils” were held in which all the Club members were entitled to participate. The vocal “participation” of some sixty or so people, at times simultaneously, is not the best means of constructive corporate thinking or of reaching mutually agreeable decisions. There was hesitancy on the part of the Leaders to instigate an elected Members’ Committee since this can give to the Club a hard hierarchical structure. But the primitive ‘general council’ foundered because so many members lacked experience in how to conduct themselves on such an occasion.

86 Argyle : Psychology and Social Problems, p.50

87 Argyle : Psychology and Social Problems, p.58

It was seen that neither the informal means of communication nor the council resulted in members feeling that they had any real responsibility for what happened.

Therefore, when trouble occurred, the more “socialized” members felt no obligation to try to influence the less-controlled people. They looked to the Leaders to do this just as they looked to them to organize and work out everything else that affected Club life. These not only “opted out” of any responsibility in the situation, they also showed hostile attitudes to the Leaders who, they felt, had failed them.

How to Proceed

There is a sense in which a post-mortem is easy: analysis of the causes of failure can be worked out. But the Management Committee had given an undertaking to serve the young people of Thornton Heath for a specific number of years. To have discovered reasons for the failure of the first attempt must be a guide for a more effective new beginning. It is indeed at this point that so much youth work is given up. But the people concerned saw that the whole experience, though costly in paint and glass and plumbing, had yielded up worthwhile awards:

1. They now know their “parish”: the youngsters of the neighbourhood were no longer the problem but real individuals with names (some of them) and personalities.
2. There was a sense of corporate entity in the helpers’ team holding together those who had no intention of giving up. This cohesion had been maintained by the monthly helpers’ meetings which had provided opportunity for honest, and structured, exchange of ideas.
3. It was realized that a “new beginning” could only be made on a basis of informed thinking and experimental action.

The Minister and leaders diagnosed the difficulties in the terms set out above: the clash of cultures, the results of apparent permissiveness on the aggressively inclined; the contrasting needs of a heterogeneous group, the failure to generate in the more co-operative members any real sense of responsibility and power in the Club. To find a way in which the varied needs might be met would require time and the leaders’ resolutely decided, and were supported by the Management Committee, to take limited and unhurried steps towards a new pattern of work.

They established certain basic principles: It was impossible to treat this

collection of young people as one group. The needs of the differing groups of young people should be equally respected, examined and catered for. It was not possible to deal with *all* the groups *immediately*.

Division

It seemed that, broadly speaking, the membership could be divided into two. There were people whose needs were represented on the Maslow table by Groups V to VII; there were people represented by Groups III and IV, and possibly even by Group II.

Classifying people is a most unenviable task, especially because, as shown by the diagram, there are number of people whose aggressiveness was probably imitative rather than spontaneous and on a less disturbed situation the former would behave sensibly. These must be identified and brought into a more helpful situation.

Some decisions were made:

1. The Maslow V – VII Group were those most likely to benefit from the on-directive approach. Therefore attention should first be given to them.
2. About fifty of these would be identified and invited to create a new Club according to their own ideas. These must have the chance to work on their ideas in isolation from those in the other groups.
3. People who seemed to be in the Maslow II – IV Group would not be invited but relationships with them would be maintained by the youth leader who would work with them in an “unattached” way meeting them in pubs and coffee bars to make sure that they knew what was going on at Parchmore.
4. As soon as possible, an attempt would be made to meet the specific needs of this ‘excluded’ group.

The obvious problem was: if the Club re-opened with invited people, would the ‘excluded’ group allow them to carry on undisturbed? Nevertheless it was agreed that the plan be tried.

The invited group met the leaders in January 1969 to discuss their idea. They were given to understand that they would have a positive part in the shaping of this new enterprise.

This meeting came to these decisions:

1. The Club organization would be in the hands of a Members' Committee of six people to be re-elected every three months (thus allowing a number of people to participate in decision-making during the year). The Chairman, Secretary and other officers were to be young people. The Club leader and two members of the Helpers' Meeting attended meetings in an advisory capacity, at the expressed invitation of the members.
2. This Committee had power to make rules for the ordering of the Club within the area of freedom which the Management Committee could allow. Working out this "area of freedom" is one of the interesting aspects of later progress. The members accepted that the Management Committee had ultimate responsibility for the Club and that the Leader had a responsibility of this Committee.
3. A condition of Club membership was the undertaking to abide by the Rules of the Club which were to be drawn up by the Members' Committee. These Rules, when they had been devised, proved to be mainly concerned that behaviour should not threaten damage to people or property.
4. The Club would occupy the Centre on Monday and Wednesday evenings. Other meetings elsewhere might be arranged between members for special activities.
5. The members asked for, and were granted, power to choose the adults who would work with them in the Club. One of the remarkable alterations to the situation came with this request. Up to this point, the helpers and members had assumed the authoritarian status of the former. Now each helper's place in the Club was dependent upon the members' judgment of his or her contribution: did that helper help to create the kind of Club which they, the members, wanted?

It indicated something of the nature of their confidence in the members and in the methods of working that the helpers freely submitted themselves to the members' judgment. In the event, all the people who volunteered to help were invited to do so and, at the same time, to say what particular interests and skills they had which they would be willing to share with the members.

“Splinter Group”

It was at this time, too, that the ‘Church-centred’ group, which had withdrawn from the Club at an early stage, requested permission to form their own Club, independent from the Centre group. These people proved themselves capable of devising their own structure, with an elected committee responsible for Rules and organization. An adult of their own choosing became their “Chairman”. They subsequently programmed for themselves various successful enterprises: dances, hikes – by day and by night – a pantomime, a car rally as well as a regular refreshment service to Church goers on Sunday evenings. They gathered up an increasing membership of friends and acquaintances at their Saturday evening meetings. But they were not without their problems, including a tendency to “cliquishness” and sub-groupings. The history of this group reveals some of the dangers of adopting the non-directive method when there is no thoroughly trained worker immediately involved in it.

Off the Ground

So, two groups of young people began to work out their affairs, both equally interesting in the course of their development. For the purposes of this essay, the fortunes of the group associated with the Youth Centre will be pursued.

It was recommended by the Leader and helpers, and accepted by the Members’ Committee, that increase in membership should be a slow process. This would allow time for the “foundation members” to get to know each other and begin to feel united and identified with one another. For the first two or three months, this policy was quite rigorously pursued and by the spring, a feeling of unity was developing. The Club consisted of several sub-groups inter-linked quite closely because some people in each had connections with people in other sub-groups. There was feeling of identity with the Club was indicated when people began to refer to themselves as belonging to “The Nick”, the name which was chosen by the members. Contributing to the development of “esprit de corps” was the Club’s membership of the Surrey Association of Youth Clubs. In fact, one ‘Nick’ member became Chairman of its Senior Members’ Council.

Through this organization, the Club participated in various sports, fixtures and competitions and SAYC hostelling expeditions. Within the Club similar activities took place: cricket, rounders (in the Croydon Youth Rounders Association league), youth hostelling groups, a jumble sale, a dance, and practical work for people in need through the Croydon Guild of

Social Service. All these enterprises were largely in the hands of members; adults were very much in an advisory role. Members, indeed, were turning to one another for advice, on occasion, rather than to helpers. At the same time, relationships with the helpers were friendly and courteous. Two representatives from the Members' Committee attended Helpers' Meetings and their contribution was of tremendous value.

The first Members' Committee made some intelligent Rules about membership and subsequent committees learned some of these hard arts of committee work which can be quite boring and therefore often too easily side-tracked. The committee has still to learn that those who make rules have a responsibility for seeing that they are implemented.

Club life was not disturbed, during the earlier months, by the return of the pre-Christmas trouble-makers. The ring-leaders did appear a few weeks after re-opening. They had a long "man to man" talk with the Club leader, allowed their names to be placed on the membership waiting list and departed peacefully. Relationships with them were maintained off the Club premises. The possible reasons for this peaceful behaviour would perhaps warrant an essay in their own account.

It would be foolish to infer that "the Nick" has no more real problems. The opening up of possibilities reveals new problems: through ineptness and lack of experience members have lost more than £20 of their funds within two months. A little more realism in dealing with other human beings might have reduced this loss: seat bookings on coaches should be accompanied by deposits so that eventual non-starters have underwritten a proportion of the loss; fool-proof supervision of entrances is necessary at a dance for the determined non-ticket holder will resort to back-doors or windows; the hire of the "pop group" must not cost more than a reasonable estimate of the profits of the function. The hard facts of financial health are learned the hard way.

There have been problems because the policy of slow growth resulted, in some members' opinion, in a rather dull situation. So, more new people were permitted to join at one time.

There were integration problems; sub-groups did not link up, some foundation members drifted away. Then, in July, some of the erstwhile difficult people re-appeared. Their interim story remains to be unfolded; some interesting things had happened to them; their behaviour seemed much modified. Nevertheless, they were still a noisy gang. They came in;

some paid their “subs”, some did not. After a few weeks, the Members’ Committee had to decide what to do about these people, for they had not committed themselves to complying with any membership conditions. Some Committee members were very much against their re-introduction. Some established real anxiety about them and threatened to withdraw if these others were admitted. But some committee people wondered if the ‘visitors’ belligerent attitude was a response to the apparent exclusiveness of members. It was possible to talk to them, said one committee man, why not let them come in? Perhaps communication could be opened up. A dozen or so of this gang have joined; so far, relationships with the established membership are tentative; the situation is explosive – and full of possibilities. This is quite a test for members, helpers, and leaders. Is real integration possible or not?

Association II

Officially ‘The Nick’s’ name is now Association I for there exists a parallel Club, Association II, meeting on Tuesdays and Fridays.

From the time of the re-opening in January, the Minister and Leaders had been exercised about how to discharge properly their responsibility towards the excluded young people. This group must be served in a manner comprehensible to them, by people who belonged to them, spoke their language, and understood their thought-processes and whom they could trust. The Borough Youth Organizer, himself a member of the Management Committee, agreed that there was a need for a leader with these attributes and he was able to assign to the Club a man whom, he thought, could work with this particular group. Dan Rodney had both instinctive and acquired knowledge of young people, real sympathy and tolerance towards them and, most notably, he belonged to “the people”, a working man living on a Council house estate. He took responsibility for a new “open” club deliberately designed to serve the needs of those whom the first one had failed to serve. He chose his band of helpers from amongst his own associates and the full-time Youth Leader retired to the canteen to observe events from this vantage point.

Word about the opening of the new Club spread quickly to the expected clientele and before long thirty or so were coming fairly regularly, amongst them a high proportion of familiar faces from the pre-Christmas era. Dan Rodney started with a good deal of credit in terms of their trust, for some of his youngsters had met him before in Clubwork elsewhere and had sensed that he was “on their side”. There is no rule-making committee or terms of membership. Provided there is room, any-one who comes

and who will pay their 'subs' can go in and enjoy themselves. There is no pressure to organize activities but it is noteworthy that, after only three months, some of these have asked for skilled coaching in football and table tennis – and 'Nick' members have asked if they may share this facility when it is available. Behaviour in Association II appears to be governed by what is acceptable to Dan Rodney in consideration with the member who seems to be stepping over the line indicated by common sense. The Leader and his helpers appear to the members as comprehensible human beings who will say, when it seems that a mistake has been made, "I'm sorry" and will give direction, when invited, opening with the words "I may be wrong but -----" The members feel that they are accepted and respected just as they are. No one is covertly wanting or trying to change them to another pattern because the leaders in the situation belong, fundamentally, to the same pattern as themselves.

So far, damage has amounted to one ash-tray broken and a cistern which mysteriously parted company with the wall.

It is some of these people who have recently appeared in Association I. Is the security and acceptance which they have found in Association II sufficient to enable them to come to terms with more complex structure of Association I and feel that their status does not require reinforcement by an exhibition of physical aggression?

Findings

No one can predict the direction of events in the ensuing months. But same deductions have been made from the observation of happenings so far:

1. Integration is not achieved simply by bringing diverse people together. The effect of class culture is profound. When groups belonging to opposing cultures come into contact, particularly in circumstances where expected external structures are absent, e.g. the middle class representatives are not fulfilling their accustomed dominating roles, then the working class reactions may be uncertainty and defensiveness. These reactions may express themselves in belligerence and aggression. The middle class response will probably be increased exclusiveness and obvious antipathy.
2. There is a limit to the diversity of needs which can be met by one organization and one kind of approach. Those people whose needs remain unmet will look for compensation for this in ways which may undermine the service to the rest. Thus, those who fail to achieve

status and significant in the larger group will resort to means of enhancing their status in their sub-group in the flamboyance of insolence to authority figures, bravado and physical violence.

3. Groups are important: a successful association between people is probably achieved best when all of them feel secure in their affinity and friendship sub-groups. E. A. Peel says "Group life, whether in the classroom, play ground or factory, must provide an outlet for its members' needs for security, responsibility and adventure."⁸⁸ A particular characteristic of all adolescent development is the need for protective association with peers. This is an observable phenomenon of human behaviour throughout life. The danger in the expression of this instinct is that it can lead to exclusiveness and isolation with attendant attitudes of suspicion and fear of other groups. The structure that is required to enable human beings to link in amicable association with each other is one which does not in any way threaten the entity of the sub-groups while it encourages the gradual building up of relationship patterns between them. Factors which may help to achieve this are:
 - a. Cross-membership of the sub-groups; i.e. people belonging to more than one group;
 - b. Common interests shared by the sub-groups;
 - c. A common overall loyalty to one person or to the ideals and ideas of a particular organization.
4. Leaders of sub-groups are important. W. J. H. Sprott quotes G. C. Homans' view that "every group tends to develop a pyramidal structure, to throw up "leaders".... Where there is anything specific to be done, a leader nearly always emerges spontaneously".⁸⁹ Sprott later points out that, through leadership in a group may pass from one person to another according to the demands of the situation yet "single individuals always emerge who perform leadership acts more frequently than any-one else, who are not only required to "to initiate interaction" with other members of the group, but are also looked up to as the group representative."⁹⁰ The effect any change in the behaviour of the group, these people must be recognized and helped to change their attitudes, if this appears desirable. The influence of an accepted leader can alter a group's behaviour to the extent of complete reversal.

⁸⁸ Peel : Psychological basis of education, p. 272

⁸⁹ Sprott : Human groups, p. 52

⁹⁰ Sprott : Human groups, p. 154

5. It is a mistake to impose too great a demand upon people. Some ‘challenge’ there should be as the Albemarle Report recommends. “The Youth Service must offer opportunities ... for as many [young people] as possible to find something sufficiently challenging to capture their enthusiasm and to ensure the fullest development of their qualities of mind and body.”⁹¹ To those who are already secure and self-confident, such an approach will be bracing and exciting. But those with a “built-in” sense of being “second-rate”, has even rowdily disguised must not be called to “swim out of their depth” and reveal further inadequacies. They need time to come to a point of taking quite small steps and preferably self-chosen ones. They need plenty of interest and encouragement from adults, some suggestions, some opportunity for decision-making all within a solid structure of obvious, sensible but not overbearing authority.
6. The adults most likely to be able to provide this kind of structure are those who belong to their own class and culture, speak their language with sympathy, and yet with firmness, and thus will enjoy their tolerance and trust.

The Future

At present, it is the policy of the Management Committee and the Leaders that the two Associations remain distinct in their approach and that their efforts would be directed towards different kinds of young people. There is, however, no ban on dual membership; indeed it is hoped that Association II members will be welcomed into the ‘Nick’ when they feel ready to comply with a more organized, yet in some ways, a freer situation. To be acceptable to ‘Nick’ members, they must develop some of their characteristics: self-control, respect for organization, willingness to co-operate, desire to think and plan and work for more distant objectives. Such developments would not make them less “working class”. It would make them more adequate and efficient in maintaining the best elements in their class culture.

Twin Objectives: Reconciliation, Maturity

The work that is being done at Parchmore in the Youth Clubs and in the Community Centre is an attempt to meet the challenge of the Biblical idea of Reconciliation. Not the place to examine the theological basis of this concept but to say that it may be expressed in terms relevant to the present situation. It does not mean ignoring or minimizing differences. It does

⁹¹ Albemarle Report, p. 61

mean giving respect to each individual, by trying to understand why there are differences, by co-operating in each person's and each group's attempt to realize its full and best potential. It also involves providing a structure in which diverse people can come to tolerate, understand and accept each other as they are, and to be in that forgiving relationship which may achieve a degree of healing in our fissured society.

To create these conditions, truly mature people must be at work in this area. The object of the whole enterprise was stated to be "maturity" for both individuals and the community. So many definitions of this term have been given by various thinkers. E. A. Peel mentions "charity, loyalty, generosity, humour, resilience, consistency and willingness to take responsibility "as" some of the things we are looking for in a mature person".⁹²

To measure success by the degree of maturity which the members are attaining is not easy. Although George Lovell and Graham Riches have suggested some criteria of measurement in papers on 'Evaluation in Community Work',⁹³ these criteria have not yet been applied to the Parchmore Clubs. In any case, who can judge to what degree the Club and its staff influence young people or whether their response may be to contacts and experiences outside the Club? Who knows how far their natural development would take them? All that is stated here is what has deservedly happened and what is seen to be in the process of happening:

1. Some members are successfully assuming and carrying out responsibilities, programming their own activities;
2. Some are able to make sensible decisions and to stand by them;
3. There is much less violence and destructive behaviour;
4. Some members are replacing hostility and aggressiveness with more co-operative and friendly attitudes;
5. Some members have been willing to show friendship across the barriers of group, race and behaviour patterns;
6. Some have wanted to bridge the generation gap and have joined the all-age community club, Axis;
7. Some have shown concern for people in need in the locality to the extent of giving time and effort in practical help;
8. The helpers themselves corporately evidenced maturity when they allowed their status to be set by the Club members.

⁹² Peel : Psychology of education, p. 260

⁹³ Lovell, G. and Riches, G: Evaluation in Community Work in Community Development Journal, October 1967 and January 1968

All the people in the Club, including the adults, are at widely differing points of growth. "Maturity" for each individual will be as totally different as the personalities, capacities and circumstances of each. But the aim of the work stands and there are indications that something really is being achieved "to help the people in Thornton Heath to develop their lives to the full..."

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Appendix II

Suggestions about a Probationer and Sabbatical

From: The Rev. George Lovell
228 Green Lane
London, S.W.16
23rd January 1971

The Rev. Norman V Dawson
20, Beadon Road
Bromley
Kent

Dear Norman,

Thank you very much for giving me so much of your time on Thursday morning. I deeply appreciate it. Your ideas and suggestions were most helpful; I feel greatly encouraged. Thank you again.

The more I consider the suggestion about the appointment of a probationer to Parchmore the more certain I become that this would answer my immediate need for help. Such an appointment would enable me to continue to make my contribution to the overall development of the Parchmore Project and to the other demands placed upon me. Simultaneously it would mean, as you pointed out, that a minister would be learning about community development work in a practical situation and that M.T.D. would be receiving information about the implications of training ministers in this kind of work.

You raised questions about accommodation for a probationer. The flat I spoke to you about will be available for a probationer from September or earlier if necessary. It is in Westwood Hill, Sydenham, approximately 3 miles by road from Parchmore. Obviously it is not ideally situated and should be seen as a temporary arrangement. Should a probationer be appointed steps could then be taken to try to obtain accommodation in Thornton Heath. Whilst such enquiries were being undertaken the probationer would have good accommodation but would require his own transport. The flat is on the first floor, is furnished and comprises two bedrooms, a lounge/dining room,

a kitchen pantry etc., a bathroom and toilet and an outside store cupboard. A telephone is already installed. It is in a modern block of flats and there is a hard standing car park for residents' vehicles. It is on the main bus route to Crystal Palace. The rent would have to be agreed but the proposed figure is £400 per annum.

It was most gracious of you to suggest that I should take two months sabbatical leave this summer. This would certainly help me to catch up with writing up the project and doing the necessary research. When I have thought through this idea I will discuss it with Mr. Gibbs and let you know the outcome. How generous of you to suggest this and to offer to take one or two appointments when you must be as busy, if not busier, than I am.

You asked me to put down briefly the sort of demands being made upon me other than those of the Parchmore Project. I left an outline of the Parchmore Project work with you. The other demands are as follows:

1. There is what could be described as the self-imposed demand of carrying out the Parchmore Project work as an action-research programme and writing it up as a thesis in order that:
 - b. I might have the resources of the university behind me in doing my work;
 - c. a church project may be assessed by an independent academic body; and
 - d. information may be supplied to administrators, trainers (of ministers and lay people) and those responsible for policy decision-making in the churches in order that they may be able to draw out the implications for their work.

I also enclose an outline of the thesis. The point should be made that ministers can engage in community development work without doing all of this. But it seems to me essential in exploring a new field for church-community involvement that some of the work should be undertaken in this way. Such an approach will help towards a proper consideration of the practical and theoretical issues involved for the church in deploying some of her resources in community development.

2. M.T.D. has asked me to direct an In-Service Training Course on Community Development. I enclose an outline of the course programme.
3. The Inter-Departmental Youth Committee have involved me in considering the implications for the Church of the Fairbairn-Milson Report, Youth and Community Work in the 70's. This has involved me in consultations and preparing written material and charts.
4. I am the Chairman of the Board of Lay Training's Group on Community Development. This group is charged with the task of 'exploring the principles, methods and theology underlying the new and growing concern about the need for churches to share more fully in community work'.
5. Until Easter I have responsibility for a training course for clergy and lay people at High Wycombe mounted in consultation with the Local College of Technology. Leaflet enclosed. This has been fully recorded and is being written up for publication.
6. Various people have been in touch with me about community work and community development projects. This has involved correspondence and consultations about their work and community development processes, principles, methods and ideas. Some examples: The Rev. John Lane and the Telegraph Hill Project - involved in helping him to conceptualize his work - I have had to decline to act as group worker consultant to the principal organizers of this project. An invitation from the Rev. Derryk Collingwood to help the Sutton Methodists to work out how they could make a Christians contribution to Sutton's redevelopment plans could only be met by correspondence. They would be helped by a community development seminar but I cannot undertake this at the moment. Several requests from L.E.A's to take counselling and group work courses for teachers and youth workers declined. A request from the Rev. Paul Kimber to help an ecumenical group to study community development had to be answered by correspondence and written material whereas much more help is really required. Consequently a great opportunity similar to the one we have taken at up High Wycombe may be missed.

I have been involved in consultations at Mission House about community development and called to

give evidence at an Anglican Commission.

This list could be extended considerably but I think these illustrations are sufficient. By request, and in order to meet some of these points, I have written a short book to be published in the spring answering some of the basic questions raised in the churches about community development. This will save a lot of correspondence but I am afraid it may bring more!

7. I act as group-worker to the monthly meeting of the Ministers of the Ten-Centres and the staff of the King's Cross Greater London Youth and Community Service Organization.
8. I am a member of the working committee responsible for a five-year action-research programme designed "to explore the practical, technical and theoretical implications of churches becoming involved in the field of the community development". I enclose a brief description. The project paper will be ready in about a week's time.

I do hope this is the sort of information you required. Writing such a list I do not find a pleasant occupation but I see it is necessary. May I conclude by saying that I love my work and feel greatly privileged to be a minister working in this exciting and satisfying area. I would not have anyone conclude that I am complaining; I am asking for help in solving problems of my ministry in order that I may be able to make any contributions that I can to the exploration of the proper contribution that the people in the church can make to community development as a part of their essential mission to the world.

Thank you for your patience, help and understanding.

Yours sincerely,

George Lovell

Statement prepared by J. Gibbs and read to staff meetings
on 5/3/71, 8pm 5/3/71 and QM on 8/3/71

At Parchmore the first of the Ten projected "Youth and Community Centres" within the borough of London, has been established by the Methodist Church. Still in an experimental stage, its minister (Rev. George Lovell) has established himself by considerable study, having considerable expertise in the subject now being recognized as "Community Development" and has written a book on it - about to be published.

The theory of this technical, academic subject has been, and is being, applied by Mr. Lovell to the situation at Parchmore. It is too early yet with any certainty, to say how successful or not this experiment may prove to be.

Mr. Lovell has always been, and is still aware that his primary responsibility is to the work at Parchmore, and he has refused many requests to speak about what may be called "Christian Aspects of Community Development" and allied subjects because they could have taken him away from Parchmore.

Nevertheless, requests continue to come, and are likely to increase with the publication of the book, and this places increased tension on Mr. Lovell - a situation that emerged in telephone conversation between Mr. Lovell and Mr. Gibbs. As a result Mr. Gibbs suggested that Mr. Lovell might have a talk with the Rev. Norman Dawson to obtain his view of the situation.

This was done, and Mr. Dawson felt that two possibilities should be explored:

1. Short term - "sabbatical" of say two months (perhaps May and June) to allow Mr. Lovell to catch up with work which arises from his study of these subjects and the Connexion will demands made upon him. This could mean freedom from (a) Sunday preaching and its necessary preparation, and (b) certain weeknight meetings and pastoral care. Mr. Lovell would still want to take community worship and Communion Services, and to take the chair at Leaders and similar meetings.
2. Long term - the help of a Probationer Minister as from September. He would be a man already interested in Community Development, and not involving this circuit in any expense. This would depend upon the Circuit's existing staff being maintained. Whether this can be implemented may not be certainly known until Conference in July.

I have since put these suggestions to the staff, who agreed to co-operate, and to a meeting of Parchmore Leaders and Trustees, who unanimously agreed to (1) and left (2) to be considered by the L.M. and L.M. and make its mind known to the group and the Chairman. This has been done.

Staff Meeting re. Sabbatical and Probationer - 2/2/71

1. John introduced it very well.
2. Peter very sympathetic and got hold of it immediately and realized how important to write to clarify ideas and understanding. Likewise about Probationer.
3. Felt David a little aggressive - almost as though fed up hearing about Parchmore. Could see problems re. Probationer if a minister lifted - don't know what Parchmore involves he said.
4. J. Garbutt - we are doing this anyway at Addington but don't say much. Think he feels a bit unfairly treated. Didn't disagree with either when either idea. Sympathetic.
5. Tom sympathetic but didn't really understand - John excellent and fair.
6. No problem about sabbatical. No problem about probationer if don't take minister from Addington or put probationer in there and providing pay for it all. Very sympathetic really. Felt very embarrassed.

Combined T/L - 8/2/71

1. John put case very well indeed.
2. Meetings well attended.
3. Strong objectives from A. Burges - too much experiment. Felt didn't want me to leave - said be pulled out - different from last year when wanted to get rid of me - Mr. Neve - no option but fearful for state of society - can't take responsibility for not allowing to go - murmurings around that I was on my way out - tries to answer this.
4. Brian Spalding spoke well - must let me have it and accept my word because minister of integrity - likewise Andy - vote unanimous for sabbatical.
- 5) Want time to consider probationer.

Appendix III A Mission to the Church?

Leaders meeting to discuss the Mission to the Church held on the 12th May – (see the notes of the meeting written up by J. Sewell)

There were several things about this meeting which were difficult and complicated. First of all, there had been a considerable amount of discussion and disagreement about certain financial matters that ought to have been dealt with at a previous meeting. I felt that the matters ought to come before this meeting, and asked the meeting if they wished to consider them. They agreed to do this. It took a little time to decide on exactly what they wished to do about the increased assessment but eventually I thought that they came to a realistic decision which brought together the various ideas of the group. I was concerned during the meeting that this discussion did not spell out the possibilities of a proper discussion of the matters that we had come together to talk about. I therefore suggested that we should have a break even though it was only just after 8 p.m. in order that we might change the atmosphere of the meeting and start again. We agreed to sing the doxology. I was somewhat surprised, I think, at the reaction of the people; when I had first suggested this idea at the last meeting, there was enormous support for it and they wanted time to think but they seemed quite enthusiastic. At this meeting things were quite different and I will try to note some of the points that seemed to emerge.

1. Miss Peggy Rush was the chief spokesman for this particular line. She could not find any enthusiasm or anything that excited her to engage in a Mission of this kind. She felt she ought, but she did not enthuse about it. She just did not feel that she had any energy left. So much had been demanded of them during the past few years they just felt flat, without energy. She started off by talking about the point No. 1 that I had made in the notes that I had prepared at their request. She felt that this continual insistence on addressing ourselves to subject, for disciplining our mind, for putting our energies forward, was just too much. She wanted things to happen spontaneously and freely and to have a joy and verve about them. When I questioned her about this in regard to how one does these things, or was it necessary to arrange a place where things can spontaneously happen, for instance, she did not have an answer. There were several other people who seemed to agree with her and they were concerned about this.
2. Mr. Burges looked back over the long period of the history of

Parchmore and said that there had been times when the whole effort and energy seemed to have been spent. He remarked about the period immediately after the 1914 – 18 war, when it seemed that there were so few workers and so many children for instance, in the Sunday school that they had just simply come to a shuddering halt. He thought that the times of re-birth and resurrection came out of such moments and that perhaps we were at such a time now.

3. When I pressed them about this whole business of being ‘overtaxed’ and busy, even to the point of saying that I could see that looking round the room, there were some people who were extraordinarily busy in the life of the Church, but most of the people had no duties other than the ones they would have had prior to the alteration of the premises, there just did not seem to be any answer. I differentiated between the changes that have occurred in our lives and in the life of the Church in general which would have happened in any case and the changes that have happened in Parchmore because of the alterations and the new work. I thought that they were confusing the facts, and influences of these two different strands of change. They agreed, I think.
4. Miss Peggy Rush thought that the concern with regard to tiredness, exhaustion, flatness, had not come so much out of the amount of work done, but rather from having to ‘think through the theory of all this work’ and all that lies behind it. I suggested to her and to the meeting, that, in fact, the problem was emotion in the proper sense of the word. It was a problem like the emotional adjustment of the mind that one has got to make when one moves to a new house or a new town or when one loses one’s loved one or when a new member joins a family. She would not accept this, but the rest of the meeting did (and so did Mrs. Goode and when discussing this with me the following evening in private, she said she accepted the point that she was tired by the movement of life and not by what was happening in Parchmore).
5. The major discussion centered around the statement that the Church has become like a business. When I tried to get to the bottom of this, I failed lamentably. They would reiterate what they said, but could not produce illustrations of what they meant. For instance, one illustration was brought out that one person was asked to sign cheques on a Sunday, but when this was pressed, this was not what was meant. I just could not get to what they meant because like so many other issues over the last five years, when I have started to ask

them to expand exactly what they mean, they are unable to do so. Putting my verbal skills at their disposal sometimes does not help. The actual meaning of what they are saying eludes definition. We had a period of prayer before we came to any decisions and these are recorded in Jessie's notes and then afterwards I suggest that they should sing 615.⁹⁴ We sang the first verse and ended on a most amicable note, but the Mission to the Church is temporarily, at least, put on one side. Mr. Neve had a very long conversation with me on the telephone, about the whole affair on the following morning.

CONFIDENTIAL

Some Notes for the Members of the Leaders' Meeting on the suggestion that we ought to consider a Mission to the Church during the year 1971/72 as a basis for discussion

At the Leaders' Meeting on Monday, 26th April 1971, after we had arranged for a special Leaders' Meeting to be held on the 12th May 1971 at 7.30 p.m. to discuss the suggestion about a Mission of the Church, I was asked to write some notes about it.

During the past six or seven years, the officers, leaders and workers of Parchmore have given a considerable amount of time to thinking and working out what is involved in the Church being involved in Youth and Community Work. At the same time, of course, a considerable amount of effort, energy and thought has been put into the traditional life, work and worship of the Church. In addition, a whole series of meetings on worship resulted in experimental services. After a year's work 10.30 Church was inaugurated a few months after the opening of the Centre with a comprehensive educational programme combined with monthly services of community worship. But the point would seem to remain that by the force of circumstances, a major amount of our effort has had to be directed towards the Youth and Community Work and all that it has involved. This work is seen to be an essential part of the Mission and the Ministry of the Church.

The basic idea behind the suggested Mission to the Church is that we should redress the balance by concentrating for a year upon the fellowship and educational life of the Church within the context of the Youth and

94 Guide me, O Thou Great Jehovah....
Secretary's notes in background file

Community Work. It is generally agreed that all aspects of the Church, Youth and Community Centre work ought to be held in balance at all times. In order to achieve this there are times when we have to give more attention to one thing than to another. The points I wish to make by way of an introduction to a discussion about such a Mission are:

1. It will require a considerable amount of work and there would be no point in starting such a Mission if we had not first sat down and counted the cost, personal and financial, and committed ourselves to carrying it through.
2. The Mission could be planned to reach its crescendo on Easter Sunday, 1972
3. Decisions about the responsibility for such a programme of work would rest with the Members of the Leaders' Meeting.
4. It would be necessary to determine what we understood by a 'Mission to the Church'. My own thoughts have been in the direction of stimulating the people who have already shown an interest in the life and worship of the Church, or who are members of the Church, to think out more of what Christian faith, practice and commitment is all about.
5. There are groups existing for Christian Fellowship and discussion which could be involved in such a Mission. It might be possible to arrange house groups to provide the opportunity to talk about the Christian faith, and etc.
6. The normal meetings for worship and witness, especially the Christian Education Programme and community worship, could be seen as a means of working out a part of this Mission and enabling people to talk to each other about the reality and meaning of the Christian life.
7. We could seek the assistance of a theological college and some of its students in carrying out such a Mission. Queens, the new college at Birmingham, springs directly to mind because one of its tutors, the Rev. Trevor Rowe, is training people in pastoral theology within the context of community studies and is very interested in our work.
8. Obviously, it would be an advantage if this Mission could be conducted without creating a lot of new machinery, i.e. through normal organizational machinery in the life and work of the Church. You will see that most of the suggestions and the points I have made could be worked out in this way.

PARISHMORE YOUTH CENTRE - Diagrammatic representation of certain situations since opening.

Fig. 1.

Structure as envisaged at outset (early '68)

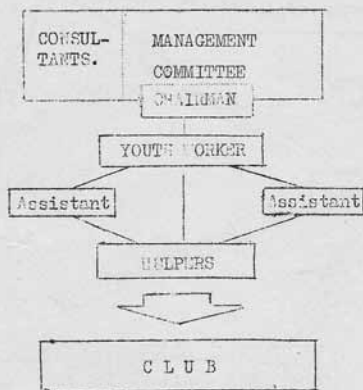


Fig. 2.

Situation towards the end of '68.

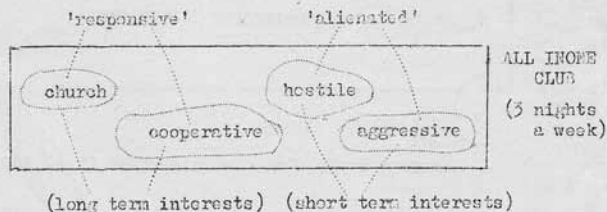
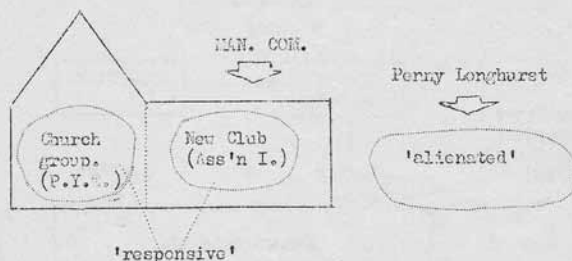


Fig. 3.

Situation in Jan. '69.



PARCEMORPE YOUTH CENTRE - Diagrammatic representation of certain situations since opening.

Fig. 1.

Structure as envisaged at outset (early '68)

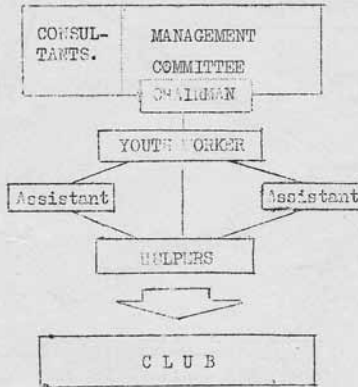


Fig. 2.

Situation towards the end of '68.

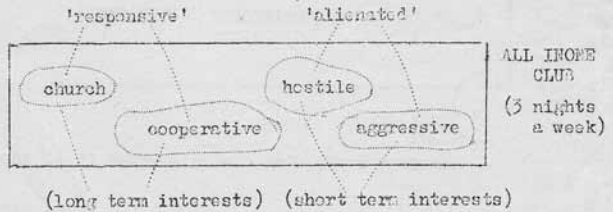
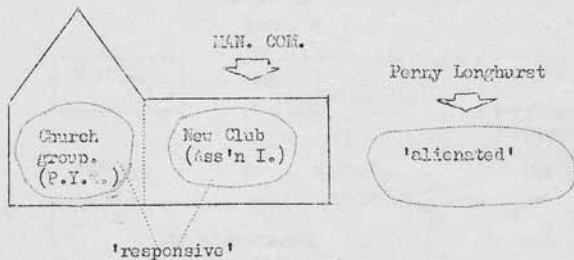


Fig. 3.

Situation in Jan. '69.



Appendix IV

Six Local Church Strategies by Alan T Dale (Of *New World Fame*)

In a letter I received from Alan Dale, following a discussion about church and community development, he outlined six local church strategies and gave them each a title and a ‘text’ as follows. They are reduced and reproduced in this Appendix.

- I. Social structures of local church
‘You are my friends.’
- II. Channels of communication – 1. through individuals
‘All real religion is meeting.’
- III. Channels of communication – 2. through groups
‘We are not here to run everything. We are here and here to stay
– until everything is done.’
- IV. Method of approach
‘The son of man came...to be a servant.’
- V. What tactics?
‘GHQ – or club?’
- VI. The setting of the local church
‘God so loved the world...’

In these models he emphasized the central role of the local church by hatching them in red. In doing so he anticipated David Bosch’s missiological emphasis upon the primacy of the local church everywhere. Compare Allen Dale’s little-known book. *Discovering The Local Church* (SCM press, 1943 79pp).

Appendix V

Text of a letter to Harry Morton about Batten's Course, 24th July 1968

**Extract from my PhD Thesis (copies in my Archives and the
Avec Archives [8])**

The text of a letter to the Rev. Harry O. Morton MA

**A Secretary of the Methodist Missionary Society about the
Community Development Course the worker attended 4th
April to 24th June 1967.**

24th July 1968

Dear Harry Morton,

Thank you for your letter about the Community Development Course which I attended last year. I remember very clearly the conversation I had with the Rev. Tom Beetham on our way home from the May Synod. At that time I was in the middle of the Course. It was a great joy to talk with a senior minister of such wide experience and real understanding about things which had set my mind and soul alight. The passage of a year has not dimmed my enthusiasm for the Course. I feel it was one of the most important things I have ever done; as a consequence of it my ministry has taken on a new shape. But I find that writing about it is difficult and frustrating because some of the dimensions of the experience and some of the implications of it seem to elude my powers of expression. However, I will try to get down some notes and if you wish to pursue the matter further, perhaps we could meet and talk over some of the points.

I have enclosed a copy of the leaflet which contains a succinct statement of the nature and content of the course. Although the paragraph headed, 'For whom intended', states that it is for 'senior officers' Dr Batten is prepared to take ordinary Methodist ministers on the course! A fuller description of the course, showing how it evolved, is to be found in Dr TR Batten's book *Training For Community Development, A Critical Study Of Method* (Oxford 1962; reprinted 1965). The introduction to Part 3 and Chapter 7 of this book are particularly helpful in explaining the nature of the Course.

The Course was of enormous value to me because it was related to my work as a Methodist Minister of a Church,

Youth and Community Centre in Thornton Heath. Similarly each of the other members of the group found it relevant to their particular situations although they came from different countries and very different spheres of activity. (I enclose a list of the members of the group). This relevance did not happen by chance: the Course was so structured that the content was conditioned and determined in part by the interests and problems of the group members. At the beginning of our study together, we listed, clarified and grouped the problems we faced in our work. It was an amazing experience to find that the same basic problems were common to us all. We realized that this was because we were all, in one way or another, working with people. As the Course proceeded, our problems were thoroughly examined and possible solutions worked out.

The experience of being a member of what became a tightly-knit group was something I shall never forget. This was a unique training experience in itself. This group of people, of very different backgrounds, was run on non-direct principles by a highly skilled trainer. I learned much about groups, about tolerance, about what it feels like to live and work in such a group and I began to understand the role of trainer/leader/worker. Dr Batten has developed a very effective strategy of training. He will accept no more than 13-15 students for each Course, for this, in his view, is the optimum number of people to form a successful group. He believes that a vital part of training in group work is a worthwhile experience of group membership for each of his students. A trained group member will be able to lead and work with other groups when he returns to his work and thereby extend the influence of the University trainer. I have applied this idea in my own Circuit in preparing Sunday School staffs for the Experiential Approach to Christian Education. I meet the Circuit Sunday School Superintendents as a training group; they in turn meet their departmental leaders and these meet their staff members; the staff members meet their children and young people in a group situation. This has had fascinating results because method and content training are combined. As you can see from the Reports on the Parchmore Project, I have also applied these methods across the spectrum of Church, Youth and Community work.

I have tried to describe these aspects of the Course which were of major importance to me. I also learned what Community Development is all about; I am able to distinguish between community development and community service, community care and community organization. I see the field of community development as presenting a unique challenge and opportunity to the Church at home and overseas, in the

city, and in suburbia and I have started to work out some of its implications. (The book *The Community Development Process* : re-discovery of local initiative by W.W and L.J. Biddle, Rope-Rinehart Winston Press, 1965, emphasizes the Church's role in the Community Development process not only in under-privileged and 'downtown' areas but just as vitally in more cultured and prosperous communities). I have learned new skills such as case-study techniques. And all of this by working in the most intimate way and on equal terms with people of all faiths and none. Further, I was able, in association with another member of the group, to produce a Paper on 'Evaluation' which has been published in the *Community Development Journal*. This is related to the Parchmore Project in particular and to community work in general.

The other main strand which ensured the relevance of our studies to our working situations was the work we did in producing 'Organization and Method Papers'. Each of us worked on such a Paper. A copy of one which I wrote is enclosed. The tutorials I had with Dr Batten were mainly concerned with this Paper. I cannot overstate the vital importance of working through the ideas which are summarized here. The Paper does not do justice to the value of the work that went into its preparation. As it stands, it was in fact prepared overnight because at the end of the Course Dr Batten came to the conclusion that it should be discussed. Prior to that, he had doubted the possibility of presenting the Parchmore Scheme realistically to people who had no idea of the weird and wonderful workings of the Methodist machine! In the end it provided the basis for one of the most amazing discussions I have ever shared in. The Egyptian member of our group said, amongst other things, that the problems we were facing at Parchmore were identical with those which confronted a Health Centre Campus in Egypt and that the diagram could easily be re-written to help solve their problems. The work in my Centre over the past year has been based on this Paper and the Reports accompanying this letter show how things have worked out and how they are developing.

Because the Course was geared to the particular problem with which the members were concerned and because of the work which we did on our individual Papers to define our purposes and work out possible methods for achieving them, the relevance of our studies to our working situations was assured. The lectures and seminars expanded and explored the basic concepts of Community Development and we could see the relevance of these to the problems we had enumerated.

Further, the structure and the content that was given were

based upon the experience of previous Courses which have taken place annually for the past sixteen years. Common basic problems had emerged and training needs had been revealed by following the procedures I have described. (Incidentally, I think that all of this has an enormous amount to teach us about how to organize and run the post-ordination training discussed at the London Conference. To my regret, I do not find any evidence of such thinking in the Conference Report. It will be tragic if the opportunity to apply the 'Batten Method' to post-ordination training is missed since it enables ordinary men like myself to look clearly and analytically at our work and our problems in such a way that new and exciting possibilities for progress become apparent. It gives no opportunity for escape from actual situations and it is never an academic exercise).

In short, the Course was an ideal introduction to the basic ideas and principles involved in community development work and the literature about it. As such it provided a foundation on which to build my future work and studies in the subject.

By way of conclusion, there are several observations I would like to make:

1. I think that it would be of invaluable help to the work of the Missionary Society if some men who are interested in community development and who are now working in the field could attend this Course. My brother-in-law, the Rev. James Poore, at present in Dominica, has shown some interest.
2. It would prove a very real encounter in depth with people from other countries and faiths. It would help missionaries to work out their role in developing countries with particular reference to community development ideas and programme. Senior officials would see what the role of the Church is, or could be, in their countries.
3. Clearly only a limited number of men could attend this Course. Would it be possible for the Methodist Church - or even better an Ecumenical Training Commission - to organize courses on similar lines, groups consisting of some people from the home and some from the overseas fields? This would result in a unique sharing of problems and experiences and would contribute to the realization of the unity of the mission of the Church. If such groups were formed, community development could be one of several subjects. The inclusion of people from secular agencies would be most desirable for the reasons

suggested in Point 2 above.

4. These are matters which could be usefully considered by the Post-Ordination Training Committee of the Methodist Church.

I do not know whether these are the kind of notes which you wanted from me. If they are not, at least they may provide a basis for dialogue! Every good wish,

Yours sincerely,

(signed) George Lovell

