

## INTRODUCTION TO PARTS 9:2-9:6<sup>1</sup>

When I came to writing Parts 9:2-9:6 my initial working outline stymied me. Eventually I broke free from it through finding a quite different structure which, to my delight, led me to see my post Parchmore ministry to date (July 2013) in a distinctively different way from how I have viewed it over the years. Reflecting on the actualities of my ministry I discerned six phases of significant kinds of vocational work related to the non-directive approach to church and community development which evolved naturally one from the other(s). They are as follows:

Phase 1. An extended study of and research into the viability of the praxis of the non-directive approach to church and community development and its theological significance to the work of churches of different denominations. (c1970-1980).

Phase 2. Inducting and training to ordained and lay people of all denominations in the non-directive approach to church and community development and providing consultancy support and other services to them and working on projects with them. (c1970-1994). This too was educative.

Phase 3. Researching the work described in (1) and (2) above and the evolving praxis and intellectual assets and making them readily available and accessible to practitioners and those engaged in training, supporting and deploying them. (c1993-96).

Phase 4. Postgraduate training courses in work consultancy, ministry and mission for people of any denominations and theological persuasion. (c1998-2006).

Phase 5. In-service training of preachers in the Methodist Church and publishing a 'Practical Guide'. (c2000-13)

Phase 6 Analytical reflection on my career, vocational life and ministry, writing up my findings and organizing my personal archives. (c2008-13).

<sup>2</sup>These six points summarize the phases of work to which I gave myself unreservedly from 1972-2013. They are in chronological order but aspects of some phases overlapped and ran in parallel with others. For example I completed my PhD thesis which I first worked on during my Parchmore ministry, during Phase 1; Phase 2 overlapped Phase 3; Phase 3 overlapped

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1 30.7.13

2 31.7.13

Phase 4, 5 and 6; Phase 6 overlapped Phases 5 and 6. But there was a core of work related to each phase.

From 1972-93 I engaged in these phases of work 1 and 2 encroaching on 3, as a 'sector' minister (or a minister in 'other appointments'.) Notes about such appointments are in the background files. Amongst other things, this involved me being responsible for my own housing and financing. Leaving the security of circuit ministry was a traumatic experience but eventually a profitable one. From 1993 to 2013 I did the work as a self-employed supernumerary ministry, i.e. a minister in retirement variously engaged in 'part-time appointments as college lecturer, post-graduate course leader and honorary and senior research fellow<sup>3</sup>, freelance work consultant. During this period I funded the work through a small bequest I had received, a Leverhulme Fellowship, honorarium, fees and my own resources. Through this period I ordered and organized my life as a full-time working minister – and still do with a daily routine of work and leisure Mondays to Saturdays. Ageing means that the hours are reduced and reducing but I still manage to work no less than 35 hrs/week. Sadly, I tire more easily not having the energy and stamina I once had. Nonetheless, I consider myself fortunate and greatly blessed that I have work I love doing and a considerable amount of freedom and resources to get on with it.

This is one aspect of my vocational life and work, my 'day job' as they say, and quantitatively by far the greatest segment of it. The other, equally important even though over this period I have not been able to devote myself to it full-time, is my ministry of the word and sacraments and my active participation in the life and work of the local Methodist Church in the Circuit in which I live. Throughout this period I have been stationed as a sector minister and then as a supernumerary in the following circuits.

Sydenham and Forest Hill. 1972 – 1980 and I lived in the Circuit until 1998. So in London SE District.

Victoria and Chelsea 1980-1998. So in London SW District but I was on the V&C plan for 1976 to 80. I was an associate minister from 1980 onwards i.e. for 18 years; I was acting superintendent 1985-6, and an active supernumerary with especial responsibility for Victoria, 1993-4.

Leeds North-East 1998-2013

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3 Honorary research fellow, Roehampton Institute, 1991-93.  
Part-time senior research fellow, Westminster College, Oxford, 1994-99

Whilst engaged on Project 70-75, Phase 1, I was on the Highgate Circuit (London North West District) plan and preached frequently.

So, throughout this period my vocational life, work and ministry had two integral parts/aspects: my day job in relation to church and community development as outlined in Phases 4 to 6 and my ministry of word and sacrament in the churches in the areas where I worked and those in which I lived. Both aspects are equally important to me and to my vocational ministry. My call to preach and to ordained presbyteral ministry is fundamental and forms a vocational axis along with my ordination to which all else relates and around which it radiates and revolves.

One of the things that struck me forcibly, after I had teased out the six phases outlined above was the way in which praxis evolved and was refined. Throughout the whole period covered by these phases from my time in Sydenham (1962) until the present I was engaged in learning from experience and from my Parchmore ministry onwards (1972) I was studying my work more rigorously as a reflective practitioner practising as an action-researcher. Combined with reading and study in a range of related disciplines (See Section 10) refined my praxis incrementally. This ongoing gradualistic learning and development of praxis was interspersed with intensive periods dedicated to the research and development of praxis. The overall pattern is one of the repeated sequences of periods dedicated to research and study and application of findings and insights. They follow my ministry at Parchmore which demonstrated conclusively that the non-directive approach to church and community development is relevant, applicable and necessary to the work, ministry of the Methodist Church. Successive phases demonstrated its universal relevance and necessity by research *and* application to churches of all denominations and religious and voluntary organizations. The sequences are tabulated below.

[See also the ‘Overviews of Ministry 1958 – to date, 9.1(i)]

I find the overall symmetry of almost fifty years of studying, working, researching, studying – amazing, awesome. Had we pre-designed it, we could not have improved on the basic structure. That such a pattern evolves stage by stage is remarkable. (I find myself captivated by it and wanting to go on saying the same things over and over again in different ways!) Undoubtedly a lot of critical thought went into it and Reg Batten contributed to it enormously and he was consciously committed to this kind of pattern. As we saw earlier it was he who convinced me of the importance of researching my Parchmore work, without him it is doubtful if I would have gone on to do the vigorous studies to qualify for an MSc research

<b>Period dedicated to research, study and writing</b>	<b>Period of application of findings</b>	<b>Period dedicated to research, study and writing</b>	<b>Period of application of findings</b>	<b>Period dedicated to research, study and writing</b>	<b>Period of application of findings and writing</b>
Establishing through study and research the applicability and relevance of the non-directive approach to church and community development in the churches of different denominations and to Christian and voluntary organizations.	Promoting the practice of the non-directive approach to church and community ecumenically by using what learnt through the Parchmore project and Phase 1 to provide in-service training and consultancy and project services	Researching the nature of the evolving praxis and the insights from the training and consultancy work done during phases -1-2 in order to make them more readily accessible to practitioners and others in the field.	Ecumenical postgraduate training courses in work consultancy, ministry and mission for clergy and laity engaged in church and community development work.  In service training of preachers and publication of work done.	Ongoing analytical reflection on and research into my career, vocational life and ministry and my retirement.  Writing notes of my findings.	Continuing Phase3 and using insights to inform my period of retirement and in writing papers.  Wider relevance and application currently under consideration as is the possibility of publishing and my future work.
<b>Phase 1</b>	<b>Phase 2</b>	<b>Phase 3</b>	<b>Phase 4</b>	<b>Phase 5</b>	<b>Phase 6</b>

degree and gone onto a PhD. What in fact I now realize that he did was to thoroughly orientate me to, educate me in this approach to work and research that it became integral to my professional (and personal?) being, to my praxis, to my approach: this happened through every aspect of our interaction – his teaching, working at a wide range of exciting but difficult issues . All this and processes of osmosis induced the approach within me. Consequently, it became an inner driving/guiding force influencing the unfolding, evolution, of my vocational life and the critical decisions I had to make at important junctures between vocational and strategic alternatives. But there is much more than that in the evolutionary processes which is even more fundamental. The Guidance of the Holy Spirit which our Lord promised as a partner in thinking things through and working things out to those who love the Lord their God with all their heart, soul, strength and mind and their neighbour as themselves – and I do try to do that. So alongside the profoundly important human directional forces influencing/giving direction to the evolutionary processes there is a powerful spiritual

directional thrust. They are variously interactive – challenging, informing, reinforcing ... - and at best integral and often barely distinguishable as they work together for our good and that of God's purposes for his world.

From what I have written so far it would appear that these evolutionary processes resulted from my interaction with God and Batten. That is simply not the case, important as that interaction was. Undoubtedly I was powerfully 'inner directed'. The evolutionary processes were compounded providentially by my collegueship and soul friendship with people similarly motivated. The two most significant were Dorothy Household and Catherine Widdicombe. Their Christian vocational drives were similar to mine. The dialectic between their vocational drives was creative beyond what I could ever have hoped for. As things evolved others similarly oriented and motivated joined their forces with others – I think particularly of our colleagues in Project 70-75 and the Avec associates. Through the work we did together their vocational drives and pathways were plaited with ours most powerfully. Then there was the interaction between our vocations and the church and community contexts to, the changes to be made and the needs to be met. All of this drove and pulled us forward through the phases.

These six phases of extensive work are fully documented: records were made of the work as it was done and these along with correspondence, minutes of meetings; position papers etc are stored in the Avec Archives. Numerous books have been written describing and examining research projects, programmes of work and aspects of the praxis that has evolved along with published and unpublished articles, papers, theses, handouts. (See my CV, Part 9.8, the section in the *Avec Archives Annotated Catalogue*, Completed Research and Published Work (pp55-66) and the numerous seminar and dissertations written by postgraduate students (listed in the Additions and Amendments to the Catalogue) and the reports on Avec project work. Then there are my private journal notes. Now I attempt a different task; a holistic exercise, aimed at tracing out as far as I am able, the patterns, sequences and meanings I can discern retrospectively, meanings and insights in my vocational story through reflecting on it phase by phase analytically and prayerfully/devotionally.

