

## **PART 9:2 STUDYING, RESEARCHING AND WRITING, 1970-80**

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After three or four years developments at Parchmore attracted widespread interest to which, despite my resolve to focus exclusively on the local work, I felt I simply must respond. Quite quickly my ministry was local, connexional and ecumenical: a ministry which evolved directly from Parchmore. For the remainder of my ministry, Parchmore and the ways in which I had researched it proved to be foundational, a basic reference point and an invaluable practical, theoretical and theological resource for all that followed. (Serious study and sound qualitative research I have always found richly rewarding in the development of my praxis.) Earlier I discussed this expansion and how a new discipline and movement was formed. Not only did it equip me but it also gave me experience, credentials and the professional status that I needed to operate with authority and confidence in this discipline in religious and secular organizations and academia: in short it gave me my qualifications to practice.

This part describes and assesses four areas of study and action and reflective research into the applicability of the non-directive approach to churches of all denominations and the theology of community involvement by the Church. Whereas the focus of the work and research I undertook in Parchmore focused on one church of one denomination in one community, these programmes of study and research were Methodist and ecumenical, local and national and related to different forms of church and community work and development. They are:

The Grail Conference, 1969

The Community Development Group, c1970-80

The William Temple Foundation Group, 1975-80

Project 70-75, 1970-76

## **I. The Grail Conference, 1969<sup>1</sup>**

The Grail Conference on church and community development was Catherine Widdicombe's idea organized at her initiative in cooperation with the members of the Grail community. We had already met through the Battens. She invited me to lead it, which I was glad to do; we planned it together and she made all the arrangements, took notes of the sessions and wrote up and published as an occasional paper a comprehensive report. (Papers and report are in the Avec Archives see *Catalogue* p20. They are in box [15]). Unfortunately I do not have ready access to these papers and the report. Details of the event have long gone from my memory but the impressions made upon me remain.

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<sup>1</sup> 5.8.13

By common consent it was a highly successful event. Catherine had recruited a good number of people through the contacts she had, mainly Anglican and Roman Catholic, through the courses she had been involved in on non-directive group work and living in community courses. (See *Avec Archives Annotated Catalogue*, pp 19-20.) It was held at the Grail Centre, Waxwell, on 3rd and 4th December 1969).

It was a thrilling two days. Very quickly the whole gathering was animated, alive with vital interest. Responses to my input were incredible, exciting and humbling. Discussion in the plenary groups was charged with enthusiasm about the ideas and concepts of the nda, to church and community development and what was emerging from Parchmore's experience and the importance of it all to the Church universal and to local centres and communities. There was the feeling that we were at the beginning of a ground breaking movement with enormous potential. The centre was alive with thinking and animated discussion during sessions, coffee breaks and meal times! I noted members of the Grail said that Waxwell had never before buzzed with such thinking and excitement. Its several fold importance is readily discerned in retrospect.

It was the first opportunity that I had had of testing out the wider responses of people from different denominations to the nd concept and our experiences of applying and researching it in Parchmore. The responses could not have been more encouraging and confirmatory. The approaches were entirely in line with their (the conference participants') emerging theologies of how to work with people in church and community; they had been groping after them; my presentation gave them conceptual frameworks for things they were already doing and the praxis they espoused; they were not only searching for new ways of thinking but also for new ways of being and doing. The thrust of the discussion was towards action, creative development action. Consequently I did not have to defend and justify the approach as I had in wider traditional Methodism. Together, as fellow travellers in conference, we were exploring and enthusing over what we were discovering. An exciting place in which to be!

This was my first experience of engaging seriously with Roman Catholics and Anglicans and my Methodist experience in Parchmore spoke to them. My ecumenical world was opening before me.<sup>2</sup>

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2 I hope to supplement this if I can after my next visit to the Oxford Archives.

## ***Core Vocational Relationships***

Important as all this was, something else of great importance occurred, it was the beginning of a very precious and creative God-given relationship between Catherine and me. For me it became the most important enduring vocational relationship of my subsequent ministry and life. (A similar relationship with Dorothy Household was tragically cut short by her untimely death.) To my great joy I knew that in Catherine I had met someone who had seen the significance of the non-directive approach to community development and its vital importance to the ministry, mission and work of the contemporary church and who is deeply committed to helping people in the church to discern its significance and to act upon the implications. Moreover, I soon discovered that: she is a ‘worker’: a person who, by disposition and application, works assiduously at things to which she is committed giving herself self sacrificially and completely to the tasks in hand, at times obsessively; she is deeply spiritual and committed to the Christian faith and church. I had met a kindred spirit.

A few days after the conference we arranged to meet at the King’s Cross Methodist Mission Church (I think it was on 9th December) to edit the draft she had prepared of the conference report. I waited for her at the entrance on a cold winter evening. The dark wintry night was well lit by the street lamps; snow was falling as she walked slowly up Crestfield Street. She wore a dark coat and a black tubular head scarf as she did for many years (I don’t know what it is called). The snow was settling on her head and coat. At that moment I had a moving experience similar to conversion or falling in love; instinctively I knew I had found my vocational partner. And so it proved to be. We soon became committed vocational colleagues, soul friends, equally married to what we came to understand as our joint ministry and work. Over the past forty-four years that relationship has deepened and matured and is something I value enormously.

Whilst we have many characteristics and commitments in common, we differ in other ways and bring different abilities and gifts to the relationship. Over the years this has proved to be both the strength of the relationship and an intermittent source of dissonance and stress. But we have worked at the difficulties we have encountered to our mutual advantage and to the development of our relationship. Overall, there has been a creative synergy between the things we have in common and our personal similarities and differences: occasionally, however, this has driven us too hard with the consequence that we have overstretched ourselves at some cost to family, the Grail Community and ourselves. Our contributions to

the relationship and to the work we have done individually and together have been complimentary and compensatory. I believe that our individual achievements and every aspect of our personal and spiritual wellbeing owe much to the vocational partnership which, for me, and I have reason to believe for Catherine, has been extraordinarily creative, deeply satisfying, fulfilling and blessed of God: a relationship for which I am profoundly thankful.

Discovering this relationship and recognising its potential was one thing: entering into it and realizing its promise was quite another. Both Catherine and I had important relationships to which we were deeply committed and to which we had taken solemn vows: Catherine to the Grail Community and to her secular religious life in the Roman Catholic Church and I to Molly, our marriage and to my ordained ministry in the Methodist Church. Consequently, to be responsible and faithful, we had to live and work out our new-found vocational relationship with proper respect to these existing and loving, vowed Christian relationships. And that we have endeavoured to do but not without encountering difficulties, personal and interpersonal struggles and stresses and strains; at every stage maintaining our integrity was of paramount importance, and that we believe we have managed to do but at some cost. This is the place to acknowledge but not to describe the ups and downs of living out our vocational relationship faithfully; I have done so elsewhere and in these Notes.

However, it was not simply a matter of Catherine and me working out the relationship together, although it certainly did involve us doing so as responsibly as we could. Realizing the potential of this new relationship had implications at every stage for the important people and institutions in our lives, Molly and the Grail and for our relationships with them. Given our commitment to them, the Christian faith and the non-directive approach, it could only be done in loving collaboration with them and with their backing and support: they were very important soul friends in our common vocational pilgrimages. Ideally, we wanted them to be active partners in our relationship and working it out and for it to enrich their lives and contribute to their vocal vocational aspirations as well as ours.

Providentially, we were blessed by the ways in which they and our colleagues over the years not only graciously and lovingly accepted and endorsed our very close and intense vocational relationship in its different phases, but facilitated and contributed to it. They were magnanimous. I believe they shared our conviction that it was God-given. Certainly Archbishop Worlock must have done so to have said that the working partnership formed between us through Project 70-75 was ecumenically

unique and important and therefore should be enabled to continue. Owen Nankivell and the Rev Christopher Bacon speaking on behalf of the Ministries Committee of the Methodist Church agreed with him as did the Grail community and my wife Molly. And, as will become clear in later sections of these Notes, they acted upon their conviction and made it possible for us to work together in the formation and work of Avec.

Magnanimous, is the only word to describe Molly's response to our vocational relationship from the outset. She accepted the relationship without reserve or qualification, made it possible, facilitated it, trusted us, allowed us to spend enormous amounts of working time together in a wide range of situations including residential courses and working away on consultancies and projects in different parts of Britain and Ireland, she worked with us as a valued colleague as Bursar to Project 70-75 and Avec, welcomed Catherine into our home as an intimate family friend for fellowship and long working sessions. At no point did she show any jealousy; she was quite incredible. Undoubtedly she gained from our relationship. The Grail had a very special place in her affections not least because it contributed greatly to her recovery after the Tower bomb tragedy.

Allowing and supporting me throughout the extensive work that I did in Ireland she saw as a way of making a modest contribution to resolving the Troubles. But, I know that it cost her dear and I was always sorry about that. My absence from home for prolonged periods she found extraordinarily difficult; it placed strains upon both of us and our relationship but, not without difficulty, we persevered. All in all, her response was a remarkable demonstration of her love, Christian discipleship and lay ministry, and for that I am eternally and greatly indebted. It is a consolation to me that she knew this but how I wish she were here to read this.

For me, and I have reason to believe for Catherine, it was, as it still is, a very rich experience and I like to think that all those involved with us in our Christian vocational journey have gained something from contributing to it and sharing in it. I count myself fortunate and greatly blessed in all these relationships.

[I checked out this section with Catherine. See also *Our Church and Community Development Stories* by CW and GL, May 1987.]

## II The Community Development Group c1970-80

The history of this group, The Community Development Group of the Methodist Church, goes back to the Board of Lay Training. As noted earlier I was invited to join that group early in my Parchmore Ministry. Alfred Gilliver was invited at the same time to represent the interests of local church work in the circuits. Up to this point the membership of the Board was made up entirely of secretaries of departments, connexional officers and one or two people from Ministerial training colleges. As I saw it, the Board was 'high-powered', containing two or three ex-presidents. I suppose the Board had 15-20 members. It met in a room set out with a table for the chairman and secretary and serried rows of seats. Alfred and I sat at the back and listened to the discussions but did not or were not expected to speak. Indeed, it would have been difficult to do so because the discussions were 'in-house' conversations between dignitaries aimed at organizing training for the laity. I think there were only two or three lay people on the Board, all distinguished; Pauline Webb, the secretary, for instance had been a vice-president of Conference. The much talking was not getting anywhere. One of the major problems – apart that is from some members looking after their own departmental interests in their lay educational programmes – was that the Board simply could not agree a definition of lay training, and had given up trying, consequently they were floundering.

Eventually progress was made outside of the meetings. I am not entirely sure now how this came about except that it was through discussions with Pauline. One aspect of that was about a series of 'Lay Training Papers'. Alfred and I had been deeply involved in an extensive education programme in the London SE District. We contributed two or three papers of the series which Pauline edited. They were Lay Training Papers:

1. *Let's Find Out: A fact-finding exercise for a local church* 24 pp. I am not sure whether Alfred and I wrote this or contributed to it.
2. *People at Work: A Lay Training Programme* compiled by George Lovell and Alfred Gilliver. 1 0pp.
3. *People in Community: A Lay Training Programme* compiled by George Lovell and Alfred Gilliver 26 pp.

Unfortunately they are not dated; my guess is that they were produced between 1968 – 70. I learnt a lot about writing such material from Pauline

and Alfred, who were highly skilled at it. These are the only papers that I have and I don't have a list of the series. (I have just seen a reference to a series of four; I do not know the theme of the third!)<sup>3</sup>

Given the difficulties of defining lay training, the approach in this series is significant. Essentially it was self-induced training through undertaking a task which was useful to the life and work of a local church – their church. A task which, presumably people selected/opted to do because they saw it was something they needed to do. So the focus as prescribed was on doing something of use, not on training, which was, as it were, incidental. And it was training because it was doing the task in a guided/structured way informed by approaches and methods likely to be new to them. These approaches and methods derived from my experience of church and community development work and particularly the non-directive approach to it. Not only were they learning and acquiring experience about surveying and profiling churches, neighbourhoods and communities and gathering information about and insights into their people and neighbours 'at work' but they were learning about leadership, group work and teams and team work. As a result there was a large 'payback' for those involved and for their churches and organizations from those multifaceted learning processes. Moreover, each Paper offered people the opportunity to opt into a discrete uncluttered task with a given number of sessions – a programme which they could tailor to the time they were able to give to it and which was self-organized and regulated. The papers were a form of 'distance learning' offered without fussing over definitions of 'lay training'. They cut the proverbial Gordian knot which had tied up the Board. Copies of the Papers are in my files, 'Articles and Papers, Published and Unpublished'.)

The other aspect of the breakthrough was closely associated in some ways with the first but it had a much greater impact. Trevor Rowe<sup>4</sup> came up with a very bright and shrewd idea which he put as a proposition to the Board. They accepted it. His suggestion was that whilst we have not been able to define lay training we can identify some training needs in relation to leadership in general and church leadership in particular: adult education,

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3 I intend to re-visit the Archive paper, when next in Oxford.

4 Trevor is a very distinguished minister, sadly suffering from dementia. He was a very important person throughout my ministry for 1970-1990's. From 1965-70 he had an outstanding ministry in Moseley Road and Sparkhill Churches (Methodist) in a deprived racially mixed area of Birmingham. Then he became variously Lecturer in Pastoral Theology, Senior Tutor and Acting Principal of Queens College, B'ham for 1970-79. At the time of these developments in the BLT he had probably just moved to Queens.



the uses of sociology in church and community work and in structuring the church for mission, community development – and I think there were others which I cannot recall. His idea was to form a working group (in contradistinction to boards and committees) for each of these topics. Alfred was asked to convene and lead the adult education group I believe; I was asked to form a community development group and David Clark the sociology group. It worked! The Community Development Group did a distinguished work. Details have long gone from my mind and I do not have ready access to the papers which are in the Avec Archives (see the *Catalogue* p 17). A group was assembled, mainly Methodist but with one or two people from other denominations including Catherine Widdicombe, representing different approaches to community development and community work and the involvement of churches. For instance, Harry Salmon had given up on involving churches in community development programmes and was engaged full-time in non-church community development. All of the members were active practitioners in local church and community development or in community development. They were highly committed to promoting their praxis widely in church and community. It was an exciting lively group. For its first ten years I chaired it but it went on long after I had withdrawn due to pressure of work in Avec. Full records were made of the proceedings first by Dorothy Household and then to Mollie Corlett who she taught how to write records. (See *Analysis and Design* pp 178-9 for a description of ‘records’ and ‘recording’). Consequently, there is in the collection of these records ([4, 5 and 6] boxes in the Archives) rich and unique information about and insights into the interests, concerns and thinking of the members of the Group and their experience. The contribution made by the Group to the extension of the praxis and understanding of community development was enormous: it functioned as a working group, a workshop, not a talking shop.

Several of its major achievements need to be noted.

- It produced a supplement for *The Methodist Recorder* which Pauline Webb edited brilliantly setting out the nature and importance of community development in the mission and ministry of the church and giving examples; this was very accessible.
- It produced a guide to chairing meetings based on the non-directive approach.
- It participated fully in the William Temple Foundation research into the theology of community development, see the next section.
- It provided strong support for the setting up of Project 70 – 75 and backed my application to serve on it full-time and acted as one of

the Consultative Groups to it. (See *Churches and Communities* pp 24, 165-166, 214)

The Group fully realized the need for books and articles on church and community development. They supported me in writing *The Church and Community Development: An Introduction* (1972) and in publishing an article in the *Expository Times* in 1974. Harry Salmon and I drafted a proposal for a Reader in Church and Community Development but pressure of other work prevented us from going further with it.

As these various groups of the Board got under way, the interest of most of the original BLT members seemed to wane and the Board membership and meetings changed dramatically. It became a lively forum, the hub of the working groups, in which the leaders and representatives of these groups participated vigorously.

### **III The William Temple Foundation Core Group, 1975-80**

<sup>5</sup>I simply must break out of chronological sequence and write some notes about an extraordinarily important programme of research into the theology and praxis of community development and major implications for Christian churches and communities. This morning I awoke first to discover to my great surprise that I had slept for 4½ hours from 2 am to 6.30 am. (This is a very rare event, I normally sleep in 2 hour stretches throughout the night) and second to find sentences pulsing through my mind about this programme. Clearly my unconscious had been busy anticipating my writing this section and composing key sentences! Remarkable. The sentences were about the enormous privilege and strategic importance of participating in this distinguished group (more about that later) and in what resulted in cutting edge thinking about community development setting its praxis in an original and revealing theoretical and theological framework and the painful emotional costs of participating in it as it was for my dear friend and colleague, Harry Salmon who found the cultural dissonance of the social setting of the residential sessions unbearable and withdrew from the research group part way through its life.

At the outset I must get something down about the emotional cost of participating which was variously caused. One was what I can best describe as cultural. The way that David Jenkins organized/conducted research programmes of this kind was through residential seminars in his home and

the William Temple Foundation base. This was a very large house on the outskirts of Manchester which the Foundation had bought at his request when he became the Director. Apart from the domestic accommodation for the family it had a large seminar room which was also David's study and small dormitory type bedrooms each for two or three people. Sharing this accommodation with some of the members of the research group I found embarrassing. After intensive and sometimes not easy sessions I desperately needed private space to work through my thoughts and feelings and I don't like sharing bedrooms with other people anyhow. Others, especially ex-public school students, did not seem to mind. Meals were with the family and after 'dinner' we met in their drawing room to be entertained by the family. One of his daughters gave piano recitals. It was all highbrow, upper middle class Anglican culture. Both Harry and I felt out of place and quite embarrassed. We were the only Methodists. I don't think what I have said explains our discomfiture adequately. But the cultural impact was as I have described in spite of the fact that John Atherton, a brilliant academic, the son of a Wigan plumber who was very much North Country in speech and manner, Tony Addy, a Baptist minister, was working class and Austin Smith, a RC priest, lived in a run-down area in Liverpool 8. I was intimidated, I suppose, intellectually as well as culturally, not least because I was, with Harry, a Methodist.

[Working on the documents I realize that we did make contact with David Jenkins and that was followed by a meeting of the Community Development Group with him and Gerry Wheale in March 1975. They explained plans they already had for the Project. (*Diagrammatic Modelling* pp. 6-11). The Group became an enthusiastic participant.]

There was another source of dissonance. The group came into being through action I had taken on behalf of the Community Development Group of the Methodist Church. A deep felt need for professional theological help with working out an adequate theology of church and community development in general and the non-directive approach in particular, had led us to approach various theologians for assistance. What we wanted was for a theologian(s) to read some of our material, discuss our approach with us, and observe us in action with groups and to draw out the theological implications for and with us. David Jenkins was the only person who responded. Catherine and I met him at a conference on community work and community development (it was a very important event but the details have gone from my mind except for our discussions with David, I think it was convened by the British Council of Churches and I recall the Anglicans were prominent participants, except for our private discussions with David

Jenkins. He responded very positively to what we were seeking and said that this was something that the William Temple Foundation would want to work as in partnership with the Community Development Group of the Methodist Church. [Later, I discovered from David that whilst at Geneva with the World Council of Churches working on the Humanum Project he had decided to study what he considered to be vital subjects for theological reflection at that time: industrial relationships (hence his close association with John Atherton), medical ethics and community development. He did so, he said, by reading widely and through a process of osmosis (his word), activated by attending conferences and lectures of groups operative in these disciplines. This led to his presence at this conference, a large gathering on community development.] Discussions between us led to the setting up by William Temple of this project.

It was an action-research project over a period of three years. We met as a group, I think, three times a year for 36 hour intensive seminar. The basic ground rules enunciated by David Jenkins, and accepted by the members of the Group: attendance at the seminars for the whole period; members were required to produce papers as required, to read all the papers thoroughly by way of preparation for rigorous discussion of them; to participate openly and indefensibly in disciplined ways in focused discussions. I warmed to this. Another understanding was that this research group which became known as the 'core group' should interact through its members with churches, theologians and 'operative groups' as the research proceeded. The idea was that members of the core group would report to/share with and discuss what was emerging from the core group discussions and report the outcome by way of feedback to the core group. (I describe the process in one of the two publications about the project, *Diagrammatic Modelling: an aid to Theological Reflection in Church and Community Development Work*, pp 7-14). My operative group was the Community Development Group of the Methodist Church. We pursued the process vigorously throughout the Project. In the event, we were the only group to do so. It was to our great profit, we derived enormously from the Project as a consequence and used what we learnt in our work extensively. (*Diagrammatic Modelling* was used very widely and went through several editions.)

A major problem I encountered which caused me some emotional stress was that I was the only member approaching the discussions and research from a thorough going commitment to the non-directive approach to church and community development; all the other members were focused on community work and community involvement; Austin Smith was committed to living alongside people in deprived communities and

immersing himself in their communities.<sup>6</sup> I greatly admired his approach, was seriously challenged by it through what he said, wrote and through visiting him in Liverpool<sup>8</sup> but which, not without a bad conscience, I did not/could not practise. Crudely stated, my emphasis was on educational and development processes, theirs on outcomes and radical changes in peoples' circumstances and situation i.e. on changing people and communities contextually.

For some time my attempts to get a proper hearing in the core group of my approach to, position and stance to church and community development failed, to my great frustration annoyance and distress. Eventually I decided I must be heard and understood or withdraw from the group. I think this came after Harry left. I remember struggling desperately with myself for a long time in the back bedroom of my Father's house<sup>7</sup>, I am not sure but I think it was before a residential session, about my distress caused by the cultural dissonance which I would now have to face without Harry's support and that caused by the dominance of the groups' approach which was marginalizing mine. It must have been before a session because the memory and the emotions are gradually returning – I was distraught at the thought of participating in the seminar – sleeping arrangements, discussion etc. (I must say that the hospitality was warm, generous and welcoming. The problem was with me and where I was coming from.) I can see me now, kneeling by the bed pleading with God, pouring my heart out, struggling to find the inner resources to continue because I knew that the rewards for the cause to which I was utterly committed would be – indeed already were – enormous. I knew I had to go on even though I wanted to escape the situation and the pain and cost to me personally of continuing. God gave me no way out. At all costs I must continue. But I resolved to get a hearing and I did to great effect.

I told the Group that I wanted to describe my approach to them, I desperately needed to and asked for their permission to do so and their help because my emotions might inhibit and prevent me from doing so articulately. They responded magnanimously and gave me their undivided attention. Opening my mind and pouring out my heart to them, I described my approach, my deep personal, professional, spiritual and emotional

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6 See Smith, Austin *Passion for the Inner City*, 1983 and *Journeying with God-Paradigms of Power and Powerlessness*, 1990 pub by Sheare and Ward. Moving and powerful books.

7 I used to take the opportunity of the residentials to spend a day or two with my Father and Edith and visit Molly's father and other members of the family before or after the residentials.

commitment to the non-directive approach to church work and community development at some length. Gradually my emotions quietened and I became fluent. The mood of the group deepened into one of rapt attention. The atmosphere was warm and embracing and quiet. After I had made my statement (the content was unrehearsed, I had spoken extemporaneously) there was a goodly creative silence, reflective and contemplative. John Atherton broke the silence after what seemed a long time but probably was no more than a minute, 'That is not simply a way of working, it is a way of life.' What he said was met by a warm murmur of agreement. That became a major theme in all our future discussions and a heading of a key chapter (Five) of the final report, *Involvement in Community: a Christian Contribution*, "Involvement in Community as a Way of Life". (pp 69-80). My participation in the group from that point onwards was transformed and much more creative with much less stress. My prayers were answered. I felt my contributions were better received, my status in the group enhanced and I found my participation to be more relaxed and enjoyable: I was both understood and accepted for what I represented. The published report, *Involvement in Community*, 1980, did have the overall impact that I had hoped for and expected. David N. Thomas was most impressed by it and told me at one of our many meetings in various Gulbenkian working parties soon after its publication that he considered it to be by far one of the best contributions on the theory of community work. In his monumental and definitive book, *The Making of Community Work*<sup>8</sup>, he writes:

The very broad groupings of the left in community work has not been able, with the exception of some feminist socialists and the William Temple Foundation Group, to articulate its different ideas about community work; indeed the debate about value and ideology has been dominated by the CDP Political Economy Collective, who have been twisting and untwisting their strand of the materialist rope since the mid 1970's. (p 16)

This indicates the vital importance of enunciating the theology and philosophy and ideology underlying the Christian approach to church and community related community work (the official approach adopted rigorously at the time by the URC which did some outstanding work in the field).

In a section on 'explanatory theories' and their importance he writes:

there was the Christian view, ideas that were given extended expression in the William Temple Foundation Report of 1980 which offered a theory

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8 By David N Thomas, George Allen & Unwin, 1983. A brilliant piece of work by someone whose knowledge of the subject and its history is unparalleled.

of society constructed around a number of political and theological conceptions about 'involvement in community.' (p255)

How relevant is the current debate about the 'big society'? (See my sermon, S 531)

The Report was a set text for the students of the Avec/RIHE postgraduate diploma in church and community development. Generally speaking they found it difficult to access but when introduced to them they deeply appreciated its significance. One student did really get his mind around it (his name eludes me<sup>9</sup>) and wrote an excellent seminar paper on it and the seminar he conducted was greatly valued and applauded. The paper became an Avec handout.

The first draft of the report was written by John Atherton and then edited by the group individually and finally in a day long meeting. In spite of his editing, and the fact that it was based upon key papers several of us had contributed over the three years, it is in John's inimitable style and his way of conceptualizing things, and that is both its genius and value and its limitation because it does not communicate readily to practitioners (and theorists for that matter) in the fields of community work and community development whose terminology and conceptual approach and ways of thinking differ significantly. Howbeit, participation in this research programme was an enormous privilege and in producing the Report and the companion to it, *Diagrammatic Modelling*.

Working with such gifted people with such powerful intellects as David Jenkins (who went on to be the Professor of Theology at Leeds University), John Atherton, an authority on R.H. Tawney and who has written some highly influential books and is still writing, Austin Smith, pioneer and highly original thinker, Harry Salmon, community development worker extraordinary (I was thrilled to know of his ground breaking work early in his ministry in Roscoe<sup>10</sup>, a church in our Circuit, with West Indian Communities in the 1950's), was a great experience and a profound learning experience. However I have two regrets. One is that the unique part played by the Community Development Group through its search for theological help was not properly acknowledged in *Involvement in Community* including that to the inauguration of the project (see p i and *Diagrammatic Modelling* pp5-9).<sup>11</sup> The second is that I did not write my understanding of

9 It was the Rev John Gawne-Cain, an Anglican priest

10 See *Roscoe Methodist Church Leeds: A Unique History*, Compiled and published by Roscoe Methodist Church, 2011

11 I have some responsibility for this omission.

the outcome in a style more readily acceptable and understandable to the constituency with which I worked.

A Summary of the Report is presented in Appendage I

## IV Project 70-75, 1970-76<sup>12</sup>

This Project was Catherine Widdicombe's idea; she wrote a paper about it whilst she was on the Battens' three months' course in 1970. Soon after the course she invited John Budd (an Anglican priest), Patrick Fitzgerald (a Roman Catholic priest) and me to discuss the paper in July 1972. Their discussions led to the inauguration of Project 70 – 75 and to them constituting themselves as the Project team and asking Dr Batten to act as their consultant. Initially envisaged as a five-year project and hence the name, it was later extended a further year. (See *Churches and Communities*, p15) p70-75 was fully documented as an action-research project. All the papers are in the Avec Archives (see the *Avec Archives Annotated Catalogue*, pp 21-23<sup>13</sup>, which is on line, [www.avecresources.org](http://www.avecresources.org)). A full report of it was published as a book, *Churches and Communities: An approach to development in the local church* which is also on line in the same website. The Team's overall purpose was to get a group of local churches of several denominations to assess for themselves the potential value in their work of the non-directive approach and to consider adopting it. (*Churches and Communities*, p21). By common consent these purposes were achieved and the people who participated saw value in the approach and the wisdom of using it.

It is not necessary for my purposes for these Notes to describe the Project or to summarize the Report which is readily accessible and the background papers are open to anyone interested in them. Here, I intend to tell significant aspects of my personal involvement, my story, and to do so economically because more will emerge in sections 9:7 and 8 and 9:12 about its vocational impact upon me, my ministry and my work.

<sup>14</sup>[Stupidly, I have got the chronology of the events described in this part wrong! I realized this when I was going through the papers related to my application to the Methodist Church to serve Project 70-75 full-time. Fortunately it does not affect the points I have made. I still cannot be precise but it seems to be as follows:

- Towards the end of 1970 decided to leave Parchmore

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<sup>12</sup> 9.8.13

<sup>13</sup> Cf also pp 10, 11, 14, 39, 55, 57

<sup>14</sup> 13.8.13



- End of 1970/beginning of 1971 decided to offer to serve as a full-time worker on p70-75.
- Discussion with Catherine about the offer.
- She tested it out for acceptability – Grail, team etc.
- March/April '71 applied to the Methodist Church to serve on the Project.
- 12th May 1971 interviewed by a Ministry in the Sectors Panel – they recommended that I be permitted.
- Application successfully processed for January – July 1972 when Conference confirmed that I could serve.
- Discussions with Catherine about our working relationships at the end of a course, October 1971.
- I have decided not to amend the Notes! Read on!]

### ***Becoming a full-time worker to the Project<sup>15</sup>***

Our first task as a team was to work out ways and means of making Catherine's proposal into a viable research programme. The four of us committed ourselves to be a working team: Catherine being the full-time and John, Patrick and me part-time voluntary workers. To secure the necessary funding we drew up a research proposal and submitted applications to charitable trusts.

Whilst the negotiations with the trusts were under way, I began to see more clearly the incredible possibilities in the project, its enormous importance and the complexity of the work involved in carrying it out and achieving its research potential. Reflecting on the field work and the research to be done in the light of my experience of being the 'work/researcher' to the Parchmore action-research project, I realised that the staffing arrangements envisaged for project 70-75 were probably going to be inadequate. From the outset some of our discussions the team felt, as I did, that my training, experience of putting the approach into practice in a local situation and researching it was going to be of considerable importance to the Project. What was now being borne in upon me was that it was essential that I make this directly available to the project not in a voluntary capacity once removed, as it were, from the day-to-day work involved but directly as a full time hands-on experienced worker and action researcher. To my surprise I found myself challenged to consider the possibility of offering

myself to be a full-time worker to the project. Discussing this thoroughly with Molly and Dorothy led us to the conviction that it seemed a most appropriate and providential way of following through the work that I had done at Parchmore and in ministerial training. Fully aware of the radical changes this would inaugurate for all three of us we came to the conclusion that I ought to offer my full-time services to the project and explore the possibilities with all concerned.

This conviction came to us quietly and unbidden. We did not engage in an agonising decision making process of any kind. The decision simply emerged; from the outset we were comfortably at peace with it. In retrospect I see more clearly than I did then that God was calling me to this new phase of my ministry through Catherine and the far-sighted project she had designed with Reg Batten. It followed naturally from my work at Parchmore which evolved from a project proposal I constructed under Batten's tutelage. (My first working draft of that proposal Batten rightly described as a 'service' not a 'development' project. A criticism made me see the difference between the two models and to radically revise my initial programme so that it was a thorough going development project. Without that intervention I very much doubt whether Parchmore would have become a church and community development project.) That is a successive sequence which I had not identified previously. What an incredible influence Reg had upon the development of Catherine's vocation and mine and our vocational partnership and through us upon the work of the churches.

We felt free to pursue this conviction because quite independently some time before this I/we had come to the decision that it would be circumspect for me to leave Parchmore in 1972 without having any firm idea about what I should do next. As far as I can remember, we did not experience any difficulty in coming to that decision either. It emerged gradually from the trauma engendered by the debacle about [my re-invitation](#). At an earlier stage Norman Dawson had been somewhat concerned about my involvement in the non-directive approach to church and community development. He said that he feared that I might become a dilettante - how little he understood by true nature! On another occasion he made something of an ill-considered joke aimed at ridiculing what I was saying to a group about this approach. When I indicated that his remarks were inappropriate he withdrew what he had said somewhat apologetically. But when I decided to leave Parchmore he could not have been more helpful. Obviously he had changed his opinion because he was quite keen that I seek a post in one of our theological colleges to develop, research and teach church and community development as an aspect of Christian Ministry.

Various possibilities were still under consideration when I/we became convinced that I should offer my services to Project 70 - 75.

Clearly, Catherine was the first person with whom to explore the possibility of my serving as a full time staff member of Project 70-75; she would be profoundly affected if the possibility became a reality. The first opportunity to approach the subject was when we had a meal together between meetings. I did so most tentatively. At first, to my discomfiture, she did not seem to register what I was saying and offering. For what seemed to be quite a time, I was left with the feeling that she did not welcome the idea. Eventually, however, to my great relief, she suddenly realised what I was saying and responded most positively and enthusiastically. (Some years later she told me that her initial response was muted because she could not believe what she was hearing; she simply could not 'hear' what I was saying because up to that point she had been convinced that nothing would cause me to leave Parchmore for some years.)

Before we proceeded to explore the feasibility of the suggestion with others I was concerned to explore with Catherine the effect that my becoming a full-time worker could have upon her and our interpersonal and working relationships. Not to have done so would have been extremely unwise although it would have been all too easy to have gone forward on the waves of enthusiasm and excitement without considering difficulties we might encounter. Already, in my working relationships with Catherine and the other Team members I found myself being accorded a leading role. If I became a full-time worker, I foresaw the real possibility that I would become the de facto the Project leader by default not design due to various factors: my accumulated experience of church and community development work and action research; my abilities to think and to articulate my thoughts; my status as an ordained minister. These unchangeable factors were written deep into the authority of the working situation; they enabled me to make my unique contributions. However, I was most concerned that my becoming a full-time worker did not have any avoidable adverse effects upon Catherine through compromising her leadership and her ownership of the project - after all, it was her visionary idea. I knew that it was my awesome responsibility to raise these issues, but how could I do it without offence, presumption and arrogance and without straining or damaging a working our relationship which even at this early stage was precious to me as I have indicated earlier. Somehow or another I did manage to raise them. Catherine was at her very best in responding to them openly and creatively. This has being one of the most wonderful aspects of our relationship, the ability to face up to and work through the most complex inter-personal and working relationships always with profound and creative outcomes

including the deepening and enriching of our relationship; howbeit, these things were not achieved without difficulty, I hasten to add! Frequently over the years Catherine has said to me and others that one of her main jobs was to see that my ministry was exercised ecumenically so that it was open to and readily available to the churches of all denominations. I have always been moved by such a magnanimous objective which, providentially, has been realised beyond her expectations and mine as can be seen by browsing through the *Avec Archives Catalogue*.

Whilst I remember all this—how could I forget it because it is so deeply embedded in my soul?—details of the conversations have long gone from my mind (this phrase is becoming a litany in these Notes!) To my enormous frustration I am unable to date this pivotal conversation. In all probability it was between September and November 1971. (I deduce this because I have a letter dated 21st of January 1972 saying that the Sector Ministry's Committee of the Methodist Church approved the Panel's recommendation that I been given permission to serve Project 70-75. The Panel could have met in the latter part of 1971 or even early in January 1972.) However I do have notes of apposite discussions on the 13th and 14th of October 1971 towards the end of the first residential in-service training course for Methodist ministers held at Windermere House that I led with Catherine as the co-leader and Barry Heafford as the chaplain from the 4th to 14th October 1971 (see the *Avec Archives Catalogue*, p 24). During that conference Catherine and I had painful experiences of the kind of issues about which I was so concerned when I raised the possibility with her of being a full-time member of the project team. However, to my added frustration, I do not know whether that course followed or preceded the discussions about the possibility of my becoming a full time staff member. I suspect it came before because had it come after, I would have had no problems in raising the concerns, I would simply have referred to it to introduce a discussion. Whatever the sequence, as it throws light on the issues and how we dealt with them. I include below an annotated transcript of the notes.

Having established that the suggestion was acceptable to Catherine, discovering whether there would be all-round agreement to the suggestion was a matter of considerable urgency because the grant applications would have to be revised to cover the costs of my stipend and expenses. Without delay, therefore, Catherine checked out the acceptability of my suggestion to the Grail, Reg Batten and the other team members. They were all enthusiastic and so I went ahead to see if the Methodist Church would give me permission to be a full-time member of the Project team from 1972 to 1975.

***Catherine and George: A note on experiences which led to creative but costly developments of our vocational working relationships, 4th-14th October 1971***

The events which led to these developments occurred on the first training course on which we worked together. It was a residential in-service training course for Methodist ministers held at Windermere House that I led with Catherine as the co-leader and Barry Heafford as the chaplain from the 4th to 14th October 1971 (see the *Avec Archives Catalogue*, p 24). As the course proceeded Catherine and I experienced stressful difficulties whilst we were acting as workers together in the sessions and particularly in the group work (not in the planning). Understandably, this led to tensions between us and some measure of estrangement. We promptly acknowledged what was happening to us and agreed that we must do everything that we possibly could towards preventing the difficult dynamics between us from adversely affecting the students and what we were trying to achieve through the course. To make this possible, we also agreed that we must put our problems on hold until we were able to face up to them and work at them and their implications constructively and profitably. We were able to do that - as we have throughout our working relationship.

The opportunity to work at the issues constructively occurred on the last day of the course the 13th of October. We felt it was important to do so once we had the help of Barry Heafford who, as he had had been with us in his capacity as chaplain and not as it worker in all the sessions and had attended Batten's three months course, could bring the informed objective perspective of a participant observer upon what had been happening and act as a facilitator as Catherine and I considered what had happened and the implications for us. In the early hours of the 14th I wrote the following notes of the discussion and slipped it under Catherine's bedroom door - and then I went to bed! What follows is a verbatim transcription of what I wrote. The first four points summarise rather crudely our discussion; the last two record my reflections. (A copy of the original is in my file on our working relationships.) I have just realised that it is a baseline to our working relationships. Later I intend to review the relationship and the crises we experienced and how we managed to work through them to our mutual advantage and that of our work.

**Transcript**

1. C and G wish that develop their full potential; have similar purposes for church and community development; prepared to sacrifice for

purposes-example play subsidiary roles at times if [not] able to deal with the issue/situation.

2. G has more experience in cd than C and C is conscious of this especially in group work situations. C, whilst recognising the complimentary male (M) and female (F) roles, is concerned that she is not seen as a person with less professional status than G. For e.g. does not want C/G working arrangements to be like the Barrie (B) working arrangements. (see 1). G wishes her to develop full potential.
3. Imbalance said to be because of G's experience, thought processes, differential. But C has an unassailable F contribution - no F I know who can do what she does in cd, and greater experience in skills practice and sensitivity and T group training, also certain cultural advantages.
4. Possible ways to improve situation:
  - a. By exploring it periodically (not too often) and by working out ways of improving it.
  - b. Recognition that we will never be the same, our contributions will be different. Achieving confidence that we are increasingly making our full contribution and that we are doing this together without either feeling changing his/her being as a person. Acceptance of what self and other in the working situation.
  - c. By certain ways of working-
    - C to take groups in say discussion in absence of G until gets confidence and establishes role in absence of threat of his presence
    - danger that she's seen only as work in his absence - not important in transient groups. By this method gradually gain expertise in other fields of training work and be able to practice freely in G's presence. The more capable she is to work in different ways the more likely to be able to achieve purposes.
    - Dual approach, C worker, G information - try to work this out. Yesterday all right in part.
  - (d) By capitalising and making overworked C's experience which is more than G is in skills and T group's - could she write something about this in first instance for self?

**G's reflections**

5. The thought struck me that distinction can be made between content and structuring of our work. We discussed our contributions to content viz M and F, where you will help me to think, challenge and stimulated me to work out my ideas, our admin partnership, (we didn't mention your superior contribution in making contacts and helping me to meet people ...), our common concern and purposes. It seems to me that what you are wanting to do is to become more expert and free from some of your negative feelings about your performance in 'structuring'. You are not challenging the fact that we have different and unequal contributions to make - sometimes yours is more than mine et cetera therefore it is nda/cd worker performance in situ together in which you wish to be seen to be a professional in your own right. I agree.

6. I thank God - and you - for our working arrangements and collegueship and friendship. I am aware of this being providential. It is a precious thing to me. It is so valuable and precious that is worth all the time and effort - and more - necessary to work it out as well as possible. I admire your courage in talking the thing out as you did. You enable me to make a greater contribution than I would without you. In a sense by what you do to encourage me and stimulate and help me to make my contribution you make overt some of the differences. That is a paradoxical point on which to end. I almost feel like signing it Sidney! [Sydney was a member of the course who had been making notes and passing them on to prevent him talking too much during sessions.]

**Transcript of the reasoned statement made in my  
application to the Ministry in the Sectors Committee of  
the Methodist Church for permission to serve as a full-  
time member of project 70 - 75, c April 1971**

Church and secular authorities are investing considerable capital and manpower resources into community work and community development. I am convinced that the churches have a unique contribution to make in the field of community development and that in making it all those involved can develop and mature.

However, we can only make this contribution if we have an adequate theology by which to interpret our task and also the necessary training in the skills required to develop simultaneously those kinds of interdependent church and world Communion new duties in which God intends men (sic) to live and work.

For about eight years I have had an increasing inner conviction that my ministry should be devoted to exploring, in theory and practice, what is involved in fulfilling this aspect of Christian mission. When I was appointed to work in a Church Youth And Community Centre the Methodist Church encouraged me to study under Dr T. R. Batten. With his help I have been able to work out in an urban area a programme of church-based community development work.

The work I have done in the local situation has resulted in ever-increasing demands from the wider church that I should help others to understand and apply these methods. I have, therefore, recently been engaged in the training of ministers and lay people and writing about these ideas.

Over the past few months I have been discussing with my Chairman and Superintendent how I could meet these demands. The invitation to work full-time on Project 70-75 presents a unique opportunity for me to take the next logical step in exploring this field of work. It would enable me at the same time to continue my Connexional community development work and it would resolve many of the tensions between conflicting demands I am currently experiencing and yet would not cut me off from grassroots work. This board be achieved without any major financial demands upon the Methodist Church.

I therefore beg permission to respond to the invitation to join the full-time staff of project 70 to 75.

*[I am somewhat surprised that I did not refer to the action research in which I was engaged for a PhD, which was a key factor in the application. Possibly I had done so elsewhere on the form.]*

### ***Becoming a Sector Minister***<sup>16</sup>

Having got the enthusiastic backing for the idea of my becoming a full-time worker to Project 70-75, it was now necessary for me to negotiate early release from my Parchmore ministry and permission to become a 'Sector' minister. (See paper on file, 'Ministry in the Sectors'). In my case the title is something of a misnomer: it was about 'ministry in sectors of life other than neighbourhood congregations'. Project 70-75 was all about neighbourhood congregations and their communities, howbeit a particular aspect of ministering to and working *with* them.

Gaining these permissions did not prove difficult. The chairman of



the London SE District, Norman Dawson, my Superintendent, Brynmor Salmon, the Circuit and the leaders of Parchmore were magnanimous. They believed it was just the kind of work I should be doing. I had the enthusiastic backing of Pauline Webb, the members of the Community Development Group and the Senior Youth and Community Officer of the Ten' Centre Scheme and Tony White amongst many others. Tony White made a most carefully considered statement to the Sector's Committee which is reproduced below.<sup>17</sup> (Re-reading it some forty two years later was quite a moving experience.<sup>18</sup>) In a covering letter he wrote, ... 'I personally have no doubt about the validity of this application.'

At the request of the Secretary for Ministry in the Sectors, Ralph E Fennell, I made a statement about my reasons for applying to serve P 70-75 a transcript of which is reproduced below. As part of the process, I had to appear before a Panel. As I entered the room, the first person I saw sitting in the circle on easy chairs, was Maldwyn Edwards. He was beaming with joy and waved to me! I was granted permission and eventually the Conference of 1971 (I think) agreed also.

## **Finding Accommodation**

Finding accommodation was more difficult. Eventually Catherine found it for us through her friend Gwen Rhymer, an Anglican Social Worker who eventually also found a flat for Catherine next door to her own in Clapham which she moved into when Avec's base was fixed in Chelsea. Both properties belonged to the London Diocese of Southwark's Housing Association bought to house chaplains. We moved into a very comfortable and spacious house, 40 Dacres Road, Forest Hill, SE23 2NR. Making this move – indeed becoming a sector minister – would not have been possible without Dorothy Household's contribution:—furniture (we just missed out becoming the owners of the fine furniture in the Green Lane manse!) and her helping with the finances. The house had been occupied by the Griggs who we met up with again when we came to Leeds but the tenants before me, an Anglican curate, had lived in the large L shaped hall-way and painted the ceilings black. Catherine and Elizabeth (Rowan) helped with the decorations and I laid cord carpet throughout! All very exciting. I had the best study that I have ever had.

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<sup>17</sup> The original and the correspondence related to it is on file

<sup>18</sup> It has suddenly dawned on me that I have got the dating of the meeting related to my becoming a full-time worker quite wrong. I must have had the discussions with CW early in 1971! How could I have got it so wrong?!

## ***Funding ourselves in Sector Ministry***

Becoming a sector minister was not simply taking up another appointment, it was a pilgrimage in faith. Leaving the security of the life of a Methodist Circuit Minister – stipend, house, furnishings, repairs were the responsibility of the Church, now they were mine/ours. That was quite a shock, a steep learning curve. Not only that, but I was/we were proactive in raising the money for our stipends and the work – and I remained so until my retirement. Strangely, I felt good about it. I was now living by faith, earning my living, in the hard world of providing for myself and my family and my vocational working life. I experienced a new independence and the vulnerability that went with it. In some ways I felt a much better Christian worker and disciple with a greater affinity with the laity of the Church. I was and remained much more responsible for my own vocational life and destiny – under God that is.

Obtaining the funds also proved to be much more difficult than we had anticipated. One of the reasons for this was unexpected personal circumstances of Richard Mills, Deputy Director of the Gulbenkian, the principal Trust with and through whom we were negotiating a grant. He was acting as the coordinator of our applications to one or two other Trusts. Tragically, his wife was dying of cancer and he had to cancel/postpone critical meetings with Catherine and me. The result was that we did not get a decision about funding until, I think, December 1972 i.e. three months after I had left Circuit. Nerve-racking! The Methodist Church required assurances that the finances necessary were available. Unbeknown to me, Catherine W and Patrick F found several people to act as guarantors of the monies required to fund me for one year against the failure to get Trust funds. (The sum was £3,000 and Norman Heaps was one of the guarantors, I later discovered.) News that the grants had been agreed came through whilst the Team was meeting at the Grail. I remember the joy and asking the Team to stand and leading them in prayers of thanksgiving. A great Christmas present! I meant to say that the Grail, through Philipa Craig who was the President at the time who assured Ralph Fenwell that the funding for me for 1972-3 was assured (letter dated 19th June 1972).

As soon as he possibly could after his wife's death, Richard Mills arranged to meet us at Waxwell. I remember it well. It was in September I think, a lovely day. Catherine and I met him in a first floor room (? The Den) overlooking the parking area in front of Waxwell. Catherine went down to meet him, I saw him arrive in his car debonair. Catherine and I had thought that he would be kindly disposed to us in view of the cancelled meetings. As

I saw him get out of the car and walk to the house without a brief case or folder, I thought that the meeting was going to be a friendly chat. I could not have been more wrong. He was apologetic about the delays and we offered our condolences; he was, as always, warm and gracious, but the interview was one of the most thorough going and penetrating that I have experienced. He was an absolute master of his brief. In fact he was more on top of the finances than we were. Even though he carried out what at times felt like an interrogation, howbeit a courteous and friendly one and without any aggression. He was feeling out/assessing the viability of the Project – and indicated ways and means of improving it – and our ability to carry it out and our commitment. We knew we had met someone who was an extremely able and widely experienced professional in the field of community development. Oh that he would fund us and become an ally – he did both.

Writing this has led me to a fuller realization of how significant my/our relationship with Richard Mills was. Undoubtedly our association with Reg Batten and his association with the Project was highly significant in our getting Richard Mills' and the Gulbenkian's support. Through Richard Mills I eventually came to be associated with a group of people influential in community work and community development – David Thomas, Hywell Griffiths and others. I must think more about this.

### ***Completing my PhD Thesis*<sup>19</sup>**

When I took up my full-time post with Project 70-75, I had still to do the final editing of my PhD thesis and to prepare it for presentation. Catherine and other Team members agreed that it was important for me and for the Project that I should complete that work as soon as possible. And that I did, being awarded the doctorate in 1973. This increased my status in the field of church and community development and importantly that of the Project.

### ***Salient features of the project***

Project 70 - 75 was an action-research programme. This means that the work done was continuously assessed for what could be learned from it, and whatever was learnt was ploughed back into the Project to inform future decisions on future action and eventually evaluated. (*Churches and Communities* pp 14, 22, 208). It was carried out through the Team working with the clergy and laity of sixteen churches of seven denominations in one

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19 14.8.13

typical council of churches in an area in North London on their schemes and projects and through training courses for them. The ministers, priests and laity concluded that the non-directive approach is highly applicable to all aspects of the work of their denominations in the churches and in their neighbourhood communities: Anglican, Baptist, Congregational, Church of Christ, Methodist, Moravian, Roman Catholic, United Reformed and the YMCA. It was agreed not to disclose the name of the actual area, the churches and the people so pseudonyms were used. However 40 years on, it is safe to say that it was in Crouch End and Hornsey. After a thorough evaluation of what had happened, local people were convinced that what they had discovered should be widely known for the sake of the church as well as the community.

### ***The local action project work (in contradistinction to the research work)***

As I said in the preamble to this section, the project and the work done was written up in great detail in *Churches and Communities* which is readily available online and has also been referred to in various publications (see for instance, *Human And Religious Factors In Church and Community Work*, page 17). Whilst there is therefore, nothing to be gained in attempting to describe it here, there are some points to be made and reflections to be shared.

## **Experiences of new working relationships**

The project gave me invaluable experiences of a new range of working relationships. I was privileged to work with clergy and lay people of six denominations other than my own on aspects of their work vitally important to them and to me: working with them on their work became my work. To do this, on various aspects of their church and community work, which were variously exciting and problematic, is a quite different form of engagement from that of discussing things and praying and worshipping with people. All of these forms of engagement are important but working with people has the unique potential to form very deep interpersonal relationships and commitments. In fact, there were a range of different working relationships with clergy, laity, churches and ecumenical and voluntary organisations.

## **The team**

It was the first time I had worked with a Roman Catholic lay woman and an Anglican and Roman Catholic priest in an ecumenical team. The religious, ecclesiastical, cultural mix combined with the interaction of our

different personalities and our approaches to working with people and the variations in our work ethics was most enriching but it could be a source of irritation and tension! One of the enormous advantages was that we brought into the team meetings and to the work in which we were engaged intimate personal knowledge and direct wide experience of four of the seven denominations with which we were working, their ethos, religious cultural norms, ways of working and structures. This incredible advantage aided planning and preparation and helped us to avoid some of the pitfalls into which otherwise we might have fallen from ignorance and inexperience of other denominations. Processes of mutual education about our different denominations and their ethos were ongoing, sometimes through discussions, at other times through osmosis. Interaction and learning were sharpened by the fact that our discussions were in relation to project work and important decisions that we had to be made. Also, we modelled an ecumenical teamwork approach to church and community development.

On the whole we work together very effectively, honestly and with good humour. Occasionally we prayed together and worshipped in churches of each other's denominations. However, on one occasion I was brought up with a start by Patrick's reaction to the suggestion that we should normally meet together for prayer before we got down to business. Peremptorily and somewhat abruptly, he said that he didn't agree and said something to the effect that he prayed at the beginning of the day for an hour and that he came to meetings to work not to pray. His response stymied the idea. In fact, in retrospect, although Catherine and I prayed together regularly at our meetings, I think as a team we worked together rather than prayed together.

There was a much more disturbing aspect of my relationship with Patrick. Quite quickly after our first meeting a very warm personal relationship and a most effective working relationship developed between us. In fact we did quite a lot of very interesting and productive work together as well as in and with the Team and went out the meals together which we enjoyed enormously. However, well into our partnership we found ourselves discussing the importance of our respective ordinations. At one point in the discussion I asked Patrick quite forthrightly whether he considered my ordination to be valid—perhaps I ought not to have done so, but I did. By way of reply he said that he was not sure how the post-Vatican II Roman Catholic church viewed the ordination of other denominations. Dissatisfied by his response, I said that what was important to me was to know what he himself thought/believed about my ordination rather than what his church felt. Quite determinedly, to my frustration and disappointment he refused

MINISTRY IN SECTORS

Statement on behalf of Rev. George Lovell, B.D.  
by Tony White, Senior Youth & Community Officer,  
Ten-Centre Scheme, 11<sup>th</sup> May 1971.

General:

Since my appointment to the Greater London Youth and Community Service in September, 1968, I have become closely associated with the Rev. George Lovell as minister of one of our Youth and Community Centres particularly with regard to the use of Community Development principles. He is currently acting as group-worker to a monthly conference of the ministers of our ten centres which is shortly to present a Report to our central committee on the implications of Community Development for the work of the Church.

He is also consultant to a Community Development tutorial team involved on behalf of King's Cross and the Westminster Pastoral Foundation in association with the appropriate Methodist Departments concerning the establishment of a ministerial 'post-ordination' course in London.

I have also observed his work in various consultations and conferences and, notably, by attending a residential course on Community Studies at Manchester University when he lectured on the role of the Church in Community Development.

Personal:

Against this background I have come to two basic conclusions:-

1. That, in this area of activity, he is probably the most expert of our ministers and enjoys a high reputation among those in church, state and academic life who are concerned with Community Development.
2. That because of the expertise and skill he has demonstrated in both the written record of his research and in his practical work in the field, it would be only a matter of time before an opportunity for full-time work presented itself either within or outside of the ministry.

On the first point I think there will be little, if any, disagreement; but it may be useful if I make one or two further comments concerning the second.

(i) It is vital that at this particular time the Church should be in the forefront of developments in this field and I believe that the Methodist Church is fortunate to have the opportunity, at no extra cost, to gain more and not less from the separation of Mr. Lovell for full-time technical work in Community Development.

(ii) To release Mr. Lovell from circuit responsibility, however, would not mean removing him from circuit involvement; for it would not only be desirable but vitally necessary for him to remain 'earthed' and to continue to perform most, if not all, of the activities I have referred to in my general comments.

(iii) It is my judgement that George Lovell is ideally suited for the appointment in question for although until now he has managed to combine (though not without strain) both the theory and the practice of Community Development in a good deal of well-documented action research he is, in my view, both by nature and temperament more fitted to the role of researcher than of operator in the field. In a more relaxed environment I am confident he has an important contribution to make in what I believe is an area of vital concern for the future development of the work of the Church.

to answer saying that he would look up what the church was currently saying. Unsatisfactory, that is as far as we got. It was a long time before we discuss the subject again.

Fond as I was and still am of Patrick, I felt bitterly disappointed in him and not a little upset and angry. Several things caused me to be disappointed: my strong commitment to the preeminent importance of one's personal beliefs over institutional pronouncements; I desperately wanted to know what he believed because that had serious implications for our relationship upon which I placed great value. I was upset because my calling and ordination our precious and sacred to me. I was disappointed that Patrick's assessment of my ordination was based not upon his experience of the expression of my ministry but upon what his church said about all such ministries: if the church said it was valid, regardless of what he personally thought, he would say it was valid; if his church said that it was invalid, he would say it was invalid whether he thought so or not. In neither case I just did not know where he/we stood. Where did that leave our relationship - functionally useful but religiously and spiritually lacking authenticity? And, I couldn't help thinking, where does the non-directive fit into all this—a useful technique or a way of life and a fundamental principle of interpersonal human engagement? I realise that we were living and working from quite different religious basic commitments, premises and understandings which I felt to be an unbridgeable: I was working on my inner personal commitments and beliefs hopefully endorsed by the Methodist church; he seemed to be operating on a curious admixture of personal beliefs and what the church decreed.

That is where it was left. We went on working together effectively and cordially but I felt that something of value and potential in the relationship had been lost or possibly was never present. His letters were always warm and supportive, as were mine to him.

After the conclusion of the project force of circumstances meant that we did not meet often, possibly a few years later, on one of the few occasions that we met, the subject came up again. Opening his heart to me Patrick said that he could not say what he personally believed during that discussion because the church was his family and mother and he could not do anything that could possibly estrange him from her or made him feel disloyal to her. Significantly he still did not say what the church thought or what he believed. I can only think that he too valued our friendship and did not want to do anything to damage it. I did not press the subject because I presumed that at that time the Roman Catholic Church decreed my ordination to be invalid. Anyhow, in a sense that is academic because

whatever Patrick said I would not know whether Patrick was saying what he believed or what the church decreed. I was moved that he had been so open with me and realise that it bothered him as it did me. But I was sad that he was in that position.

Clearly, we have to relate to people in the givens and to form the best kind of relationships that we possibly can and accept with grace the limitations. That is the authority of the ecumenical situation. Recently Catherine has told me that from conversations that she has had with Patrick that she does not think he is now in the same position, I hope not. It is hard to develop deep relationships and probably not possible to enter into soul friendships with somebody who doubts the validity of something as precious to you as your ordination.

Despite all this working in the team was a great privilege and a deeply profitable and satisfying experience.

[I think that this is the best that I can do. When I started to write this part I wrote it before I dictated it into the computer. I had no idea that all this was in my mind and heart and that those strong feelings remained. They must be written deep in my soul. Writing it has been a healing experience even though the issues are not completely resolved in my mind. I feel drained and am quite exhausted but warmer to Patrick and somewhat self-critical of myself. It does show the value of writing these Notes. I think that there are some profound lessons in this experience for ecumenical relationships and relating.]

## **A Church-Centred Approach<sup>20</sup>**

During the early discussions about locating the work in Ronsey (pseudonym for Hornsey, Crouch End) I became very concerned about recruiting sufficient people in each church and organization to engage in community development. I was very conscious of the enormous amount of work that I was involved in doing so in Parchmore. This led me and through me the Team to make cardinal mistakes. I came up with what I thought was a very good idea, setting up a task force from various churches to undertake community development schemes in Ronsey. (See *Churches and Communities*, p38.) That was mistake number one. The second mistake was to go public in Ronsey with the idea without first consulting Batten. The people in Ronsey were enthusiastic! When Batten learnt what we had done he was furious and summoned us (Catherine and me) to a meeting



on a Saturday morning.<sup>21</sup> I took the brunt of his wrath. He was anything but non-directive! The idea was a cop-out. What we should be doing, he argued, was to be working to get each church and each organization as institutional entities to be involved in their own right in church and community development. That was what he saw the Project to be all about, just as Parchmore was. And if the Team and the Project were not going to be about that, then he would have to reluctantly withdraw from being Consultant to us and the Project.

Immediately we saw how right he was. Once articulated so clearly and in stark contrast to the idea of a task force, the importance and superiority of it was blindingly obvious. There was no doubt whatsoever in our minds that that were the underlying concept that we must embrace no matter what the cost might be. It involved a reversal of our position locally at this early stage and the loss of face and possibly people beginning to doubt our competence. However, as we could see no alternative, we screwed up our courage and levelled completely with the local people. Once they got hold of the concept, they too opted for the 'church-centred' approach and the policy of 'working with churches as institutions'. And this became one of the conclusions of the Project. *Churches and Communities* has a fuller description of what happened – except, that is, for the raw details of that unforgettable Saturday morning encounter with Reg when he saved us from an ineffectual project, a shadow of what it in fact became. (See *Churches and Communities* pp38-39, 2000-2004).

Reliving the pain and enlightenment of this incident, I found myself wondering how I could have made such an error given my Parchmore experience and my commitment to local work. I can only conclude that at the stage I simply had not got an adequate conceptual grasp of basic principles of church and community development work: church-centred; locally based; working with religious and secular institutions and organizations and communities. These are tenets of praxis and missiological theory fundamental to all my subsequent work. I have spent much effort in developing the theory and theology of such approaches, see for example *Consultancy, Ministry and Mission* pp 252-254, 169-275 and much else. My gratitude to Reg is endless.

## Structuring and Classifying the Work

Unearthing the church and community work on which the local laity,

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21 I feel I have already written about this incident but for the life of me I cannot remember where!

clergy, churches and ecumenical groups and organizations needed to work with us and wanted to, was an important aspect of the research programme. Just what that involved and what emerged is well documented in *Churches and Communities*. The only point I wish to make here is that I gained an enormous amount of satisfaction from the demanding task of structuring and classifying the work (see pp 60-62). Discovering the threefold classification of church work; church-community work; community work, was a major breakthrough in conceptualizing the nature of the work in which churches were actually engaged. It broke out of the widespread distinction between church and community work. The third category that which I called church-community work (uniformed organizations, clubs for old and young etc) was a major segment of the work in which churches were involved. Throughout my ministry these conceptual distinctions proved to be enormously useful in helping people to understand more clearly the nature of the work in which they were actually involved and to organize, manage and assess it.

## **Telling Incidents**

Here, I want to mention three of the many telling incidents that occurred during the Project. I am not sure why!

### ***1. Difficulties not problems.***

This incident is described in *Analysis and Design*, p 67. Here it is left to speak for itself.

It is sometimes necessary to avoid using the word “problem” because of the negative feelings it can engender. On one occasion, whilst talking to a Parish Church Council about the ways of tackling problems described in this chapter, the Vicar, who was in the chair, a man of commanding presence and well over six feet tall, sprang to his feet in the small crowded room, towered over me and bellowed at me, “Dr Lovell, we do not have any problems in this parish”, and addressing the members of the Committee, he added “Do we?” They meekly agreed. I made conciliatory gestures and said, “But do you face any difficulties?” “Yes”, he said, and for the next hour or more he and his council spoke with deep feelings about one difficulty/problem after another!

### ***2. The theory should work***

This incident is described in *Churches and Communities* p 128 but to save embarrassment and offence I toned down the histrionics of the event which it is now safe to tell. One of the principal architects of the Good Neighbour

Scheme which was being reviewed in the light of difficulties some of the street workers had encountered was in charge of local statutory social work, a lady possibly in her late 40's or early 50's at the time. Local road stewards were encountering resistance to the scheme because it was too formally structured and people didn't want someone in their street to know their business. Through the Project the road stewards had become involved for the first time in evaluating the scheme and were coming up with some good ideas about ways of making it work. Some of the organizers who were not involved in field work and never had been were in complete denial of the obvious points made by the road stewards engaged in the day-to-day running of the scheme, that the scheme would work if the road stewards did their job properly. The lady in question, worked herself up into frenzy, stood up, stamped her feet, gesticulated vigorously and repeated angrily over and again that it would work, the scheme was a good one, it's the workers who are at fault, not the scheme. Eventually we managed to quieten her but nothing we did could get her to see that the scheme had been well and truly tested and that the criticisms and the remedial suggestions made sense. She could not see that evaluated practice not doctrinaire adherence to theory must be taken seriously. (How often I struggled to get this over!)

### ***3. Reciprocity between church and community***

A moving moment of illumination occurred in a conversation Catherine and I had with the secular community development officer in Hornsey which illustrated this principle of reciprocity which is simple to state but generally difficult to get people in churches and communities to see, accept and practice. The Executive of the Council of Churches had asked us to meet him on their behalf just after he was appointed and the Borough Community Development Unit set up in 1974. This is how I described the meeting:

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 organizations 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 workers to non-church people.

The community development officer and the team felt that much could be gained from co-operation between the unit, the council and the churches. The unit could benefit from the experience of the churches and the team;

the unit could help the churches especially after the team had withdrawn; and the churches and the unit could be more effective if they worked together in some situations than if they worked independently. The team agreed to report the discussion to the executive.

Good working relationships were established between the Executive, the secular Community Development Worker and his Unit and within a few months he was involved in no fewer than eight church and community development schemes five of which had resulted from Project work. (See *Churches and Communities* pp 149-151.)

## **Working relationships**

Carrying out projects 70 - 75 involved me in:

- working with individuals and groups and with ministers, priests and leaders, councils and committees of churches of thirteen denominations and several ecumenical and voluntary Christian organisations;
- engaging with them, in all their diversity of culture, praxis, churchmanship and theology, on a wide range of diverse church and community work programmes and projects;
- many significantly different working relationships;
- researching the work as we did it as an 'action research project'.

All this is described in *Churches and Communities* and, the position papers, reports and working papers in the Avec Archives. My purpose here is to describe the nature of and basic types - or forms or kinds or models - and critical features of working relationships through which I engaged in the Project work with these different people on their work.

What follows are brief notes about the critical features and types of my working relationships.

### ***Primacy of local workers' perspectives of their work in my working relationships***

Primarily, I was engaged, as were the other members of the Team, on the work being undertaken or planned by the local clergy, laity, churches and ecumenical organisations i.e. their current and plans that they had for their future work and the application of the non-directive approach to it and anything else I might contribute to their work and how they went about it. Throughout I was clear about this and was at some pains not to compromise or usurp or takeover their ownership of it and their responsibility for it nor

to compromise or undermine the status of their leaders.

*My* work, the action aspect of the action-research project, that is, the field work if you like, was *their* work, its enhancement and development through being a non- directive worker. Thus, I was applying and demonstrating as well as advocating the non-directive approach. Briefly stated, therefore, *my* work, the *project* work, was *their* work.

*All my working relationships were based and profoundly influenced by this fundamental approach.*

Subsequently I have written about these distinctions and their importance in *Consultancy Ministry and Mission*, pp 28, 35, 51- 63. But that was after a further 25 years of reflective experience and theorising. Howbeit, during Project 70 - 75, whilst I was aware of these distinctions it was some time before I achieved that degree of praxis refinement and conceptual sophistication. I was, however, consciously and scrupulously working to other people's perspectives rather than mine and using them and my perspectives on them and their situation to do so.

### ***I was a second line in situ non-directive worker***

Local people were first-line workers, I was a second-line non-directive worker engaged with the local people *in situ*. This did not mean that I saw clergy and people precisely as they were when alone: my very presence as an active participant observer, to greater or lesser extent, affected their behaviour; and, in any case, I saw only snippets of their activities. Nonetheless, I had an action-researchers observer's perspective on their working environment and of them in their working environment and of them at work in it. And this affected how I saw them and how they saw me.

This working relationship differs significantly from engaging with people about situations that I have not visited when I have to rely on and work to their descriptions of their situations. There was a temptation for me to think I knew the situation and for them to think that I knew it! (See a discussion about the issues involved in *Consultancy Ministry and Mission*, 192 - 7). This working relationship had its advantages and its dangers. One of these was that of my working to *my* perspective of their situation, rather than *theirs* and to *my* perspective of them at work not *theirs*. Later I came to see that doing this involved me in acts of 'virtual insidership' (*op cit* pp 59 - 60) which took seriously what I saw with my mind's eye and through my empathic imagination along with what I observed through being *in situ*.

## ***Ecumenical teamwork in and through the Project Team***

There were two aspects of this form of teamwork: first there was the private aspect, i.e. the work we did as a Team did on our own and that which we did with people outside Hornsey; secondly there was the public aspect, i.e. that which was done with people in the local area. Some of this work involved four (or five when Elizabeth Rownan joined us as the recorder), but much of it was done in twos and threes through ecumenical worker partnerships.

## ***Acting as a non-directive worker/facilitator/consultant to churches and ecumenical organisations through church committees and councils***

This I did both in ecumenical worker partnerships and as a solo worker.

Working with churches involved working with groups of people comprising ministers/priests and lay leaders and workers. This involved the tricky triangular dynamics between: myself as the worker; the priest/minister; lay leaders/workers; those between priest/minister and lay people/workers. At times this involved second-guessing hidden agendas which, without surfacing, could make the overt exchanges inexplicable and baffling to me when I was not privy to them! One example of this was the priest who had problems but not difficulties already discussed. Another was the work that Patrick Fitzgerald and I did on 'a community centre scheme in a Roman Catholic parish'. [*ibid* pp 79 - 90] It was some time before Patrick and I realized that the laity's insistence that the centre should be near the church was a coded reference to the necessity that it must be housed in the capacious basement and first floor of the presbytery. Until we discovered this we simply couldn't understand why the priests blocked all suggestions that the centre should be near the church without explanation!

## ***Acting as a non-directive worker/facilitator/consultant to clergy***

For example, I did this with the open youth work clergy task group with Elizabeth Rownan acting as the recorder to the meetings. This was an extensive project on their work. (*ibid* pp 96 - 106)

## ***Acting as an in-service trainer***

In partnership with Catherine I acted as 'a non-directive in-service trainer to the clergy through a long series of sessions. (*ibid* pp 50 - 59)

## ***Consultancy relationships with T.R. Batten***

This was effected by Catherine and my acting as consultants between the team and Batten (*Churches and Communities* 209 - 10 describes how this relationship was conducted.)

As I remember it we were able to establish these nuanced multiple working relationships without any undue difficulty which is rather surprising because they were subtly different from any relationships that the local people had previously experienced. It gave me invaluable experience of being deeply involved as an action- researcher into the work of other people for which I was not directly responsible. As such it was a significant extension to the work and action research experience that I had gained at Parchmore.

## ***Working relationships, roles and functions***

Throughout all these working relationships my substantive role was that of a non- directive worker. (There is, of course, a place for directive action, for working for rather than with people. Batten and I have discussed their uses in various books.) This role was made explicit in the discussions leading up to the agreement that the field work of the Project would be carried out in Hornsey. However, there were roles within this role notably those of: adviser, administrator, advocate coach, colleague, consultant, educator, friend, ordained minister, organiser, supporter, team-worker, and trainer. Combined, these roles and working relationships enabled me to perform the different functions necessary to achieve the purposes of the Project. The boundaries between them were somewhat blurred and they were inclined to overlap. Generally speaking I adopted these variant roles of the non-directive approach without declaring or describing them.

## ***Ecumenical work experience***

The project enabled me to gain by direct observation and work experience knowledge of and insights into: the ways in which different churches work, operate, organise themselves; the beliefs and values which motivate them and inform all that they do in church and community work; the working relationships between clergy and laity. It also enable me to gain first-hand experience of the culture, ethics and ethos were of different

denominations and ecumenical organisations. This was an invaluable ecumenical education gained not from study or discussion with the people of different denominations, but through working with and alongside people of different churches and ecumenical organisations in situ on things of great importance to them, their church and community work and their ecumenical enterprises. This is a rich and unique way of learning about people and churches and allied organisations in depth. It gets beneath the veneer of other relationships to what makes them what they are and function the way in which they do. Work experience of this kind is an unparalleled tutor in all that is involved in working with and for them creatively for development. I consider myself very fortunate to have had this experiential and existential work experience in church and community work working relationships.

## Preaching

In a section already completed, I have written about my approach to and objects for my preaching ministry in the local churches during the Project. Most of the services that I conducted and the preaching that I did were Methodist churches but on one or two occasions I did preach in an Anglican, a Roman Catholic and a Union Church. The project area was in the Highgate Circuit of the London North-West District of the Methodist Church. I took some forty services in one or other of the seven churches of this Circuit. Half of these were in Holly Park and Middle Lane Methodist churches. Some members of both of these were actively engaged in the Council of Churches and the Project. Aubrey Mares worshipped in Middle Lane and was the chair of the Council of Churches; David Palmer and his wife both worshipped in Holly Park and they too were actively engaged in the Project work. Bevis Ridley, a leading layman in Holly Park and the circuit, was a saintly man who was extremely supportive of me and my ministry and I had many meals in his home on Sundays. Aubrey Mares was one of our staunchest allies and he and his wife entertained me extensively. (By coincidence, many years later in 1989 Aubrey Mares' son Stephen, a student at the time, became the minister of Parchmore Road Methodist Church and Community Centre!)

My pulpit ministry was extremely well received especially in Holly Park and Middle Lane. From the first appointments I took I realised that the services I led and especially my preaching profoundly affected for the better the way in which people felt about and related to Project 70-75, the respect they had for it and the support they gave to it. I think that this was because it provided them with opportunities to relate to me personally, not



as the project worker but as a Methodist minister with whom they could relate and with whose theology, spirituality and preaching they identified and embraced. I was far from an unacceptable radical committed to the 'social gospel' that they might otherwise been inclined to associate with the Project! By extrapolation, rightly or wrongly, logically or illogically, they presumed that anything to which I - a Methodist minister in good standing - committed myself would be acceptable to them even if they didn't understand it. In short my pulpit ministry gave Project 70-75 a good press.

## **The Tower Bomb**

On 17 July 1974, a devastating tragedy struck our family: Molly, Dorothy, Martin and Neville (Ben) Poore (Molly's young nephews) were in the immediate vicinity of a bomb which exploded in the Tower of London. Molly was very seriously injured, Dorothy was killed and Martin and Neville badly injured, Martin more so than Neville. This awful incident had far reaching terrible effects upon the family and upon and still pains and affects me. However, this is not the place to revisit the event in its entirety. Here, I focus on the principal ways in which it affected me in relation to my work with and my responsibilities for Project 70-75, clearly without being in any way indifferent to the wider effects upon all concerned. Understandably and rightly, a considerable amount to my attention, concern and energy now went into caring for Molly. For an extended period of time she needed hospital treatment, risky ear operations (she had become profoundly deaf) and help in overcoming the emotional trauma and the loss of confidence in travelling especially in and across London. This involved me in doing more domestic work - although employing Gertie Spatcher for a few hours a week helped and provided some therapeutic companionship for Molly. There was a lot of anxiety and worry about the present and the future. Through Dorothy's death we had both lost a soul-friend and an incredibly valuable help-mate and colleague. Molly had lost a treasured companion who was there for her especially when I was working away. This, combined with Molly's greater dependence upon me meant that I was not as free as I had been to give myself really to my work and to be absent from home: of necessity I simply had to give myself to help Molly and cope as best I could work-wise with personal and domestic preoccupations and distractions.

And, understandably, for some time Molly was unable to do her work as Bursar of the Project. But she was back at work as soon as possible and travelling to and from Pinner to meet with the Treasurer and do some of the bookkeeping she could only do there. With great care she planned

circuitous routes to get to Pinner by public transport without her having to go through central London on the Tube. I greatly admired her tenacity in and determination to overcome her anxiety and fears, loss of trust and confidence and found what she was doing deeply distressing, moving and upsetting. There was so little I could do except and you are my suffering as quietly as possible, contain my emotions and support her in every possible way I could. And that I tried to do

Further, I had lost to a unique creative partner in my work through Dorothy's death; someone with whom I had discussed much of my thinking for several years from the time that I became involved in church related community work. As will become clear in the next section her death had disastrous and very painful effects upon my ability to write. Also we had lost someone who shared in financing the domestic and personal side of our participation in Project 70-75. Providentially, our long term housing was secured through Dorothy leaving us of the flat and all her possessions. (How well I remember, possibly a year or two before this event, Dorothy coming home one day from the solicitors and saying that she was greatly relieved because our future was secure even if she died tomorrow she could do so in peace. Had she ever premonition? Or was she simply being circumspect?)

So this event was a veritable bombshell, personally physically domestically emotionally for Molly and for me. My admiration grows for the way in which she overcame it.

It came right in the middle of my four years as a full-time worker to the Project and, importantly, at the point at which the work involved was moving from the field work to the evaluative research and writing it up. Up to this point Dorothy's participation had been mainly in discussing the Project with me - and that had been very valuable. But she had been greatly frustrated that, in contrast to her active participation in the day-to-day work of Parchmore, it had not been possible for her to participate in the action in Hornsey because of her job and the distance. Then, ironically, at the very point at which she and I were looking forward to her participating with me in the research and the writing and planning how we might collaborate, she was murdered. This was an enormous blow. Recovering from it was a painful and prolonged period - that is if I have fully recovered from it even now. Periodically as I write these Notes I remember that she had promised herself and me that she would write my biography and I realise how much she would have thrown herself with great enthusiasm into this project and added so much to it. My life has been all the richer for hers and all the poorer for her premature death.

## Writing the report

From the outset it was our intention to seek the publication of the final report. So, as agreed, I set out to draft it as a book. Initially, getting anything at all on paper proved to be extraordinarily hard for me. The difficulties inherent in the task combined with my emotional state in having to tackle it without Dorothy Household caused me to have a severe attack of writer's block. Eventually, however, with Catherine's consistent and invaluable encouragement, practical help and moral support, I managed to get a start and produced the initial instalment of the draft. With some trepidation I sent what I had done to Reg Batten. When he had read it Catherine and I went to see him. His criticisms were scathing. Also, as I remember it, he showed his annoyance with me and rebuked me for sending him such an inadequate poor piece of work when I was capable of doing better. I felt he was angry with me; he certainly was abrasive and rough with me. I was devastated and very upset. I think I tried to explain how I was feeling but he seemed dismissive about that. Looking back I wonder if he could not handle his emotions about what had happened to me, Molly and Dorothy and consequently they found expression in this most inappropriate displaced and misdirected manner. (Madge, his wife had told me that he had been distraught by the event.) Somehow or another I kept a modicum of composure during the discussions with him but soon after I left I went to pieces in the security of Catherine's presence.

Compassionately and courteously Catherine spoke to Reg unbeknown to me and told him that he was having an adverse effect upon me and exacerbating the difficult situation in which I found myself rather than helping me.

I have no idea how, but somehow I broke through my writer's barrier and started to produce more acceptable drafts and we established good creative working relationships. We got into the rhythm of a process that worked well: Catherine and I discussed working outlines and content - I drafted sections - Catherine read them - I sent them to Reg - Catherine, Reg and I formed an editorial group and worked on the draft manuscripts I had supplied - I redrafted - this process was repeated until we had a final text which was mutually acceptable to the three of us. The final draft was checked with people in Hornsey.

Catherine took the lead in getting a publisher, which proved to be difficult. Eventually, through her persistent efforts, a publisher was found. Somehow or another Catherine got in touch with Countess Charlotte del a Bedoyere (known to her friends as Lotti!), the principal director of

Search Press Ltd. Fortunately, she proved to be genuinely interested in our ecumenical work generally and in Project 70 - 75 in particular and agreed to publish the report and did so in a very attractive publication, *Churches and Communities: An approach to development in the local church*, 1978. Lotti became an enthusiastic supporter and a great help in getting much of my subsequent work published.

*Churches and Communities* was very well received, reviewed and widely used. It became a basic text book for all our subsequent work and was reprinted two or three times. Reviews are on file. Also on file are copies of critical but useful correspondence I had with Tom Corlett, husband of Mollie who was the recorder for the community development group.

## Conclusion

Writing these Notes some forty years later it strikes me forcibly that Project 70-75 and Parchmore - supplemented and reinforced by the work I did in the Church and Community Development Group, the Methodist ministerial in-service training programme and in the research group that produced *Involvement in Community* - were ideal preparation and training for all that was to follow. Or, was it that it made all that was to follow possible? Either way it was ten years of unique experiential and academic training in:

- the praxis of the non-directive approach to church and community development work;
- the serious study of the underlying theory and theology;
- action research;
- the induction, education and training of other people in these ways of working;
- writing it all up for publication.

Moreover it was an experience of all this first, as a local Methodist minister in the Methodist Church and then as a Methodist minister in an ecumenical setting working with clergy and laity of seven denominations in a broad band of working relationships and roles. This provided me with the requisite denominational and ecumenical experience, knowledge and credibility to work with people of all denominations, religions and none with confidence. Through this long apprenticeship I was well endowed for all that was to follow. Thanks be to God.

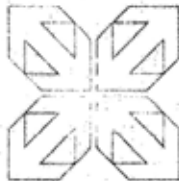
## APPENDIX

The William Temple Foundation

## BULLETIN

Number 12

December 1980

INVOLVEMENT IN COMMUNITY.

At a time when Christians are searching for more effective social thought and practice, especially in relation to the persistence of poverty in Britain, the report of the Community Development core group has recently been completed. We are pleased that the report has been published by the Foundation in collaboration and with financial support from the Community Work Unit of the British Council of Churches. As you may know the core group was made up of a variety of practitioners who shared a common commitment to explaining how the more deprived members of society could organise to have a greater say over what was happening to them. The report is not simply about techniques or methodologies. It is concerned to locate involvement in community within wider social and political theory and to demonstrate how the authentic practice of community involvement requires fundamental changes from both people and organisations who are so involved. The report indicates that community involvement at best finds a number of points of convergence with the Christian Faith. Firstly, community involvement as we understand it is about becoming as clear as possible with people about the situation which they are in and the possibilities for change - in other words there is a pursuit of truth which leads to a practical pursuing of social change. We find here a convergence with the Christian concern for truth and for the pursuit of that which makes for human authenticity amidst discouraging realities facing many city communities.

Secondly, we find the desire in both community involvement and amongst Christians for a principle of intervention which effectively combines method and purpose. Thirdly, we came to see that for theology or theory to have authenticity was dependent upon a listening to people, analysing structures with them and working in a dialogical way on social action to achieve a more just and humane situation. Fourthly, whether or not God is held to "come into it", those committed to this involvement will need to be as clear as possible about the resources available to sustain involvement which means probing life beliefs and life practices as deeply as possible. Fifthly, community involvement and the Christian Faith at their best embody a principle or radical dissent with the established order insofar as it prevents human fulfilment, together with practical methods for pursuing the eradication of injustice and the promotion of a more human future. In other words the report is not simply advocating that the church takes on board a few new methods and indeed the report argues that involvement in community has major implications for the reformation of contemporary theology.

Appendage I: 'Involvement in Community'  
and Contemporary Theology

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